In housing at last, veteran looks forward to school, new relationship with books

Wendell Lewis knew by the age of 8 that something wasn’t right with him, and by 22 that he was an alcoholic. Now, with the help of St. Vincent de Paul’s Vet LIFT and a 12-step program, he is finally beginning to grasp the inner peace that eluded him for half a century.

In late September, Wendell moved into Vet LIFT housing, demonstrating the commitment to sobriety that can be the biggest hurdle to veterans struggling with mental illness and addiction. He shares a tidy apartment in a complex with vegetables growing lush in raised beds. He spends hours at the public library, absorbing information and planning his return to school where he hopes to expand upon his training as a peer-support specialist. His mind still races, but it’s on a positive track.

He is a far cry from the man who spent 25 years drinking and stealing to drink, spiraling downward as his military service and personal relationships failed, and his illicit book business thrived. People from all walks of life would pay half price for a brand-new $300 book, no questions asked.

Wendell’s first wake-up call came in 1990 after an extended period of intoxication. A 12-year-old who struggled in school told him, “You don’t look happy. You smoke those funny cigarettes.” “I asked myself, ‘Which one of us is learning disabled?’” Wendell remembered. He sobered up for the first time, but he couldn’t conduct business. “Stealing and recovery don’t go together,” he said. Another 14 years slipped by before Wendell moved into Vet LIFT, back page.

Angels Dinner for emergency services

It’s an irresistible deal: A tasty and affordable spaghetti dinner, great company, and uplifting accolades for those who grace the volunteer corps of St. Vincent de Paul with energy, expertise, and compassion.

Of course, it’s the Angel Dinner, set for Thursday, Nov. 6th at St. Mary’s Parish Hall, 1002 Charnelton, Eugene. All community members are welcome! Tickets are $5 for adults, $2.50 for kids 12 and under, and $20 for families of six or more.

For First Place Family Center

This second annual extravaganza will feature an all-new musical revue by Eugene’s legendary director Ed Rogozinzo and a cast of veteran performers, a brief but lively oral auction conducted by emcee and auctioneer Sid Voorhees, a silent auction, a sumptuous meal, and entertainment by tonight’s headliner, Vietnam vet and woodepecker Cabaret author Richard Heeney. Tickets are $75. Individual and business opportunities to treat friends and associates to a night of pure pleasure are available for $750. Individual tickets are $575.

Get ready for a real evening “on the town” Eugene-style and help support homeless families with children.

Turkey Drive

Holiday fare for low-income households

As you purchase meat for your household this holiday season, can you provide for one more? St. Vincent de Paul with energy, expertise, and compassion.

After marching through downtown Eugene to demonstrate solidarity with the poor on the Society of St. Vincent de Paul’s 175th anniversary, SVdP of Lane County is moving forward with a bevy of activities to entertain, inspire, and raise funds to assist those in need. For more information on these activities, call Rebecca or Tamara at 687-5820.

For more information on these activities, call Rebecca or Tamara at 687-5820.

Upcoming months abound with opportunities to enjoy, assist

We assist the poor & those in need of care, seeking out & utilizing every resource. Being mindful of the sanctity & dignity of all, any charitable work that advances those goals is within the mission of St. Vincent de Paul.

Earl McDonald led the way Sept. 27th as St. Vinnie’s supporters celebrated the agency’s worldwide anniversary.

St. Vinnie’s marks anniversary with Saturday Market crowd

Looking down from somewhere beyond the forest cathedrals he so loved, the late Senator Wayne Morse must have smiled Sept. 27 as people, dogs, drums and banners waving to celebrate the 175-year legacy of giving Vincent de Paul staff members and volunteers gathered with packed the stone-walled plaza that bears his name. St. Vinnie’s supports...
St. Vincent de Paul has been in Lane County for 55 years, but the spirit of caring has been here far longer. Our Agency is simply one of many catalysts for this caring. What we all share is the love for one another that calls us to dedicate ourselves and our resources. That is the spirit of this community and of St. Vincent de Paul.

This organization had humble roots — people like you and I who were called to actually do something about human need. That kind of caring, that love, is a powerful tool that transcends creed. When we care about each other in the way that this community cares, we are doing what we can to knit our community. A compassionate community is healthier and more sustainable than a community in which people simply don’t care.

