The Annex: A Tool for Empowering Families

Permanent Site Doubles Night Shelter Capacity and the Need for Food

Following a neighborhood ice-cream social on Sept. 28 and grand opening festivities the morning of Oct. 1, the first occupants of the First Place Family Center Annex brought in items needed for the inaugural overnight stay. “The Annex,” as it’s called, is a permanent home for the Night Shelter program that has rotated families among host sites for more than a quarter century. The location at West Amazon Pkwy. and Fox Hollow Rd. is a convenient yet semi-secluded site that will be open to families from early evening to early morning. With the Annex comes the capacity to serve twice as many families -- 20 total.

Initially, families were admitted a few at a time to avoid overwhelming any one aspect of the new routine. Faith community partners continue to provide meals and evening entertainment. Other groups -- work teams, civic organizations, youth groups, etc.-- are welcome to participate.

The Annex was made possible by an anonymous donor who funded the property’s purchase on the condition it be used as a family shelter. This was not lost on more than a dozen families who were first to move in. They included couples, single parents, a pregnant mom, a grandma, and several teens. The families expressed joy and gratitude, and also relief from the temporary burden of being homeless with children.

“Overwhelming,” wrote the 38-year-old single parent of children ages 9, 8 and 6. The parent of a soon-to-be 5-year-old wrote, “I’m so thankful that we don’t have to sleep outside anymore.”

A couple with a 7-year-old, who escaped “gangs, drugs and heat” in California expecting to find employment and housing in Oregon, wrote, “Thank you for the roof over our heads instead of sleeping in the truck.”

From the time families start arriving at the Annex each evening, the presence of children is evident both outside on its spacious grounds, and inside where kids have their own play room in addition to community living and dining rooms. Arriving each evening is reminiscent of arriving at Grandma’s house. A Night Shelter stay lasts up to 90 days. Such consistency was one of the most compelling arguments for The Annex, and one that Night Shelter Coordinator Beckey Beck thinks families appreciate most. “The most noticeable difference is that instead of moving to a new location every week, the families, and especially the children, know where they are going to be each night.”

“I am so thankful that we don’t have to sleep outside anymore.

-- Mom with daughter, almost 5

For Eileen Chanti, SVDP Youth and Family Services director, it’s all about providing the wraparound services necessary to stabilize families and get them moving forward – something that’s easier to accomplish with one Night Shelter location.

“Family stability comes by way of a drop-in preschool, parenting education, case management and goal setting. It’s a multi-faceted approach to addressing families’ barriers and empowering them to move forward,” she said.

More information is available by contacting SVDP Youth and Family Services Director Eileen Chanti at 541-342-7728 or by email at eileen.chanti@svdp.us.

Donate to First Place Family Center at www.svdp.us
Dear friends,

There was a funny synchronistic moment this past summer when the attractive glass Innovation Award arrived in my office. St. Vincent de Paul was recognized by the Association of Oregon Recyclers for our efforts to keep housewares, clothing, books and other items in use for as long as possible.

I recognized that recycled glass because our crew at the Aurora Glass foundry had created it, one of many products they make turning old windows into new awards, architectural art, glass bowls and garden art. What goes around sometimes really does come around. We were humbled to be honored by a state-wide group known globally for innovative recycling efforts. It’s a tribute to our hard-working and creative staff whose goal is making sure our many social service programs in the community have the revenue they need to operate.

We also received accolades from the University of Oregon’s School of Public Policy, Planning and Management earlier this year. They recognized our Outstanding Service to Oregon and specifically our efforts to build community coalitions that put a floor under people in crisis and provide them with tools to find work, affordable housing and the simple dignity of self-sufficiency.

My talented staff had the last laugh this fall when Wellsprings Friends School roasted me at their annual Toast ‘N’ Roast fundraiser. It was rewarding to help the school that provides an important educational option for students in our community. Who knew my love of the history of concrete would be so entertaining? As we turn our attention to the growing needs in our community, let’s remember that we are stronger together, that when we alleviate suffering, everybody wins.

