

# The Newsletter

The newsletter of the  
Salem Interfaith Hospitality Network

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## From the Director

Life is messy. We experience this repeatedly as we work with the families that come into our network. They have messy histories: financial, rental, occupational, relational, and all these aspects come into play as they come to us seeking help to put their lives back together. We try to help these individuals establish new patterns in their lives so that they might become successful.

One mother and her daughter came to us from a shelter in another state, demoralized, stating that she was treated no better than the throwaway trash we produce in our throwaway culture. Her weeks with us were filled with affirmation and reaffirmation in her uniqueness as a child of God and in her gifts and skills that she has developed. Her countenance changed, she stands a little taller today. Her humor, one of those gifts, is now sprinkled throughout our conversations.

Another couple came, temporarily homeless due to job loss. They appeared to us to be one of those families we could best work with: energetic, job skills, only a tarnished rental history. Yet the nagging personal histories they each brought to their relationship were too deep for them to overcome in our situation.

We extend our care to the degree we are capable of giving. When we know the needs are deeper than we can excavate, we refer to more qualified individuals or agencies, trying to find the help they need.

There are times, however, when the mess is so deep we simply are unable to help. This second couple fell back into old patterns and reached a point where they were unwilling to receive the help we offered. They chose to leave.

I do not know where they went, they said they had shelter to go to but wouldn't tell me where. I don't know what they will do for employment, and I continue to pray for the well-being of the children.

When we choose to enter into the lives of these families by allowing them to come to us for shelter, protection, and a change of life, we agree to work with their messy lives. We seek to empower them so they might be able to make the appropriate decisions.

This is what Salem IHN is all about: straightening up messy lives. In this coming year we will be becoming more involved with the various agencies in Marion and Polk Counties working together for a more coordinated approach to the situation of homelessness. We are currently establishing relationship with local property owners who are willing to work with us in getting our guests into affordable housing. The Salem IHN Board of Trustees has begun to think in terms of beginning a second rotation. This will mean seven more host churches, a second Day Center, another van, staffing, volunteers, corporate and private donors, foundation grants, the list seems to pile up ahead of us. Yet we know this is the next step for us to take.

Our big push right now is The Breakfast to be held at Mission Mill, Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>. At The Breakfast, you will hear from some of our guests in a brief video, I will share news about our new Mentor Program, and Jinx Brandt, the new Board president, will bring a greeting. Salem IHN is at the threshold of a new era. We hope you will join us at The Breakfast to hear the good things we are doing for families in our community.

**Richard Zielke**  
Executive Director

**Name our Newsletter** – You probably noticed the new look – we now need a new name for the newsletter. “Living in SIHN” was suggested, but really isn't what we want to convey. Send us your suggestion to [info@salemihn.org](mailto:info@salemihn.org) and put “Newsletter name” in the subject box. The selected name provider will be able to select something from our prize box.

## Day Center needs

Wow – thanks to everybody for getting into the Christmas/Hanukkah/Kwanzaa spirit and sending us bunches of donations! They are much appreciated by staff and guests.

Here's stuff we can just never get enough of, so the next time you're at Costco...

- ❖ Paper Towels
- ❖ Toilet Paper
- ❖ Laundry Soap

And while you're doing your Spring cleaning (yikes! it's Spring already?), keep an eye peeled for:

- ❖ Ties appropriate for job interviews (no dancing hula girls, ties that play *Jingle Bells*, or ones that glow-in-the-dark!)
- ❖ Men's belts (any size!)
- ❖ VCR movies (we're getting a little tired of *Beethoven 2*, so a little variety would be nice!)

## Special stuff

Here's some special things we need:

- ❖ A full-sized paper cutter (like the kind you see at Kinko's that can handle large sheets of paper)
- ❖ A two or four-drawer filing cabinet

If you know of anybody who might have something like this available, give us a call.

## Welcome to our new part-time van driver!

We'd like to welcome our new part-time van driver, Robert Gidley! He and his wife moved to Salem as part of their "year of service" working with VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America).

Robert's VISTA job ended unexpectedly, he knew about us from St. Paul's, and we knew a good fit when we saw it!

Besides driving guests to and from host churches, Robert also volunteers his writing, marketing, organizing and technical skills helping out around the Day Center.

This newsletter was put together by Salem Interfaith Hospitality Network. Specifically, Richard and Robert with assistance and graphic cleanup from the amazing Laura Gregg. Also, we want to give a shout-out to Yvonne, who wanted to be in this newsletter: You go, girl!



## Annual fundraising breakfast March 14, 2007

Our annual fundraising breakfast is mere weeks away! Our speaker this year will be Syd Brewster, a local attorney and activist, who serves on a number of boards including Oregon Construction Contractor's Board, Salem's Riverfront Carousel, Inc., National Association of Construction Contractor Licensing Agencies, and the Oregon Coalition for Housing and Homelessness.

Make sure you have your reservations (call us! – 503-370-9752) and that you've told all your friends and colleagues about it. The breakfast is an important source of funds for SIHN.

**When:** Wednesday, March 14, 2007  
7:30 am to 8:30 am

**Where:** Spinning Room  
Mission Mill Museum

## Monthly and annual family statistics

| "Occupancy Scorecard"    | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| # Families               | 22   | 25   | 32   | 26   | 39   |
| # Adults                 | 33   | 33   | 47   | 36   | 59   |
| # Children               | 39   | 51   | 65   | 55   | 73   |
| # Total Guests           | 72   | 84   | 112  | 91   | 132  |
| Avg. length stay (days)  | 50   | 49   | 37   | 48   | 29   |
| % Occupancy (bed nights) | 66%  | 75%  | 80%  | 88%  | 75%  |

## Thanks to our host congregations

Since we have some extra space, we thought we'd give some extra thanks to our fabulous host congregations! These folks make sure that our guests have a safe, warm, dry place to sleep and that they are fed breakfast and dinner.

Yay!

**St. Edward Catholic**  
**St. Mark Lutheran**  
**First Methodist**  
**First Presbyterian**  
**Trinity Covenant**  
**Calvary Baptist**  
**Our Savior Lutheran**  
**St. Paul Episcopal**  
**Queen of Peace Catholic**  
**St. Joseph Catholic**  
**First Congregational**  
**Unitarian Universal**  
**Holy Cross Lutheran**  
**St. Vincent de Paul Catholic**