



## **SLF's FANCY NEWSLETTER**

### **October 2009**

He was the kid who was always in the principal's office at Grant School. A third-grader who just couldn't seem to settle down in class. The kid who was quick to anger (but just as quick to smile). I was a new volunteer, part of the grand experiment back in 1996-97 to see if churches could help schools without goofing up. I was an after-school volunteer and looking to mentor a student, as well. That's when James and I hooked up. I still have the photo in my office. It was easy in elementary school, even when James' family moved. It got harder in middle school (higher standards, more moving) but that's where we experienced our greatest progress. In fact, James was named the 'Turnaround Student of the Year' at Stephens. High school was very difficult—more moves—and James finally drifted away. Not from our friendship, but from school and Salem. We stayed in touch—Las Vegas, California, Medford. What a joy to discover last year he had moved back to Salem! He was gainfully employed. Married and expecting a first child (born September 8—mom and daughter doing great). He still needs his GED (which we are working on) and life will be very challenging with a new baby. But I'm exceedingly proud of James for his commitment to marriage, employment, and fatherhood.

James' story isn't perfect. (Whose is?) But it represents what can happen when a 'family of neighbors' comes around a child or a family. I was James' mentor, but many others are part of his story, too—teachers, principals, churches, neighbors. Here was a kid "at risk," according to statistics and social science. And yet here's a kid who's on the right track. Still at-risk (we all are), but making it. What if everyone had a 'family of neighbors' around them? What if every first-grader had a reading buddy? Every student a mentor? What if foster families had adequate support and respite care? What if people coming out of prison had ready opportunities for jobs, housing and mentoring? What if folks in recovery from addictions had *friends* as well as treatment counselors? More and more it's happening. Could happen faster. But it's happening. To God's pleasure and glory.

Opportunities abound, as a quick visit to the United Way *HandsOn* website will affirm: [www.handsonmwv.org](http://www.handsonmwv.org). Or, come to the '*People Can Change*' breakfast on October 15 at the Red Lion Inn. (RSVP 503 584-4740 or [smcdonald@co.marion.or.us](mailto:smcdonald@co.marion.or.us)). Or, keep your eye on the *Fostering Hope Initiative* just taking shape in the McKay area (Swegle and Washington school neighborhoods). Just three examples of both the need and the opportunities. Don't be overwhelmed by the need. Pick one child. Or neighbor. It works. Not just in their life, but ours, as well. I'm eternally grateful to James and the blessings he has given me.

### ***What's Your Neighborhood?***

**THANK\$ EVERGREEN TRU\$T AND FRIEND\$.** It only took a few days for the Matching Challenge issued by *Evergreen Trust* of Salem ([www.evertrust.org](http://www.evertrust.org)) to be successfully met! Donors called in \$900 and Evergreen Trust doubled it with \$1,800—a total of \$2,700. A nice little 'shot in the arm' to wrap up summer! During this time, we also got the long-awaited "Make a Donation" feature of our SLF website up and running. Check it out: [www.salemLF.org](http://www.salemLF.org). As you might imagine, we are pulling out all the stops to be diligent and creative in supporting SLF's ministry: "City-as-Neighborhood." We are gearing up for our annual Christmas Matching Campaign, which is crucial to SLF's operations given the economic difficulty of the past year. Thanks to those of you who donate monthly, quarterly, and annually; thanks to those who have given when they can. We are praying for some miracles as we head toward year-end. God has provided for 13 years and we submit to his will and ways in all matters, especially finances. Thanks for your gifts and prayers!

PS: Perhaps designate SLF in your *United Way* giving? The annual campaign has just begun—***Live United!***

**CHURCHES AND NEIGHBORHOODS, CONT.** Last month we chronicled more than 20 church-based summertime events in Salem-Keizer neighborhoods. There was a time when you could count the number on one hand. It's not unusual for a church to host wonderful events for its own church families. Increasingly, churches are opening the doors and going outside the four walls to engage the community. Enclosed you will find news clippings (just two of many this summer) that extol 'faith in action' and 'neighbors helping neighbors.' In West Salem, **SOMA Church** partnered with the West Salem Neighborhood Association, West Salem Kiwanis and Kingwood Bible Church to serve more than 500 people with a clothing giveaway. In East Salem, **Trinity Methodist Church** partnered with Marion Polk Foodshare, Four Corners Elementary, the Sheriff's Department and Marion County Fire District for an afternoon of fun and bridge-building. In the McKay area, **Oak Park Church** opened its doors and its patio for neighborhood festivities. That brings the tally to 25, and now we're heading into "Harvest" and "Christmas" seasons. What might your church do to bless kids, families, and neighborhoods? Not just once or twice a year . . . but as an ongoing methodology for "being" the Gospel.

