

St. Vincent de Paul

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Society of St. Vincent de Paul - Rogue Valley District

Letter from the President



Kathy Begley, St Vincent de Paul President, Rogue Valley District

Written by Kathy Begley

Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I sometimes wonder what it is that motivates people to Volunteer their time, talent and treasure to the least of our brothers and sisters. Our Catholic Faith calls us to have compassion for all God's children and to help without judgement or criticism. Sounds simple...but it is not always easy to do.

It was just about 9 years ago that I found my way to St. Vincent de Paul...I manned the greeter

desk; it was the start of an amazing Journey.

As I reflect on my time at Vinny's and all the good things that I have seen happen, I can not help but see the hand of God guiding our work. I would love to take credit for some of those moments, but I am just an imperfect human being and, most important, a child of God.

I guess you could say that "I heard the Lord calling me in the night"! Three years ago while discerning taking the Presidency, I struggled with my doubts of my ability to

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Letter from the President continued...

lead and do a good job. I was driving one morning, and I remembered that, *“if the Lord brings you to it, He will bring you through it.”* I know that the Lord has been by my side at every turn, and I am so thankful that God loves me too!

Thank you to the many volunteers that have shared so much of their lives with me and supported me in my decision making. The years have flown by. So many wonderful memories and a few very sad days, but together we were able to be a force for good in our community.

I look forward to continuing with my work at SVDP as Past President and contributing wherever I can, with the help of our Lord. Please continue to keep St. Vincent de Paul in your prayers.

May God bless you and your families with peace joy and love.

Kathy Begley

Christmas at St Vinny's

Written by Dennis Mihocko

Christmas at St Vinny's is always a busy and blessed time. Earlier in December the St Vincent volunteer party was held with great food provided by Charlotte Martinson and her fabulous kitchen volunteers. It was delicious, abundant and greatly appreciated. President Kathy Begley was our emcee and she deftly kept the party moving along. Music was provided by Friday's cook, recorded musician and songwriter Scott Perry, along with his accomplice Buzz Mann. We also were entertained by violinist Mickey Lufkin, who

played Christmas favorites.

Raffle prizes were given away, as well as, the singing of Len Hebert's Twelve Hundred Days of Christmas, which Len actually wrote (Well maybe not actually, though it is his favorite song). There were other games and fun things to do especially the socializing which we do so well. It was a Merry Christmas.

On Christmas Eve, Boy Scout Troop 5 from Eastwood Baptist Church, served a wonderful brunch to more than one hundred people to their delight and festive surroundings. It added a feel of "home for the holidays" when so many have neither a home nor a family.

The annual Christmas Day Dinner was provided by our faithful friends at El Molcajete Restaurant with hundreds served a wonderful Mexican dinner to everyone's delight. Presents were given to all by Santa's Elves Wayne and Trish Trefren, Scott and Brenda Gustaveson and Marta Wilson. Everyone was served thanks to our volunteer coordinator Fran Cox Davis and pictures were taken by Past President Socorro as she greeted and chatted with the guests. A good time was had by all. Toys and a large donation were brought to us by Brother Speed motorcycle club and received by President Kathy Begley. It was a blessing to have Brother Speed help make Christmas at St Vincent special again this year. Another wonderful Christmas season made possible by all the volunteers who follow the Lord's command to serve one another. Thanks to all those who made it so. Amen.

Shelter Playground

Written by Kathy Fisher

Writer's note: shelter residents names were changed to protect their privacy.

The words fun and homeless shelter are usually not synonymous, but thanks to a grant from The McDonald Foundation, they are now.

Swings, a tube slide, side-by-side traditional slide, a climbing wall and an upstairs play house with a toy kitchen will soon be erected next to the St. Anthony Shelter. The area was recently excavated and filled with 12-inches of bark. A 7-foot fence with privacy slats surrounds the new playground.

The children in the shelter are excited about the prospect of having their own play area. "It will be just for us," says 7-year-old Trisha Bennett. "My mom says it's because we are special." Most, including Ronald McDonald, agree.

"It's a godsend," says shelter manager Nick Koutsouras. The old playground was dilapidated and did not have the proper ground cover." The kids used to play outside with bikes and balls, but having an enclosed space with state-of-the-art equipment will really give them a boost." Nick adds.

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El Molcajete crew served a wonderful Mexican dinner on Christmas Day.



Vicky Weiss, SVDP Volunteer; Debra Ingram, Retail Bank Manager; John Engelhardt, OLM Conference President

First Interstate Bank

Written by Vicky Weiss

Okay, I am just going to say it: there is just something about our Ashland branch of First Interstate Bank. From the very first time I walked in, I was struck by the “décor” at the bank. It seemed then (and has been confirmed nearly every time since) that fun decorations are prominently in place, all of them urging customers to contribute to one fund drive or another, benefiting a local non-profit.

If you have seen the television ads for First Interstate, you are familiar with the emphasis they place on community. Of course, all banks in our area are involved in one way or another with various charitable activities. But there is something different about First Interstate in Ashland—and it isn’t just that Our Lady of the Mountain Conference recently received a check from First Interstate. It is more than that.