For virtually my entire life, I have been blessed and happy to be associated with both St. Vincent and Lane County. I see the good that we do every day with help from diverse resources. Our combined efforts have given us all the gift of compassion. It is my pledge to you that St. Vincent de Paul will be here, shoulder to shoulder with this community, for the next 55 years and beyond.

So long as the choice is to care and love, St. Vincent de Paul is there also. Thank you!

Terrence R. McDonald
Executive Director

Don Lamb, 1937-2008:
Remembering a life lived in service

With great sadness and gratitude, St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County bids farewell to Don Lamb, a dedicated advisor and Vincentian whose involvement spanned three decades. Don died last May of cancer at his home in west Eugene. He was 71.

He is survived by his wife, Maryann, a son, Michael, and two grandchildren. His daughter, Jennifer, died unexpectedly within hours of her father’s passing. A joint ceremony held at St. Paul Church was attended by more than 300 people.

Don was the retired owner of a title company, a passionate advocate for special needs children, a longtime member of the St. Paul parish and conference, a recent member of the St. Paul Conference, and president/treasurer for the Archdiocesan Council of Portland. As the latter, he appealed to St. Vincent de Paul’s national hierarchy to retain the organization’s grassroots structure and worked to ensure the independent status of SVdP Lane County.

As a member of the Lane County Council’s Justice & Peace/Voice of the Poor Conference, Don lobbied tirelessly against so-called payday loans, ultimate in helping to put Oregon at the forefront of the movement for payday-loan reform. He also served as Oregon’s representative to the national Voice of the Poor Conference.

Don served on the Board of Directors of SVdP-Lane County, as Board chair, and advisor to its Manufacturing & Recycling, Housing, Emergency Services, and Retail operations. With Don as its tireless champion, SVdP-Lane County embraced innovation to accomplish recycling, affordable housing, and retail expansion.

Don was first a dedicated Vincentian on whose watch every proposal, every money-making endeavor, was analyzed for its capacity to fulfill the mission of assisting the poor and those in need of consolation. These people were never to be called clients, for that would imply inequality.

No one worked harder to fill gaps in the Night Shelter calendar or took more extra shifts when overnight volunteers were in short supply.

Just eager volunteer from the start, Don came to fully understand the work of St. Vincent de Paul when he joined a home-visiting team through the St. Mark Conference, according to Dennis Maricle, another long-time volunteer. When Don visited people in their homes — delivered beds to families sleeping on floors or a washer and dryer to an impoverished single men with a disabled teen in diapers — he returned more dedicated than ever that St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County must do better, work harder, to meet the needs of fellow travelers on this path called life.

“Don was respected by Vincentians both here and around the country for his deep spiritual values and his sharp perceptions,” said Terry McDonald, SVdP executive director. “He was a passionate advocate for those in need.”

Most importantly, Don held affluents of SVdP-Lane County to the Vincentian directive to see the face of Christ in every person, regardless of how blessed or how troubled. His reminders were frequent and firm.

Dennis Maricle recalled a basic premise of Vincentian work, which Don often cited at Council meetings: When you serve another person in charity, you are serving Jesus himself.

“It took me a while hearing Don repeat that before I could begin to say it myself without sounding phony,” Dennis said. “I owe Don a debt of gratitude for staying on message. “I think about it often.”

As we reflect now on this life lived in service, the image of Christ is crystal clear.

Said Terry McDonald, “Don’s wise counsel, deep passion, and fun sense of humor are deeply missed.”

Springfield, Veneta, move to affordable housing in 2009

The year 2009 will bring new options for folks of all ages seek- ing affordable housing in Lane County. Two St. Vincent de Paul projects are progressing on sched- ule. In Springfield, at 3rd and S, the Aster Apartments are rapidly taking shape and will ultimately provide 55 apartments for low-income persons age 62 and older. At the south end of Veneta, con- struction is under way for Heather Glen, 27 units of family-size rent- als and, later, four single-family homes that will be available for purchase. The apartments will be available to individuals and families with incomes at 30 percent of area median income or less.