**SERVING VETERANS AT HOME.** Speaking of "enclosed news articles," check out the story on last month's 'Stand Down' in Dallas. This first annual event for veterans-in-need was tirelessly organized by SLF's own Wayne Crowder, a Viet Nam chopper vet. So what's a good South Salem Lightning Rod doing way out west in Dallas? Well . . . SLF is very flexible, and the Lightning Rod model is very flexible. When an issue or an opportunity arises we are likely to run with it. Wayne's passion for veterans and his outreach work to the homeless in Cascade Gateway Park led him to the "hidden homeless" not only in South Salem, but in Falls City and Dallas as well. Working with Herm Boes, our West Salem LR, Wayne built relationships in Polk County and the inaugural Stand Down will hopefully lead to similar events in other sectors of Marion-Polk. For now, we salute Wayne, Bill Adams, and the Community Action Agency, who have formed a non-profit called SOVAH: Serving Our Veterans at Home. It is Wayne's passion and we are backing him 100% as he pursues the vision. If you would like to learn more, email [wayne@salemLF.org](mailto:wayne@salemLF.org).

**KONGRATULATIONS TO KROC!** What a celebration last week for the long-awaited Grand Opening of the Kroc Community Center in Northeast Salem (Northgate and SE Keizer neighborhoods). I can remember that first meeting five years ago when the dream/vision was cast. Now it's a reality. We continue to float the idea that the Kroc Center can be the 'crown jewel' of a network of 40-50 neighborhood centers all over Salem-Keizer. (Churches, schools, YMCA, Boys/Girls Club, Mano a Mano.) More than 10,000 kids are being served daily in these centers. They can't all fit into the Kroc Center at one time, and that's OK—they should spend most of their time building assets in their home neighborhoods. But what if we had a rotation of monthly field trips so a ton of kids could enjoy the facilities? There's also the matter of community swimming pools. The Kroc Center has two marvelous pools. At the same time, both Olinger and Walker pools are struggling to serve the public (school swim teams are the only users now). If our community can rally to bring a Kroc Center (\$80 million) to Salem, we can rally to find the funding for Olinger and Walker (\$400,000). Not to mention supporting smaller centers like the one at Capital Park Wesleyan, who started it all. With Kroc Center as a partner, we can do it!

**REALITY NEWSPAPER: THE 'REAL MCKAY'** Hats off to the Statesman Journal, which is the 'daily diary' of Salem-Keizer's history. On the heels of the ground-breaking and award-winning *Raising a Community* series last year, the paper is now embarking on a 10-month effort to chronicle McKay High School. Many people don't realize how strong and successful the McKay community is. (Same with North.) It's true that McKay is the most ethnically-diverse high school in town, as well as the one with most students/families in poverty. But that doesn't mean McKay is a 'bad' school. Actually—in light of the challenges it must overcome—McKay just may be the best school in town. SLF is proud to be a charter member of the McKay Area Coalition for Student Success (MACSS), which includes the Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality, McKay Community Progress Team (CPT), Salem Chamber of Commerce, Mano a Mano Family Center, and schools within the McKay feeder area. Keep your eye on McKay and the Statesman Journal—it promises to be a banner year in NE Salem!

**IMPORTANT DATES TO CALENDAR—**

October 15—'People Can Change' breakfast at Red Lion  
October 15—Union Gospel Mission's Harvest Banquet  
October 19—Salem Young Life Dessert at Conference Center  
October 29—Family Building Blocks 'Dream Builders' luncheon

November 3—Habitat 'Hope Builder' Breakfast  
April 30, 2010—SLF Fancy Dessert (earlier this year)