



SLF's FANCY NEWSLETTER

March/Lent 2009

Last week marked the end of an era. A huge, historic era. Tears were shed. But it was right on time. I can remember sitting in a meeting led by Anna Peterson and Dick Withnell back in 2005. They were laying out a vision for a massive community retaliation against the Meth Epidemic. In that meeting they made a prophetic statement: the effort would be designed to 'sunset' in 3 to 5 years. Fast action; broad participation; proven results; and then pass the baton. At a ceremony last week, the *No Meth—Not in My Neighborhood!* initiative was cheered not only for its success in the war against meth, but for the many powerful programs it birthed in the process. Without No Meth, there would be no statewide *Meth Strike Force*, which has launched legislation, big drug busts, and public-safety coalitions. Without No Meth, we wouldn't have seen the broad *Foster Care Outreach* which has created more foster homes and better support for foster families. Without No Meth, there wouldn't have been the mass re-invigoration of the *Marion County Children & Families Commission*, which is the center of gravity for decision-making and action. Without No Meth we wouldn't have the *Center for Family Success* or *United Way's Volunteer and Mentor Center* or the just-launched *Marion County Re-Entry Initiative*. The list goes on and on....

But perhaps the most important outcome of No Meth is the quickening it sparked within the Faith Community. Inspired by endless invitations from civic and government leaders, Salem-Keizer's churches began to engage in deep and meaningful ways. Both with "the state" and with each other. The pump had been primed and there were certainly other influencing factors . . . but the No Meth fire bell stirred hearts and sparked action that keeps multiplying. Churches providing Recovery supports. Foster Parents Night Out. Churches serving as neighborhood centers. More food banks and school partnerships and CASA volunteers. There is more work to be done. Many churches and folks-of-faith are not yet activated. As we ramp up for the next wave of engagement, let's take a moment to remember and salute the No Meth board members, volunteers and staff (especially *Page Merrill and Al Younger*). Well done, good and faithful servants . . .

What's Your Neighborhood? Sam

A TIP 'O THE IRISH HAT TO . . . In the spirit of St. Patrick's passion to build relationships and steadfastly bring the Gospel to the people of Ireland, we look across the Salem-Keizer geography and salute:

First Nazarene for expanding its campus for outreach and starting up *The Hope Station* in north Salem.
St. Timothy's Episcopal for partnering with the Marion County Family Court to provide child care and love.
Soma Church in West Salem for sending out teams of people to beautify the Edgewater District. Weekly!
New Harvest Church for its new building and reaching out to the nearby Hallman School neighborhood.
The youth pastors of West Salem who meet weekly at Starbucks for fellowship and school-visit trips.
Salem Alliance Church for breaking ground on the Broadway Project, including the Free Medical Clinic.
Interfaith Hospitality Network for hiring Andrew Lane as interim director and community sparkplug.
Several churches in Keizer for banding together to form a new Foster Parents Night Out—number 7!
Westminster Presbyterian for providing mentors, volunteers and support to nearby Salem Heights School.
Grace Community Church for giving volunteer support that saved the SMART reading program at Yoshikai.
Keizer Young Life for once-again serving as the quiet facilitator of the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast May 7.

“CITY-AS-NEIGHBORHOOD”

—LIGHTNING RODS AND THE SIX KEYSTONE AREAS—

CHURCHES LEAD HOMELESS OUTREACH. Once upon a time “helping the homeless” meant sending some food, blankets and money to a worthy non-profit organization. Not to take anything away from those totally-worthy organizations (we love ‘em!), but for many church folks and community members “helping the homeless” increasingly means “personally getting involved.” There are the 14 host congregations of the *Interfaith Hospitality Network* (plus 16 support churches). There’s *The Angels Ministry* at Salem Alliance in which sack lunches are delivered daily (in parks and under bridges) and hot Sunday meals are served at church. There’s a loose coalition of five churches—*Emmaus, Outward, The Vibe/WSFC, Morningstar and Ecclesia*—who team up to host meals and service connections at Cascade Gateway Park. There’s the various *Street Teams* who faithfully serve meals, clothing (and friendship) at Marion Square Park. There’s the *Downtown Ministerial Fellowship* and *Congregations Helping People* organizing a permanent-housing project. And then there’s the *Salem Free Medical Clinic* (see attached article) that West Salem Foursquare and Salem Alliance are expanding. I’m probably missing some, but you get the picture: people-of-faith choosing to get personally involved with people-on-the-streets. Last January, with snow and ice on the ground, more than 2,600 homeless people were counted in our community. Here’s what was learned:

- **Children** under 18 account for 39% of the homeless population. 42% of these are under the age of 5.
- **Women** comprise 43% of the homeless population; 40% of these women are unaccompanied. 22% of homeless women claim domestic abuse as reason for homelessness.
- **Families** with children comprise 33% of the homeless population.
- **Veterans** constitute 40% of the homeless population.
- 1 in every 5 homeless persons has a severe or persistent *mental illness*.
- 25% of the homeless (nationwide) are *employed*. (Most people are shocked by this.)
- Illness, lack of medical insurance, and/or lack of free medical care often leads to family homelessness.
- Homeless folks reached within the first two years have a high chance of getting off the streets.

On March 26 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Marion and Polk Counties will hold the first ‘Community Homeless Connect’ at *First Baptist Church* in Downtown Salem. Churches, pastors, laypeople—you are invited to come and interact with your neighbors in a new kind of way. It’s not benevolence or charity. It’s personal servanthood of the kind Jesus prescribed over and over. For more information contact **Craig Oviatt**, of West Salem Foursquare, who is coordinating the Homeless Connect: 503-585-6232 or craig@wsfc.org.

RESERVE A SPOT—MAY 15! It’s never too early to RSVP for the *SLF Fancy Dessert*, which is fast approaching (10 weeks). Please set aside Friday, May 15, for an evening of great fun, inspiration and a surprise or two. We are taking table reservations and individual RSVPs now—simply email Julie@salemLF.org to reserve your spot. Whether you’ve been before, or are joining us for the first time, we guarantee this year’s Fancy Dessert will be unique and memorable. See you at the Salem Conference Center, 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. on May 15!

SEEKING FANCY SPONSORS, TOO. We are still actively seeking Sponsors for the Fancy Dessert. Sponsorship packages ranges from \$1,000 to \$5,000—we are very flexible and we’d love to have your company behind this powerful event. Please contact Sam at sam@salemLF.org or call 503-884-8194. Even though economic times are tough, we can’t think of a better investment than the Fancy Dessert. Vibrant testimonials available!