By the way, you know you’re a real Oregonian when you’ve been sketched by James Cloutier!

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**When We Alleviate Suffering, Everybody Wins**

Eileen Sigler joined St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County as its first Chief Development Officer in mid-September. A Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE), she brings with her two decades of nonprofit fundraising experience and is excited to continue her life mission to promote philanthropy in the community where she lives and works.

Eileen, alongside her husband and two labs, relocated to beautiful Eugene from San Diego, Calif. on April 1st (no joke). “We had daffodils and tulips galore in our yard when we moved here. There is now a carpet of red fall leaves throughout our neighborhood. Leaving hot and dry southern California for seasonal treats like this? I couldn’t be more thrilled!”

Eileen grew up in a family that modeled stewardship by reaching out to help the less fortunate in San Diego. Coincidentally, her grandfather was a Klamath Falls circuit preacher who traveled from home to home in the early 1900s to serve the people in his parish; Eileen’s Dad served as the minister of music for San Diego churches over a span of 30 years. “Reaching out to care for others was something our family always did together,” said Sigler. “My mom and dad were always saying, ‘we have been blessed with a lot and to s/he whom much is given, much is expected!’ A career in fundraising would have seemed a likely choice but honestly, I kind of simply fell into it.”

Her fundraising career began with a HUD grant to establish a transitional housing program for single homeless men sleeping on the patio of a church in San Diego. She feels joining SVDP to work on behalf of the homeless and our community’s most vulnerable people has brought her full circle back to that first inspiring event.

In meetings with new Eugene friends, colleagues, and community leaders, Eileen witnessed a tremendous passion and determination to address homelessness here in Eugene. When she met with Terry McDonald, Pete Kerns, and staff at SVDP, she realized the opportunity presented a tremendous platform for working with donors and funders to ensure a legacy of hope for families living in poverty.

Sigler says that in the 22 years she has been engaged in the nonprofit industry, she never saw an organization quite like SVDP – one that works with caring community members to carve out solutions for homelessness and creates a paradigm for enormous success in entrepreneurial endeavors. “SVDP goes way beyond our well-known thrift stores. Our reuse, recycle, and upcycling businesses have gained support from prominent national organizations that allow us to train other nonprofits to create social enterprises.”

Over her tenure, Eileen has fundraised for agencies that provide child abuse treatment and prevention, family self-sufficiency services, support wild and humane animal welfare and, most recently, scientific marine research. She has been an instructor with the University of California San Diego Extension program and The Sanford Institute for Philanthropy in La Jolla. “I am grateful for the time and treasures shared with me by mentors. I enjoy giving back by promoting best practices, ethics, and by sharing my successes and failures, which help others achieve success in fundraising.”

Eileen has a unique past. Her childhood was full of singing, dancing, and artistic endeavors. She led the entertainment programs for two resort hotels in Greece over seven years, has a degree in visual arts and biology at UCSD, and as a single mom raised her daughter to become a rocket scientist (really!).

Stated Sigler, “I am looking forward to working alongside our community members and partners who know the fulfillment of sharing their gifts to bless others. Please reach out - I would love to meet you and hear your ideas about creating an even brighter future for our community.”

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**Coming Full Circle: Back to Family Roots, Service to Others**

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Streaming live from the First Place Annex with Rick Dancer, Chief Development Officer Eileen Sigler.
SVDP’s Dusk to Dawn Opens on Hwy 99N With Capacity for 115

Egan Warming Center Seeks Volunteers, Additional Sites

Tent camps have been in the news a lot. St. Vincent de Paul’s successful Dusk to Dawn program for adults went into operation for a fourth season on Nov. 1 with capacity for 115 adults. Meanwhile, organizers of the Egan Warming Center (EWC) prepared to go on standby Nov. 15 and will be ready to open when the overnight temperature is forecast to be 29 degrees or colder.

