



SLF's FANCY NEWSLETTER

Back-to-School 2009

Ten summers ago, two tractor-trailer rigs from Texas pulled up at Walker Middle School. They were loaded with food. A long line of people stretched from Walker into the nearby cannery district. The people had come to receive two bags of food. Sent from Texas. Many local churches and ministries (including SLF) were involved in the outreach, which was called "Convoy of Hope." The Salem team engaged the Texas ministry to bring the trucks to Salem as a demonstration of Christ's love to those in need. It was a pretty cool concept: invite families to a central location not only for the food, but a family carnival, as well. There was a bouncy house, hot dogs, snow cones, face-painting, puppets, balloons. We all agreed it was a superb format for Christ-like outreach.

But something was sideways. Not quite right. Why did we need to hire a ministry all the way from Texas to run a local outreach? Why did we need two big rigs to bring food to the agriculturally-rich Willamette Valley? And why did we dishonor the guests by making them wait in a long line on a hot day? It seems so long ago, but in the late '90s the local church body was not that activated toward serving the community. Especially the "least of these." The old wineskin of building buildings and opening doors and inviting people in just wasn't stirring hearts like it used to. A new day was dawning. Part of a national awakening. In essence, it was the renewed wineskin of taking the Gospel out into the streets and the marketplace and the neighborhoods. It's a quiet revival of "Rediscovering the Sacred Art of Servanthood" as expressed in such scriptures as Isaiah 58 and Matthew 25. James and Proverbs. God has a tender heart for the poor, the broken, the oppressed, the widow and the orphan. He desires that his people have the same tender heart. And respond in relational love.

Some may say "serving the poor is not the Gospel." Ouch. The Bible is clear that the fruit of a redeemed life is outreach to others. Not just in word, but in deed. Not just with lips, but with lives. Moreover, to love one's neighbor not only transforms the neighbor . . . it transforms us. It's a twin process. The lost are being saved, AND the saved are being sanctified. We often forget this second half of the twin process. Thankfully, a bunch of churches and a ton of believers are remembering . . . rediscovering . . . relearning. In reflection, I'm glad those trucks came from Texas to Salem. But I'm even gladder that we don't need them anymore. The church in Salem-Keizer knows how to do it. Let's do it! (*See related article, next page*)

What's Your Neighborhood?

A FABULOUS OPPORTUNITY FROM EVERGREEN TRUST. After the Fancy Dessert in May we received a very generous offer from the Evergreen Trust based here in Salem. They have issued a Matching Challenge (www.evertrust.org) in which they will double your dollars up to a \$1,900 total. In other words, if you donate \$25 to Evergreen Trust in SLF's name, they will add \$50 and send SLF \$75. That's a potential combined gift of \$950 + \$1,900 to SLF. What a blessing! NOTE: the dollars donated have to be "new dollars," they can't be from an existing SLF pledge. (But an existing SLF pledger could make an extra donation that will be matched.) The matching campaign will last from September 1 to 30, or until the matching dollars are exhausted. We are tickled pink (or should we say 'green') for Evergreen Trust's creative entrepreneurship in supporting SLF. Especially during these challenging economic times—it's been rough lately. To make a matchable donation by credit card, please call Evergreen Trust at 503-363-3950. *Gracias!*

CHURCHES HAVE A BLAST IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS. All summer long, including—but not limited to—National Night Out in August, churches partied with their neighbors. Some had block parties with music and bouncy houses. Others hosted neighborhood resource fairs, in which families could connect with ministries and agencies providing valuable services. Some churches organized fix-up brigades and volunteer-service days—for example West Hills Church, which sent teams to Family Building Blocks, Easter Seals, Union Gospel Mission, Harritt Elementary School, and the nearby apartment complex. And then there was Capital Park Wesleyan and Calvary Chapel, who showed “walk-in” movies on the sides of their buildings! Not to mention Salem Evangelical, which hosted a “Night of Fire” with hot rods and a dragster. *How far we have come as a Body of Christ since that summer we had to hire two trucks from Texas!* Churches are learning how to love their neighbors and reach out—not just for fun, but in times of need and with spiritual comfort, as well. We salute all the churches in Salem that are “going outside the four walls” to befriend their neighbors and their neighborhoods. The Gospel is not mere words; it is a life of love . . . lived out daily. Kudos to:

South-Central Keystone Area

Capital Park Wesleyan
Emmaus Community Church
New Life Community Fellowship

SW/Sprague Keystone Area

Gateway Foursquare Church
Cascade Hills/Foster Parents
South Salem Nazarene
Skyline Baptist Church

Keizer-McNary Keystone Area

Salem Mennonite/SE Keizer CC

McKay-East Salem Keystone Area

Salem First Free Methodist
Redeemer Lutheran Church
Calvary Chapel “Flix in the Stix”
Christian Center of Salem
Tabernaculo de Salem
Grace Community Church

North-Central Keystone Area

Salem Alliance/Boys & Girls Club
Salem Evangelical Church
Journey Church/Houck Middle School
Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran
Grace Baptist Church

West Salem Keystone Area

West Hills Community Church
Westgate Assembly of God

If we overlooked anyone, please email Carolyn@salemLF.org with info about your neighborhood event. Thanks!

SCHOOL BELL RINGS FOR CHURCH PARTNERSHIPS. It’s not just students who are getting ready for school on September 8. A growing number of congregations are also gearing up for the 2009/10 school year. There are a number of ways a church can support a neighborhood school: 1) mentors, 2) after-school volunteers, 3) classroom volunteers, 4) Reading Buddies or SMART readers, 5) official Business Partner, 6) donate musical instruments, 7) provide space for concerts and special events. If you attended the Fancy Dessert in May, you saw what happens when a neighborhood school and a nearby church work together. (DVD copies of the ‘Principal Phil/Pastor Larry’ story—otherwise known as the ‘Swegle/Christian Center’ story—are available if you email Sam@salemLF.org). A healthy community starts with healthy neighborhoods which, in turn, start with healthy families and healthy schools. Be part of the growing movement to transform Salem-Keizer, neighborhood by neighborhood. Pick the school nearest to your home. Or your church. Close by and convenient. If you have any troubles getting connected, contact us here at SLF. Your trusty area Lightning Rod will be happy to help!

A FANCY THANK-YOU TO FOUNDATIONS. Even though SLF’s funding comes mostly from private sources—individuals, families, businesses and faith-based partners—we also are blessed with support from a variety of local and regional Foundations. The Lightning Rods and the CaN Centers have proven to be strong candidates for foundation grants, and we will continue to seek such funding even as we work hard to expand and deepen our support from private sources. This month we express our fancy gratitude to the *Juan Young Trust* and the *Statesman-Journal/Gannett Foundation*. Each is providing support (\$5,000 and \$4,000 respectively) for the *Churches as Neighborhood (CaN) Centers Program*, which just graduated site #10 (Christian Center of Salem) and is launching Site #14 (Holy Cross Lutheran) in October. This fall we will be reporting to the Collins Foundation and The MJ Murdock Trust on our *City-as-Neighborhood Initiative*, for which we have a grant pending with the Oregon Community Foundation. Grants are great; private ongoing support is the real key to any non-profit’s sustainability. We treasure all gifts, large and small—thank you donor partners!

IMPORTANT DATES TO CALENDAR—

September 17—United Way Kickoff luncheon
September 22—Liberty House ‘Champions’ luncheon
September 25—KROC Center grand opening
September 30—Housewarming for remodeled Day Center

at Interfaith Hospitality Network.

October 15—People Can Change breakfast at Red Lion
October 29—Family Building Blocks ‘Dream Builders’ luncheon
April 30, 2010—SLF Fancy Dessert.