

---

# Network News

The newsletter of the  
Salem Interfaith Hospitality Network

1055 Edgewater Street NW  
Salem, OR 97304

503-370-9752  
www.salemihn.org



---

May 2008

## Fourteen months later...

When Richard asked me to write about what I've learned in the last 14 months driving the SIHN van, I was somewhat stumped. I've learned to get around Salem using our host churches as guide posts. And I've learned that getting up at 5:00 am four days a week isn't fun. But have I *really* learned anything?

Then a conversation came up: One of our "second-chance" landlords wasn't happy because half of the families we'd placed there hadn't worked out. A year ago, my reaction would have been, "A 50% failure rate!?! That's terrible!?"

Today my reaction is: "A 50% success rate! That's great!!" That means that *half* the families living there had succeeded in paying their rent.

I've learned that how families become homeless is complicated, with no single cause. Sometimes a family ends up with us because of illness coupled with job loss and landlord problems. More often, our families have worked for years to become homeless—a long history of bad credit, multiple evictions, no job skills, and lots of family problems.

It would be great if just moving a family out of our program and into an apartment would solve their problems. But it doesn't, because they're not usually simple problems with simple solutions.

Some of our families have serious family issues and need counseling. Many of our families are financially illiterate and don't handle money well. Most of them have really bad credit histories with multiple evictions. Frequently, the wage earners in families have only low-level skills and can earn barely more than minimum wage.

And we can't solve all these problems in just 30 days.

So what *can* we do? We can show them our aloha. I grew up in Hawaii, where the Aloha Spirit is very important—you welcome everyone into your house and you make them feel part of the family (ohana).

Over the last year, I've learned that my job isn't just driving families to and from the churches and answering the phone. My job is showing aloha to our guests. Making sure they have towels and sheets and soap and toothbrushes and shampoo.

It's listening with compassion to their stories. I see that they get settled into the church at night, and I sit and have a cup of coffee with them in the morning. I play with the kids and make sure the Day Center computers are working right. I treat them with dignity and respect.

And I'm not the only one. Each week, fifty volunteers from each church also show their aloha to our guests. And our guests take this aloha with them when they leave.

Of course, on the mainland, you don't call it "aloha spirit," you call it "God's Love." And showing God's Love to our guests always has a 100% success rate.

Robert L. Gidley  
Asst. Van Driver

*Robert is leaving us at the end of May to move to the Seattle area. We will miss him as he has brought so much to Salem IHN. We wish him and his wife, Laura, all of God's blessings!*

*The Salem IHN Staff*

---

## Breakfast Report

On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, an enthusiastic group of Salem IHN supporters and interested new-comers gathered at the Mission Mill Museum to hear what was happening with the Network. They were treated to a nice breakfast and a challenge from Executive Director, Richard Zielke, to "Catch the Vision." Also presented was a moving testimony from Binni Malolo of how Salem IHN has provided the opportunity to "give me and my family another chance."

The purpose of the Breakfast was to raise funds for the operating expenses for Salem IHN. The simple report is **Dollars UP, Pledges Down**. While the dollar amount received topped the total amount received in previous years, the pledges received were well below the average.

This year's budget set a challenge of \$60,000.00. The breakfast brought us 1/3 of that challenge. We have a ways to go, so if you were unable to attend and make a pledge or a donation, it's not too late! Please use the enclosed envelope and send your contribution in today.

## Day Center Needs

Next time you're out shopping with some extra room in the cart, here's a few items we can use for our Day Center:

- ❖ Diapers! We've had a batch of babies come through recently and they've run our diaper stocks pretty low. We can use all sizes.
- ❖ Baby wipes: we're plumb out, but the babies keep getting messy!
- ❖ Blankets: Due to the number of families we have had this spring, we are very low on blankets.
- ❖ **Interested in doing some landscaping?** The Day Center is in need of attention, plants, yard work. If you have a green thumb and can provide an hour or two a week, we would love to hear from you!

## Family Statistics

Category	2004	2005	2006	2007	04/2008
# Families	32	26	39	36	19
# Adults	47	36	59	52	27
# Children	65	55	73	75	34
# Total Guests	112	91	132	127	61
Avg. stay (days)	37	48	29	34	21
% Occupancy	80%	88%	75%	92%	87%

## What are you doing with your economic stimulus check?

It's not often we get back from the federal government. I imagine that you already have made plans for this bonus "kicker" Uncle Sam & Aunt Samantha have sent you. Here's a thought that shouldn't make too much difference in your plan: consider "tithing" your check to Salem IHN. A gift of 10% won't make a huge difference in what you are receiving and you will be blessing our families greatly! Please consider sharing your "windfall" with those who not as fortunate. Thank you.

Richard Zielke, Executive Director

## Wanted: Van Driver

Do you (or someone you know) have what it takes to be the Van Driver for Salem IHN? Here's the qualifications:

- ❖ Need to be an early riser – folks get picked up at the churches at 7:00 am (which means leaving the Day Center between 6:30 and 6:45 am).
- ❖ Good listener: you'll hear all the guest's stories and tales of woe. But they don't need advice – they just need a sympathetic ear.
- ❖ Flexible: In the morning, you might need to help a family move into a new apartment and in the afternoon pick up a new family and help them get into the Day Center.

It's a part-time job with up to 20 hours per week, with a split-shift: early morning and afternoons Monday through Thursday. Contact the Day Center for more information – 503.370.9752.

## Also Needed

**Is It You?** We are looking for that individual that has a few hours each week to volunteer and can provide some help with bookkeeping tasks. You would need to know your way around Quickbooks, or be an aggressive learner. Call Richard at the Day Center for more information – 503-370-9752.

Newsletter assembled by the staff of Salem IHN: Richard Zielke (Big Cheese), Greg Kornspan (Gevinat Yisrael), Robert Gidley (Short Timer), and Jimmy O'Dougherty (The German-speaking-Irish-guy).