The original Dusk to Dawn is a collaborative effort of SVDP and the City of Eugene. The program is headquartered at St. Vincent de Paul’s Lindholm Center which houses the Eugene Service Station (ESS). Dusk to Dawn clients are unhoused individuals who receive services at the ESS including meals, showers and laundry, and who received their Dusk to Dawn beds in a lottery. Names not drawn in the first round remain eligible for beds that come available when existing clients don’t show for two nights in a row.

Situated on the east side of Hwy 99N, between retail businesses and the railroad tracks, the Dusk to Dawn facility consists of a half dozen military-style tents set on raised platforms, and another tent for check-in and an evening movie. After the ESS closes, clients walk less than a quarter mile to the site. They return to the ESS by 7:30 a.m., leaving the Dusk to Dawn site secured for the day.

The site is equipped with electricity, portable toilets and propane heaters. It will operate through May 2019.

Named for Maj. Thomas Egan who froze to death in Eugene in 2008, the EWC needs volunteers and additional sites. Clients arrive by bike, on foot or via the EWC shuttle. They receive snacks and a meal, and sleep on mats in a church sanctuary or hall.

Trained volunteers are needed for a variety of tasks including set-up, registration, food service, cleanup and takedown. Required training is provided.

Last season, the EWC activated 24 nights and sheltered 1,687 individuals from life-threatening cold. More information at: www.eganwarmingcenter.com or by email at eganinfo@eganwarmingcenter.com.

Donate to the Egan Warming Center at www.svdp.us

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Social Service Office’s Golden Girl Had a Heart for Old Men and Cats

Some people have a hard time asking for help. The stern countenance of Iris Mace probably did little to calm their nerves as they approached her desk inside St. Vincent de Paul’s Social Service Office at 456 Hwy 99N in Eugene.

Iris’s pointed questions and no-nonsense demeanor belied her heart of gold, love of cats, and willingness to spend three decades of her considerable golden years hearing the woes of folks whose fortunes were different from her own.

Iris listened deadpan to unspeakable troubles and humble requests for essential human needs. She contemplated how those needs might be met, either with resources at hand or in cooperation with St. Vincent de Paul conference volunteers. By the end of the encounter, whether or not help was available, everybody felt better and Iris had that certain twinkle in her eye.

She was especially pleased to assist elderly men and any cat that crossed her path. The men, in particular, appreciated Iris’s old-school sensibilities.

As for the cats that frequented Iris’s parking space – well, they knew she was the one with the cat food.

Staff honored Iris at the Angel Dinner, and it was like pulling teeth to get her there. She was honored with a huge box of yarn donated by Petersen-Arne.

In those days Iris kept needlework in her lap and sent a steady supply of handmade hats to the Eugene Service Station next door.

Iris passed away on August 18, 2018. She had given up her Social Service Office duties a couple of years earlier, saying the effort was too much. By then she was pushing 90.

That speaks well for her jewelry, an ancient Egyptian symbol for life. Near as we can tell, Iris volunteered solely out of the goodness of her heart. She took religion with the same grain of salt she did many of the stories told across her desk, and she welcomed a debate.

Of course, that doesn’t stop our Executive Director Terry McDonald from getting in the last word. “Even though she didn’t believe in them,” he said, “Iris was an angel.”

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Thank you to our recently retired Board members:
Ruth Duemler
Greg Ilg

St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, Inc. Est. 1955
Saginaw MHP: ‘Serving People’s Greatest Needs’

Twenty years ago, Brandon Gee was hired as a meter reader for Emerald People’s Utility District (EPUD). For the next nine years, his monthly route included the Saginaw Mobile Home Park with its motley assemblage of trailers, campers and tarps situated among crumbling or non-existent infrastructure. “It was not one of my favorite places to go,” said Gee who has since moved to EPUD energy services. “So, to see this happen… for St. Vincent’s to make the effort… you’re happy for the tenants and for the community.”

“This” refers to the diligent effort by SVDP over nearly two years to acquire and rehabilitate the park, and to preserve or upgrade what affordable housing remains at the quiet crossroads in south Lane County. Area residents, partners and community representatives gathered in the sunshine October 12 near a brand new, freshly bark-mulched playground to admire what’s been accomplished at the Saginaw Mobile Home Park, and to hear what’s planned.