Architect and general construc- tor for both projects are Anne DeLaney of Berglund-DeLaney Architects and MediL Construction, respectively. Ramping any setbacks, both the Aster Apartments and the Heather Glen apartments will be occupied by next spring. These are challenging times for developers so we feel fortu- nate that the Aster Apartments and Heather Glen are moving forward,” said Kristen Karle, housing developer for St. Vincent de Paul. “We anticipate that Lane County’s need for affordable housing will only grow.”

Thank you, Night Shelter

We encourage your comments or suggestions. Please address to
Judy Hunt, 200 6th St. Veneta, OR 97482 Phone: (541) 976-7268 e-mail: jhunt@svdp.or Visit St. Vincent’s Web site at: www.svdp.or

St. Vinnie’s Voice

Published by: St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, Inc.
Editor: Judy Hunt
Writers & Photographers: SVdP staff and volunteers
St. Vinnie’s Voice is published twice yearly as a supplement to St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, Inc.’s newsletter, “This Mission of Charity.”

We welcome your comments or suggestions. Please address to
Judy Hunt, 200 6th St. Veneta, OR 97482 Phone: (541) 976-7268 e-mail: jhunt@svdp.or
Visit St. Vincent’s Web site at: www.svdp.or
New college grads focus passion for early education on First Place kids

On a warm August afternoon, a half dozen children grace the playground at First Place Family Center. Their wintertime playmates have scattered for the summer – some to the homes of relatives or friends, some to live “upriver,” where a homeless family can find relative comfort and privacy during the summer months. Happily, as many as four, along with their families, made the leap from homelessness to stable housing. They’ll be back soon as students in First Place’s full-time Head Start program.

For now, this small group plays hard under the watchful eyes of two newcomers, their preschool teachers for the school year ahead. They are Staci Keiser and Aloysia Bennett, 2008 college graduates who emanate compassion for those whose childhood paths are vastly different from their own. Each can converse with an adult while troubleshooting safety concerns, encouraging and refereeing games, soothing hurt feelings, celebrating accomplishments, and mediating minor conflicts. Each is a credit to a new generation of teachers eager to make a difference for homeless children.

Aloysia, 22, is an Oregon State University graduate who first pursued design but was diverted by a mandatory back to school class oriented around childhood abuse. She paired that experience with work at Sally’s House, a shelter operated by the Salvation Army in Portland. There, and at St. Vincent’s day shelter serving homeless families with children in Eugene, she and her horse traveled the East Coast and South as she worked on her college degree. Ultimately her degree in sociology, earning a minor in social work, has it.”

“Children are encouraged to make good choices and have positive interactions with adults and peers,” he added. “Our teachers empower children to find their own solutions to conflicts or problems, and to share their feelings.

In the case of homeless children, readiness for school often transcends numbers, letters and sounds. Instead, the goals are development of self-management skills, self-care skills, and strong social skills, Jake said.

“Children are encouraged to”...

In addition to his duties as director, Jake spends up to 60 percent of his time in the classroom. With him, the new teachers, an afternoon aide, and a morning aide from EC Care, First Place’s therapeutically oriented child care center should accommodate as many as 20 children this school year, compared with the previous limit of 15.

A part of the U of O’s College of Education, EC Care provides early intervention and early childhood special education. Children in First Place’s Head Start program receive ongoing hearing and vision screenings, and wellness check-ups. Their families have the support of a Head Start Community Childcare Specialist who provides educational tools such as book and videos, and referrals to local resources that can help keep kids mentally and socially stable.

While older children at First Place attend school, not all of the younger ones stay at First Place during the day. Last year, some went to the Relief Nursery, and one was in Kindercare. All the while their parents are working, looking for work, taking classes, doing tasks such as laundry or meal preparation, or simply savoring a stress-free moment. At night, families in the Night Shelter program are transported to a participating church, or they drive to that church and spend the night together in their vehicle, in the security of the church parking lot.

“I love it,” she said. She re-declared her major and minor in education within the first four years, earning a degree in early childhood education.

In the Therapeutic Childcare Classroom, the new teachers bring to their work with children and families.

“I am an energetic, creative, and passionate teacher,” he said. “She is willing to be creative in finding different ways of reaching children, and she’s always full of good ideas and suggestions.

