



SALEM LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

PO Box 7384 • SALEM OR 97303 • 503-315-8924 • info@salemLf.org

SLF's FANCY NEWSLETTER

May 2009

Martha* was walking to the store for some milk. It had been a rough week. Even though she and Felix* were clean-and-sober again, it was tough living in a \$700 motorhome . . . on the lot where their burned-out home once stood. They desperately missed their toddler David* who had been taken into foster care. Treatment and recovery were going OK, but something was lacking. Their rebound was fragile . . . **not real names*

Two years earlier Martha and Felix were gainfully employed, newlyweds, and expecting their first child. Life was good. A little Meth on the weekends for a good time. Then the house caught fire. But the insurance company put them up in a nice hotel and soon the settlement check came. Party time! Felix quit his job to rebuild the house himself. Martha was caring for the new baby. A new start . . . but too much money and too many bad friends. More and more money went for Meth; less and less for the house. Pretty soon appliances, tools, and building materials went for drug money. The insurance vouchers at the hotel ran out. They moved in with Martha's mom, but the drugs and the arguments were too much. They decided to 'camp out,' but winter living in a tent and a car wasn't much fun, especially with an infant. The garage back home was still standing, so they added a wall and lived there . . . until the City code-enforcement officer found out. That's where the \$700 motor home came in, which provided shelter from the rain—but not the drugs and the loud parties and bad friends. Eventually, someone reported the family to DHS and David was taken into foster care. "The worst day of our lives," Martha remembers.

Walking down the street, Martha passed a church and noticed a commotion. Balloons and barbecue smoke. It was a neighborhood 'block party' and she decided to check it out. Met some nice folks . . . ate a tasty hamburger . . . and noticed a display for Celebrate Recovery. The guy at the CR table was real nice, an associate pastor at the church. Martha raced home to fetch Felix. They met the senior pastor and made a coffee date. They signed up for Celebrate Recovery and haven't missed a meeting. The church—hearing that food and water were scarce back at the motorhome—invited the couple for regular meals and showers. They hired Martha for some janitorial work and helped her and Felix get into Chemeketa Community College nearby. A court hearing was set regarding baby David's future. Martha and Felix arrived at the courthouse and were stunned to find a crowd of church folk there for moral support. The judge was impressed. Martha sobbed. "It restored our confidence and gave us hope; we knew we were loved despite all our past mistakes." David is back in their care and the family has a nice clean apartment. Martha is studying to be a math teacher. Felix is pursuing a degree in social work because: "I want to work for DHS and help families the way our family was helped." Restoration, healing, and eternal hope from a neighborhood block party? **You bet!**

What's Your Neighborhood?

LAST CALL FOR 'FANCY DESSERT' ON MAY 15. If you liked the story (above) about Felix and Martha, it's just an appetizer for the stories we'll be telling at the Conference Center on Friday, May 15. We still have room for a few more 'Neighbors' and plan to convey gobs of hope and inspiration. (RSVP Julie@salemLF.org or call.) With economic times tough, we also need to raise support. Whether you can come May 15 or not, "won't you" consider a gift to SLF's ministry?



“CITY-AS-NEIGHBORHOOD”

—ONE DAY SALEM-KEIZER WILL BE THE HEALTHIEST COMMUNITY IN OREGON—

McKAY-EAST SALEM. In yet another example of the entrepreneurial spirit of an *SLF Lightning Rod*, the McKay Area’s Carrie Maheu has collaborated with the *Marion County Children & Families Commission* to establish two “pilot sites” for reading programs at a couple of *CaN Centers*. Twice a week CaN kids gather at *First Free Methodist* in McKay and *Trinity Covenant* in Sprague/SW to participate in a ‘*Reading for All*’ program that encourages reading aloud, arts-and-crafts, and taking books home. The YMCA of Salem is also operating pilot sites and the program could expand if successful. Carrie is also busy helping the *McKay Area Coalition for Students Success (MACSS)* and the flourishing partnership among *Christian Center of Salem, Swegle School, Blanchet High, and the Boys & Girls Club* in east Salem. Swegle was recently named a *Champion School* by the Oregon Department of Education and the partnership is hailed as part of the success. (Come to the Fancy Dessert to hear about this one!) *SLF Lightning Rod: Carrie Maheu, 503-559-5677.*

KEIZER-McNARY. Kudos to the multi-church *Keizer Community Food Bank*, which just moved from founding site *John Knox Presbyterian* to larger space at *Faith Lutheran*. This cross-denominational, close-geography ministry is a great example to other parts of the community, and is especially important in these food-scarce times. Over by the Little League fields, *Church on the Hill/Keizer* is exploring partnerships with *Kennedy Elementary School* and the *Boys & Girls Club* branch onsite. In addition, the *Keizer United CPT* (community progress team) is revitalizing and expanding under leadership of Pastor Jack Knox and Joseph Penner at *Salem Mennonite Church*, host of the SE Keizer Community Center. Membership has doubled and great projects are planned. *SLF Lightning Rod: Taking resumes!*

NORTH-CENTRAL SALEM. Hats off to *First Nazarene Church* for recent City Council approvals for its campus expansion, which will include a community center and outreach services. In addition, the church helped launch *Hope Station*, a program that engages working families to volunteer and have access to food, clothing and household items. *Salem Alliance* once again hosted the annual *Grant-Highland Health Fair* on March 5 and will host the upcoming *DHS Foster Care Appreciation Dinner* May 28. *SLF Lightning Rod: Sam Skillern.*

SOUTH-CENTRAL SALEM. As you drive along 13th Street SE you will notice a small house is missing. That’s because a newer-larger-safer facility is being built by *Helping Hands* after a successful capital campaign, including grants from some of the most prominent Northwest charitable foundations. Founded by faith-based servants at *St. Paul’s Episcopal* 40 years ago, this ecumenical ministry has served thousands of people with its all-volunteer staff. (I must declare my bias: Dad and I used to go to the old Helping Hands house on Saginaw Street to help move inside the weekend donations left on the front porch.) Speaking of St. Paul’s, their partnership with *McKinley School* continues to grow. A little farther south, *Emmaus Community Church* and *Morningside United Methodist* continue to serve Leslie Middle School and the Morningside Neighborhood on a weekly basis. *SLF Lightning Rod: Wayne Crowder, 503-510-1015.*

WEST SALEM. Dozens of churches and hundreds of volunteers are gearing up for the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the *Salem Interfaith Hospitality Network*, which has its Day Center at 1055 Edgewater NW. Since it opened the doors to homeless kids and families in May 1999, Salem IHN has served hundreds of people with dignity, hospitality, shelter, and connections to permanent housing. SLF and IHN are close partners and there are few ministries that have helped “the Church do the work of the Church” better than IHN. Even if you’re full of “fancy desserts” from our upcoming shindig, please plan to come to Mission Mill Museum on Thursday, May 28, for another evening of inspiration and faith-in-action. RSVP to IHN’s new director, Andy Lane, at Andrew@salemIHN.org or 503-370-9752. *SLF Lightning Rod: Herm Boes, 503-569-9364.*

EDITOR’S NOTE AND REQUEST: We are trying to learn about—and highlight—the good works of ALL churches and ministries across Salem-Keizer. If we have missed your story please let us know right away. It’s not bragging! It’s just adding parables to the growing chronicle of how the Body of Christ is bringing the Gospel to the City of Shalom. With lips and lives. With words and actions. With love and friendship. *Do tell!* Email Sam@salemLF.org or mail your church bulletins and/or news stories to P.O. Box 7384, Salem, 97303-0083.