Recent history indicates strong incentive among mobile-home park owners to sell to developers rather than upgrade long-established properties, especially those with outdated units and failing infrastructure. Most mobile home park residents would find it difficult or impossible to remain in their communities if their parks were closed.

That’s true at Saginaw, which now has the best of both worlds – new ownership with an eye on improving the park and the lives of its tenants.

For winter, Saginaw residents can look forward to a working septic system and a roadway that’s free of mud and water-filled potholes. Unsalvageable mobiles have been replaced with donated, rehabilitated units. In addition to the playground, a resident-services/park-manager’s office features restrooms, showers, laundry facilities and a small kitchen.

The septic upgrade was a big plus in itself, said Cottage Grove Mayor Jeff Gowing, adding “Saginaw isn’t in town, but it is in our community. I’m glad somebody finally stepped in and did the right thing… made the park livable again.”

The playground features a rocket-like structure capped in periwinkle that points skyward next to the Resident Services-Property Management center.

Eventually, the energy output from a new solar array will offset electricity costs for the residents, thanks to a partnership with the Bonneville Environmental Foundation, Advanced Energy Systems, the Oregon Department of Energy and EPUD. EPUD’s Board updated policies to allow such savings pass-throughs.

Mayor Dave Stram of Creswell saw plenty of the Saginaw park while serving as a local pastor for more than 30 years. “We saw what happened and the terrible conditions,” he said. “I am reminded of the words: Whatever you have done unto the least of my brethren, you have done that for me. That’s what’s being done here, serving people’s greatest needs.”
The Myrtlewood Adds Housing in Springfield

Set against matching gray clouds and among red trees, The Myrtlewood towered over a crowd of appreciative affordable-housing advocates and soon-to-be tenants who gathered Oct. 9 to celebrate its completion. The Myrtlewood is located near 10th and Main Street in Springfield and adds 35 affordable units in an attractive, energy-efficient building.

The festivities took place on an outdoor plaza named in honor of Virgil Heidecker, a longtime member of the St. Vincent de Paul Board of Directors and St. Mark SVDP Conference.

Following opening speeches and the “ribbon” cutting, guests wandered throughout the building, taking in the community spaces on the ground floor and the new units on each floor. The Myrtlewood has an on-site manager and a resident services coordinator whose purpose is to build community, make referrals and ensure tenant success. Case managers from Mainstream Housing provide wrap-around services to tenants living with disabilities.

The Myrtlewood
Partners
Bergsund Delaney
Architecture & Planning, PC
Meili Construction
Oregon Housing and Community Services
Enterprise Community Partners
Wells Fargo Bank NA
Eugene-Springfield HOME Consortium
City of Springfield
Economic Development Agency
Donation from Warren Miller

The Myrtlewood is less than six blocks from the Royal Building. The combined complexes provide about 70 SVDP affordable units in downtown Springfield.

Presenters of a ribbon of good wishes for The Myrtlewood and its tenants, front to back, Leslie Seese, Tammy Henry, and Dale Seese, with the Church of the Brethren, the original property owners.

Share Your Holiday Joy!

Folks of all ages are on St. Vinnie’s list because they live in our housing or participate in a SVDP housing program. Will you -- perhaps with your family, faith community, civic club or co-workers -- provide requested items or a few specially selected surprises to an individual or family this holiday season?

Call our Holiday Joy staff at 541-743-7147

Donate to SVDP at www.svdp.us.

The Bill Barr Golf Classic

All It Takes Is A Heart for Kids

$49,000 raised in 2018!

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For Connections Dad, Calm is a Call Away

Kurtis Dillon makes no secret of the mental health challenges that got him labeled as a troublemaker early on and led to a struggle with methamphetamine addiction starting at age 13. Now 42, he totes the line of positive thinking and sobriety with the help of several social service programs including St. Vincent de Paul’s Connections Transitional Housing program and Case Manager Sonya Spencer.