Aloysia is a fun, outgoing, and committed teacher. She always has time for the kids and wants them to be successful,”

For Aloysia, success boils down to ensuring that kids feel safe in an environment structured to help them learn.

“When kids feel safe, learning will happen,” she said.

Donations of children’s clothing and toys are always welcome at First Place Family Center, but time for children is equally important. Anyone with items or time to donate is welcome to call Jake Spavins at 541-342-7728.
Area shoppers, businesses join forces to provide busload of supplies for school

Sharon, left, and Esther of St. Vinnie's Division store represent a staff that went the extra mile to collect money for school supplies.

This year’s school-supply drive got a thumbs-up from, left to right, Joseph, 9, Samuel, 11, and Archie, 11.

Thanks to all who provided school supplies, money, and energy. You are appreciated!

The line of folks waiting for school supplies snaked across the street and out of sight early Aug. 27 as three district managers from Frito-Lay hoisted heavy boxes from their van to a cart in the Lindholm Center parking lot.

As Ryan Baucerman explained, his colleagues have a thing about “chipping in” on projects of common interest. So when a KMTR reporter mentioned St. Vincent de Paul’s annual school-supply drive to a friend in the Frito-Lay warehouse, enthusiasm filtered through the 30-member staff, resulting in the boxes of spiral notebooks, crayons and chips being delivered this day.

The invitation to give was still taped to one box. It read, “There are a lot of families in Lane County who are not as fortunate as we are. So please help if you can.”

Hundreds of Lane County residents responded to similar invitations on barrels, boxes and store counters this summer, generating enough school supplies, backpacks and cash donations to equip nearly 2,800 children for school.

“I am blown away by the generosity of the community this year,” said Lori King, volunteer coordinator for this year’s drive.

“Some have even created their own containers, posters and advertisements.” Among them was Oregon Community Credit Union, which sold die-cut backpacks designed by KMTR. OCCU’s West 11th branch staff went all out, however, keeping the lobby decorated for a month and wearing specially printed tee shirts that proclaimed, “Being nice matters.”

St. Vinnie’s thrift stores sold bus cutouts provided by Office Max, but the Division Ave. staff went the extra mile, displaying the buses in the shape of a life-size school bus.

Volunteers labored behind the scenes, organizing supplies and filling backpacks, sometimes into the evening. These included members of the Southtowne Rotary who joined Lori King for an evening of work and pizza.

“Most a group of people to work with,” she said. “A big thank you to Ben Mondragon for rounding them up to stuff backpacks.”

Volunteers also worked outside the Food Room, greeting families and directing kids to supplies appropriate for their grade level. It’s been a tough year financially for the O’Grady-Ford

A Gratefully Calculated
Thank You
To Our School-Supply Partners & Sponsors, & Their Generous Customers!

Bi-Mart
Eugene, Springfield, Junction City & Florence

Capella Market
Eugene

Costo
Eugene

Dollar Tree
West 11th, River Road, Junction City & Florence

Fred Meyer
Florence

Jerry’s Home Improvement Center
Eugene & Springfield

KMTR
Our media partner & designer of die-cut backpacks

Office Max
North Eugene & South Eugene

Oregon Community Credit Union
Eugene & Springfield

Pentagon Federal Credit Union
Eugene

Rite Aid
Florence

Southtowne Rotary
Eugene

St. Jude Church
Eugene

St. Vincent de Paul
retail stores & donation centers
Eugene, Springfield, Junction City & Florence

Extra credit is due OCCU’S West 11th branch staff, back from left, Jeannine Hamilton, Angie Dow, Becca Dissen, and Allison McClatchey; and front from left, Tim Walker, Zach Gard, and Marty Felts.

Student volunteers, from left, Miranda, 12, Amonie, 13, and Christian, 16, made sure kids got the right paper for their grade level.

Nancy Hughes packed supplies with Southtowne Rotary.

This year’s school-supply drive got a thumbs-up from, left to right, Joseph, 9, Samuel, 11, and Archie, 11.

Thanks to all who provided school supplies, money, and energy. You are appreciated!