I have never before or since walked into a

business and found the manager—in this case, Retail Bank Manager, Debra Ingram—making posters that urge customers to contribute school supplies for needy youngsters. Or find huge displays advertising the bank as the place to drop off food for the local Food Bank. When I first introduced myself to Debra and identified myself as a representative from St. Vincent de Paul, she greeted me enthusiastically with, “Oh, I was just up in Medford, dropping off a bunch of coats at St. Vincent de Paul.”

Whether it is advertising the “Feed the Neighborhood” program or supplying staff for local Junior Achievement programs, the “décor” at First Interstate is a seasonal display, alerting customers to the needs of the community and how to contribute. Debra herself is a member of the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, and her team there is always involved in the city’s biggest events, such as

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Shelter Playground continued...

And the children are not the only ones elated. "The shelter is so nice inside," says Laura Givens, mother of four. "But to have a playground will really help, especially with the warm weather coming. I can't wait until it is done." (Editor's note: The playground opened on May 1 2019)

Eight-year-old Nina Trevor, an aspiring chef, is most excited about the kitchen that features a play stove, grill and even toy food. 'The first thing I am going to make is a Happy Meal,' she says with a giggle.

Needless to say, all are grateful to The McDonald's Foundation for this gift of happiness.

Next Generation

Written by Vicky Weiss

We all know that St. Vincent de Paul volunteers are among the most wonderful people one could ever hope to meet. The one shortcoming I've noted in my own Our Lady of the Mountain conference—and all the other conferences in our valley—is that all the volunteers look like me. Sadly, at age seventy, I fit the standard demographic profile of our organization. The heavy lifting sometimes required of us often exceeds the physical abilities of our members.

So it is with great delight that I am happy to tell you about some young people making a difference in Our Lady of the Mountain's St. Vincent de Paul conference. This year the stu-

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New Shelter Playground (below) perfect for the little ones.





Nick Erno (left) and Daniel McDevitt load up some heavy donated pieces into Nick's truck for transport.



"A Hand Up Not A Hand Out"



Boy Scout Troop 5 from Eastwood Baptist Church serves Christmas Eve brunch



Ralph Browning and his infectious smile

First Interstate Bank continued...

the 4th of July parade and the Festival of Lights.

The First Interstate Foundation doesn't just encourage its employees to volunteer; it actually grants to a non-profit \$10 an hour for every hour that a volunteer spends working for that non-profit. Walking in, one senses that volunteerism, contributing to those in need, is just part of the air these folks breathe.

Aren't we in Ashland lucky to have them in our community!

Next Generation continued...

dents at the Walsh Memorial Newman Center at Southern Oregon University have agreed to assist St. Vincent de Paul. With the enthusiastic support of Newman Center director, Liz Millenheft, its young members have agreed that helping out St. Vincent de Paul will be their service project for the year. Some of its strong male members have been proving particularly valuable by supplying the muscle we need to move furniture when it is donated to us. (See picture on page 6). Along with the "Welcome Home" kits containing kitchen utensils and bedding which we provide to those newly housed, the furniture donated by generous individuals is a lifeline to those families we are moving from homelessness into housing.

We are fortunate that two of the young men own trucks. Nick Erno, a member of Shepherd of the Valley parish, is a strong hand, used to working construction. As a young member of the Knights of Columbus (he is a fourth-degree knight), he is no stranger to



Tony Zamudio (left) and Daniel McDevitt move donated items for a needy family into storage until needed.

service. When he isn't working, he's busy with the Knights, helping with the "Baby Bottle Boomerang" or selling Christmas trees at the "Keep Christ in Christmas" sale. Daniel McDevitt from Rathdrum, Idaho, keeps in shape by playing soccer for the varsity team at SOU. When one cannot find him at SOU, look for him at Bellview and Walker Elementary Schools in Ashland, reading to the students or playing soccer with them during recess. Tony Zamudio, the former director of the Walsh Newman Center and an SOU graduate, is married with a full-time job, but he is always willing to help out with his truck, his expertise, and his muscle. One can often find him singing in the choir at the 5:00 PM Mass at Our Lady of the Mountain.

The value of the work these young people are doing is best expressed by the president of the Our Lady of the Mountain conference, John Engelhardt: "The Society of St. Vincent de Paul welcomes youth into its work, with the knowledge that their exposure deepens their spirituality and helps them grow as human beings. Their ability to do the heavy lifting is a

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Next Generation continued...

welcome counterpart to our home visit mission and our goal of helping the homeless get into housing.”

Father Maro Escano, pastor at Our Lady of the Mountain and chaplain at the Newman Center, knows these young people well through weekly meetings and Masses at the Newman Center. As he puts it, “Having the opportunity to serve is something that I know will help [these young people] grow not only in their spirituality but also in their ability to see those who are in need around them and feel the sense of urgency to actually do something to help. The students at SOU rarely stay in Ashland after they graduate, and when they finally move away, my hope is that they will bring with them values that will help them be among those people who are not blind to those who are in need.”

Amen to that!