On an eventful day, Sonya might field a dozen phone calls from this client. Whether he gets an answer or leaves a message, Kurtis is relieved enough to carry on. These days that’s about all he needs.

What compels Kurtis to call his case manager at the first hint of anxiety? In this case, it’s Raelynn, his nearly 3-year-old baby and the center of his universe.

“I have beat down every door and forced myself through programs,” he said. “With social anxiety it’s difficult to deal with people, but I have this child depending on me. She needs me. I am not losing her.”

Kurtis was clean for 12 years when he moved to Eugene, found two jobs, and purchased a mobile home. Then, he met his baby’s mother and life unraveled to the point where they became homeless. They rallied but eventually parted ways, leaving Kurtis and the baby under his supervision of the Department of Human Services. Kurtis’s determination was so genuine that his DHS case manager testified on his behalf in his successful bid for full custody.

His case manager maintains leverage, however, should Kurtis slip up. “I will always be on her radar,” he said.

He and the baby were accepted into Willamette Family Treatment’s newly-opened Dads’ House. They were fourth in and second to graduate, then wound up in the only housing they could access: a dilapidated trailer with no running water, on someone’s property who didn’t want them there. The case managers who visited lobbied in earnest for SVDP’s Connections and case-managed housing where Kurtis and Raelynn have lived for more than a year.

Connections provides up to two years of transitional housing to families that were previously homeless, and case management to address their personal barriers. Kurtis experienced “ADHD, anxiety disorder, social anxiety, chronic pain, manic depression,” to name a few. He stayed in touch with his treatment providers at Willamette Family Treatment. After a long period of trial and adjustment, he was prescribed an effective mix of medications.

The baby is enrolled at the Relief Nursery where she receives services for her own special needs. She and her dad were accepted into Homes For Good housing and are making plans to relocate even though they could stay in Connections another eight months. Once moved, they’ll be closer to family who have been instrumental in Kurtis’s success.

As case management goes, it will be an early end to an easy gig for SVDP’s Sonya Spencer. She provided gift cards and helped Kurtis prepare his resume. But mostly, she has been a sounding board. “When I’m ready to have a breakdown, she allows me to call and bug her,” he said.

“But no matter what happens, no matter what I have to do — even if it makes my mind boggle, I’m not going to lose my child.”
Create holiday memories for yourself and loved ones by taking action to help others.

**Turkey Trot**

Packet Pick-Up & Pre-Registration  
**Wed., Nov. 21,** Eugene Running Company  
10:15am-2:30pm & 2:15pm-6:30pm

Race Registration  
**Thurs., Nov. 22,** Maurie Jacobs Park  
6:30am-11:30am

**Holiday Food Box Packing**  
Wed-Fri, December 12, 13, 14  
Atkinson Food Room at the back of the Lindholm Center, 456 Hwy 99N, Eugene;  
10:00am-4:00pm any day or every day!

**Continuing Opportunities**  
at SVDP’s Lindholm Center  
456 Hwy 99N (at Elmira Rd.), Eugene

**Food Room Attendant**  
Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays  
9:30am-2:30pm  
Atkinson Food Room at the back of the Lindholm Center, 456 Hwy 99N, Eugene

**Kitchen Help**  
Eugene Service Station, shifts are  
7:30am-10:30am and 10:30am-1:30pm

**Laundry/Shower Attendant**  
Eugene Service Station, shifts are  
8:00am-12:15pm and noon-4:15pm

For more information: ashely.hensley@svdp.us  
or call 541-743-7147

Our dedicated concessionaires worked every  
UO home football game this season  
and raised about $10,000  
for First Place Family Center. A celebration is in order!

**Eugene’s Best Secondhand Shop**  
as reported in the Nov. 8, 2018 edition of  
**Eugene Weekly.** Thanks, readers!
Billy Kiser will tell you that no matter what, you can’t give up for the sake of your kids. After weeks in Night Shelter and the Overnight Parking Program, this family is housed.