The invitation to give was still taped to one box. It read, “There are a lot of families in Lane County who are not as fortunate as we are. So please help if you can.”

Hundreds of Lane County residents responded to similar invitations on barrels, boxes and store counters this summer, generating enough school supplies, backpacks and cash donations to equip nearly 2,800 children for school.

“I am blown away by the generosity of the community this year,” said Lori King, volunteer coordinator for this year’s drive. “Some have even created their own containers, posters and advertisements.” Among them was Oregon Community Credit Union, which sold die-cut backpacks designed by KMTR. OCCU’s West 11th branch staff went all out, however, keeping the lobby decorated for a month and wearing specially printed tee shirts that proclaimed, “Being nice matters.”

St. Vinnie’s thrift stores sold bus cutouts provided by Office Max, but the Division Ave. staff went the extra mile, displaying the buses in the shape of a life-size school bus.

Volunteers labored behind the scenes, organizing supplies and filling backpacks, sometimes into the evening. These included members of the Southtowne Rotary who joined Lori King for an evening of work and pizza.

“Most a group of people to work with,” she said. “A big thank you to Ben Mondragon for rounding them up to stuff backpacks.”

Volunteers also worked outside the Food Room, greeting families and directing kids to supplies appropriate for their grade level. It’s been a tough year financially for the O’Grady-Ford

A Gratefully Calculated
Thank You
To Our School-Supply Partners & Sponsors, & Their Generous Customers!

Bi-Mart
Eugene, Springfield, Junction City & Florence

Capella Market
Eugene

Costo
Eugene

Dollar Tree
West 11th, River Road, Junction City & Florence

Fred Meyer
Florence

Jerry’s Home Improvement Center
Eugene & Springfield

KMTR
Our media partner & designer of die-cut backpacks

Office Max
North Eugene & South Eugene

Oregon Community Credit Union
Eugene & Springfield

Pentagon Federal Credit Union
Eugene

Rite Aid
Florence

Southtowne Rotary
Eugene

St. Jude Church
Eugene

St. Vincent de Paul
retail stores & donation centers
Eugene, Springfield, Junction City & Florence

Extra credit is due OCCU’S West 11th branch staff, back from left, Jeannine Hamilton, Angie Dow, Becca Dissen, and Allison McClatchey; and front from left, Tim Walker, Zach Gard, and Marty Felts.

Student volunteers, from left, Miranda, 12, Amonie, 13, and Christian, 16, made sure kids got the right paper for their grade level.
**Picnic Supper of note as First Place benefit**

Inspired by a mother’s heart for homeless children and her daughter’s musical involvements, UO’s famed a cappella group Divisi rocked St. Mary’s Episcopal Church for a second time last spring, raising money for services to homeless families with children at First Place Family Center. Divisi provided the melodic final course for an evening that cast St. Vinnie’s staff and volunteers in roles ranging from chef to dishwasher.

Picnic Supper was cooked up in 2007, one year after Divisi came into the national a cappella limelight during a season recounted by Pitch Perfect, written by author Mickey Rapkin in 2007, one year after Divisi came into the national a cappella limelight during a season recounted by Pitch Perfect, written by author Mickey Rapkin in 2007, one year after Divisi came into the national a cappella limelight during a season recount...
Vet Lift II opening doubles capacity to serve veterans

Dean Campbell lived “on the river” for three months after he came to Lane County nearly 14 years ago. With the help of the Veterans Administration and other groups, he rebuilt his life and now serves with the Springfield VFW Post 3665 Color Guard.

So it was with special pride that Dean stood at attention May 21st during the opening ceremony for Vet Lift II, St. Vincent de Paul’s second housing complex for chronically homeless veterans.

“It was organizations like this that helped me get to this point,” he said. “But things like this (veterans’ housing) didn’t exist when I came in.”

A partnership of SVP, the VA, the City of Eugene, Lane County Human Services, and state and federal funders, Vet Lift II brings an additional 12 housing units to a program that provides intensive case management and many other forms of support for up to two years. Vet Lift I provided an initial 13 units.

Among the beneficiaries are Bryan and Jennifer, homeless off and on for five years before being tapped by the VA as Vet Lift prospects. They completed the required transitional courses to clean and sober living, and clear thinking.