Ralph Browning, Jackson County Volunteer of the Month for August 2019, has kind words and smiles for all.

Volunteer of the Month

Written by Dennis Mihocko

Ralph Browning has served St Vincent de Paul for over 15 years working the donation door at our Thrift store, doing pickups and deliveries with our box trucks and managing and maintaining our warehouse storage as well. He is also our Thrift Store Conference President for over 3 1/2 years and a board member of our St Vincent de Paul Rogue Council.

Ralph also raises thousands of dollars every year for the Knights of Columbus Christmas Tree Sale fundraiser at St Vincent de Paul. The Shepherd of the Valley Knights split the proceeds with 50% coming to St Vincent's for services to help the needy of Jackson County. Ralph helped secure a electronic sign to upgrade our marquee on North Pacific Highway. The store provides free clothing, linens and house wares on a voucher system which serves those needs for over 9000 each year.

The wants and needs of those we serve in Jackson County, are supported by the funds raised by our Thrift Store, which like all of St Vincent de Paul Rogue District Council, is 100% volunteer with no payroll. There is no problem that Ralph cannot try to solve and he has proven himself over many decades, to be a person who says yes to helping others and the challenges that can bring.

Ralph has received acknowledgements for his volunteerism from St Vincent de Paul, Knights of Columbus, Kiwanis Club, the Polar Bear Plunge for Special Olympics and as a Red Cross Blood donor.

Ralph has been President of the Medford Kiwanis twice, the Deputy Grand Knight, Grand Knight and District Deputy of the Shepherd

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Nancy Hunt

teered more hours than that between all the charities they are active with. I could hold Bill and Nancy up as paragons of volunteerism, but so

Our beloved Nancy Hunt passed away Oct 16 2019. She and husband Bill were regular volunteers since 2005 with Master Gardeners, Habitat for Humanity, where they received the Jackson County Volunteer of the Month in 2017, as well as thousands of volunteer hours at St Vincent de Paul. Nancy was Council Secretary for most of those years and a store volunteer and office volunteer. Bill works in the back of the store fixing fixable stuff and helps keep our facilities operating. For many years they used their Master Gardener skills, to keep the landscaping at St Vincent looking good. They have been very busy in their so called retirement. Most full time workers spend roughly 2000 hours per year working. Nancy and Bill have volun-

many of our wonderful Vincentian volunteers put in years of service trying to help those in need without expecting accolades or pay. Why? Because they want to do the right thing by helping others. Nancy and Bill would be the first to say that they were not the first to volunteer nor will they hopefully be the last. It takes a group of people working together to harness the effort to make a difference. Nancy and Bill have made a huge difference in our community as do all our volunteers. Please continue to make a difference as only you can. The work is not done. Reflecting on Nancy and Bill's efforts to help make a difference gives us all validation and confirmation that what we do matters. Always. Thanks to Nancy and Bill and all of you.

Volunteer of the Month continued...

of the Valley Knights of Columbus. He is on the Board of Jobs for Justice (advocates for the needy helping with a warming station and providing meals at Pioneer Hall in Ashland. Ralph has done the Special Olympics fundraising Polar Bear Plunge for many years.

Ralph received his Associate Degree in Applied Science for Civil Engineering in Portland Community College. He worked in Beaverton for Traffic Engineering before being hired by Medford as a Traffic Engineer Tech from 1986-2015 when he retired. Of those 28 ½ years, Ralph was AFSCME union president for 26 years. Driving from Medford to Salem for 26 years several times per year, was his reward for saying yes to his fellow union members. Ralph was Democratic party vice chair for Jackson County from 2012-2016. He was quoted on air numerous times during his career as a union leader and active party member. On top of all that Ralph is a 15+ gallon Red Cross blood donor.

Ralph has a 30 year old son, Liam, who works for BLM in Klamath Falls and his 28 year old son, Gavin, has a paving company in Cleveland, Ohio.

Ralph says he got his drive to help others from his mother even while she was raising 5 kids. When Ralph first got married, he and his bride did so to be sent to Fiji with the Peace Corp in 1983-1984.

Ralph Browning is one of the most caring, compassionate, active optimist I have ever met. Ralph has spent untold hours helping people move or repair household problems or just check the welfare of anyone in need whether he knows them or is merely a friend

of a friend. Ralph faithfully visits the sick and gives encouragement and lifts the spirits of friends, acquaintances or anyone he is asked to befriend. Many call Ralph the “Bearded Wonder”. He is definitely a wonder to those who meet him. He is a true hero. Thank you, Ralph, for being you.



Nancy and Bill Hunt

Visit our Website at:

Stvincentdepaulmedford.info

Print and Share a Volunteer Application!

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Monday—Friday, 10 - 2

Thrift Store

541-779-3648

Monday—Saturday, 10 - 4

Dining Room

Monday—Friday, 11 - 1

Pantry

Last two Fridays of each month, 10 - 1

La Clinica

Medical - Monday, 8am—1pm,
At the Urban Rest Stop

Dental - Monday, 8am—1pm,
At the Urban Rest Stop

Dental Van

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