And in May they moved into their newly renovated apartment.

“Thank you!” was their heartfelt message to the approximately 70 people who attended the Vet Lift opening.

Without Vet Lift, their neighbor, Joe, says he’d still be on the street, embroiled in “ordeals and conflicts.”

“This is a first step towards getting my life back in order,” he said.

Now, with Vet Lift II tenants starting to harvest a raised-bed garden and enjoying the fellowship of their new community, asbestos removal is under way at a neighboring complex, which will provide an additional 10 units of housing plus a meeting area for use by Vet Lift participants and staff. It will bring to 34 the number of housing units set aside specifically for chronically homeless veterans in Eugene.

Brian and Jennifer are surrounded by Veterans Administration representatives, St. Vince’s staff members, and members of the Springfield VFW Post 3665 Color Guard as the Vet Lift II opening gets under way with a flag salute.

Old Masters inspire personal renaissance, memorial to Service Station friends

From a place of honor at St. Vincent de Paul’s Eugene Service Station, soulful eyes keep watch, each pair reflecting the spirit of a departed comrade. Their own lives lived hard and lost them early. Some passed without their families ever learning their fates.

The common thread is their place in the community of the Eugene Service Station (ESS), St. Vincent’s day shelter for homeless adults. There, these friends did not slip away unnoticed. In fact, they are commemorated in a collage of hand-painted portraits worthy of placement in the finest gallery.

Each small masterpiece is the work of George Lstrapes, 61, a commercial painter who has undergone a renaissance of his own since relocating from Texas to Eugene eight years ago. Despite an increasing sensitivity to the associated chemicals, George worked some and was frequently called upon to do faux finishes. He soon realized that his work looked increasingly like real art.

George turned to local resources, including the Eugene Public Library, for insight and inspiration. In the midst of extensive study, he adopted as personal heroes Diego Rivera and Johannes Vermeer. He practiced mostly...
George just chalks it up to one of those times of a mortgage scam. Now, they credit George with sparing them from being victims of the deal. Now, they credit George for all the little pieces. "I just want to come back to the Eugene Service Station," George said. "That the Borwigs are in St. Vincent de Paul in the San Francisco Bay area," Mike said. "I just want to come back to the course next week and try it all over again."

"A ‘come-backer’— that’s what we’re asking of all our great sponsors and players in 2008. Come back in 2009 and bring your friends as we focus on a hope for tomorrow -- our children."

For the Wonderful Items Donated to the Golf for Kids Silent Auction, THANK YOU...

AAA Travel Agency • Beehive Rental Bob Dolechek • Brad’s Specialized Service Cascade Health Centers • Cash and Carry Chinook Winds • Coos Country Club Corvallis Country Club • Creekside Golf Club Crux Rock Gym • Dandelion Flowers & Gifts Diamond Woods Golf • Dick Procarione Drift Inn B&B • Elite Car Bath Emerald Valley Golf • Excalibur Cutlery Fiddler’s Green • Hinman Vineyards Hult Center • IseNeat Jerry’s Home Improvement • Jiffy Market Lube-It USA • NW Natural Ocean Dunes Golf Links • PacificSource Paradigm Multimedia • Pizza Pete’s Roadhouse • Roseburg Country Club Starbucks • Steve Kiggore Supreme Bean • Sy’s Pizza Tokatee Golf Club • Track Town Pizza Westside Car Wash • Willamalane

For Assistance sought for ‘transitional’ vets

On an average Wednesday night, up to two dozen veterans of all ages pack a small apartment at the edge of Eugene’s Whitaker neighborhood. Others stand outside the door, preferring space and the evening air to the close quarters. All are striving to preserve their lives by complying with requirements of the Vet Lift Transitions program, and all hold onto the hope that one day they will qualify for housing. In the meantime, they live in a room or in a tent on a bridge, said St. Vincent de Paul’s Dan Temple, a Vet Lift counselor. As the weather turns, daily concerns for personal safety are compounded by the probability of cold and illness.

This growing group of veterans has many needs, among them blankets, sleeping bags, new thermal underwear, etc., and perhaps healthy snacks for the Wednesday meetings and an occasional potluck-style meal. Monetary donations would be used according to need. Ideally, such involvement would lead to formation of an advisory board to help ensure that the needs of these “transitional” veterans are met. Anyone interested in helping Vet Lift’s transitional group is asked to contact Dan Temple at 687-5820 x166.

I Rememberled himself inspired by the anonymity of people whose lives had been noted only in moments of silence. Not every coincidence is pictured. Some of the 33 are commemorated in a few carefully scripted words. "A tear and a smile for Angie Wilson. “Leo Shorty Parrish, never a bad day."

But each depiction conveys a glint of energy and humor that somehow says to the viewer, “I’m in the better place.”

Other tiles depict eager fish or graceful lilies, or simply list names. George’s venture into classical art brought unintended consequences. He met a lady in the library’s art section whose parents were contemplating buying a house on what George considered unrealistic terms. While they didn’t necessarily appreciate his caution about adjustable-rate mortgages, they opted out of the deal. Now, they credit George with sparing them from being victims of a mortgage scam. George just chalks it up to one more bonus of an afterlife opened to him by art, and to his colleagues at the Eugene Service Station.

The modern age fractures the family structure. George explained. “This place is a surrogate family for all the little pieces.”

HBA’s first Ramp-A-Thon aids mobility for five Lane households

Did you attend the Olympic Trials but miss the Ramp-A-Thon? Three Lane County households didn’t, and as a result wheelchair users are finding their comings and goings easier and safer as they travel on sturdy ramps custom built on Sept. 13th by members of the Home Builders Association of Lane County (HBA). Two more households were scheduled to receive ramps in the coming weeks.

The Ramp-A-Thon concept caught the attention of HBA member Mike Gansen who opted for a class on philanthropy in construction at a trade meeting in New Orleans. Back home, other HBA members took to the idea and launched their project based on a model used by colleagues in Seattle. In this, its 1st year of Ramp-A-Thon, the Seattle group completed 17 ramps. So in its first year, five ramps will be an excellent start for the local HBA, which relied on members Rebecca Larson, a St. Vinnie’s staff member, to identify potential recipients. They were located in Eugene, Springfield, Croswell, and Veneta.

Five HBA-member firms, individuals and other volunteers committed to a day of construction, and local businesses pitched in with building material and cash. At the Eugene home of Herb and Linda Borwig, builder Mike Gansen applied skills imparted to him by his father to build a ramp that might otherwise cost as much as $4,000. He was assisted by Mike Dotson, a Gansen Construction employee.

That the Borwigs are in St. Vincent de Paul housing was all the more satisfying. “My father was a big supporter of St. Vincent de Paul in the San Francisco Bay area,” Mike said. It’s one thing to do a good deed; it’s another to be recognized for it.
by, and Wendell once again found himself taking stock. "I was a crook. My health was fail-
ing," he said. "I wanted to sober up. I wanted a life."
He quit the book business for good, and worked on his addiction. With the help of a 12-step program he has been clean and sober for nearly 15 months.

A Midwest native, Wendell came to Oregon to pursue an Internet relationship but found himself in and out of shelters as he had since 2006. Even in sobriety, his "clashes" with others netted an invitation to leave the Mission, but he was there long enough to learn about veterans’ resources, including Vet LIFT, which provides a transitional program, housing and case management to supplement the services of the VA. He started "doing what they said," which includes being active in the community. With light at the end of his tunnel, he moved in with a friend and waited.

And in September, when a caller asked when he might be able to move into Vet LIFT housing, Wendell replied, "Give me an hour." Dan Temple is elated at Wendell’s progress. As a case manager for Vet LIFT, he is a cheerleader for sobriety, community involvement, and goal-setting, and he sees in Wendell a great resource for other veterans. "Wendell is a great guy, very intelligent," he said. "He wants a job, and he wants to give back."

"I want to work with veterans who are homeless and have mental-health problems like mine," he said. "I know what it’s like from my viewpoint, and I know they’ll go through days that are similar in nature."

In the meantime, Wendell will continue his pursuit of all things positive.

"Any day that you’re alive, so-
ber, not in jail, and have a roof over your head," he said, "that’s a damn good day to live."