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Interfaith summit focuses on shelter, education and advocacy for homeless children, youth and families

“One of the first things you need to do is call the Fire Marshall,” said Jean DeMaster, the executive director of Human Solutions. Speaking during a workshop on how congregations can provide shelter and other services for homeless families, DeMaster noted that many congregational committees forget to check with the Fire Marshall until quite late. She explained, “If you are thinking about using second floor space, or a basement area, the Fire Marshall will tell you what kinds of changes you will need to make to comply with fire and safety regulations, and early on you can decide if your congregation can afford

those changes.”

At the *Interfaith Summit on Homeless Children and Families*, this kind of nuts and bolts advice was mixed with a broader look at how to prevent, and ultimately end, childhood, youth and family homelessness in Oregon.

Participants included Christians from the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant and Evangelical traditions. There were also individuals and faith leaders from the Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, Unitarian, Baha’i and other religious traditions. They were joined by government officials, nonprofit providers and homeless liaisons for

public school districts. Over 250 people participated in the all-day conference, and they came from communities throughout Oregon.

Childhood and family homelessness increasing at both state and national levels Rick Crager, deputy director of Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS), began the day by outlining the dimensions of the problem. Recent state data reported by OHCS indicate that both individual and family homelessness are increasing in Oregon (*see box on page 6 for statistics*).

Heather Lyons, of the Corporation for Supportive

Housing, provided a look at the characteristics of homeless families. What researchers have found, Lyons said, is that homeless families are more similar to other low-income families that have stable housing than they are to single adults who are homeless. However, parents in homeless families are more likely to be younger than single adults who are homeless, or than stably housed parents, and more likely to be female. They are typically in their 20s or 30s with one or two children, and often the children are young—many are less than five years of age.

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EMO honors community leaders at annual celebration

“Come and join the table,” Lutheran activist Norene Goplen invited the audience at EMO’s 2010 *Annual Community Awards & Celebration Dinner*, while she accepted the award of Ecumenist of the Year.

Goplen was one of five diverse individuals and community organizations honored at the May 25 event at the Portland Hilton Hotel. Approximately 370 representatives of Oregon faith groups, denominations, congregations, tribes, corporations, unions and interfaith partners joined together again that night to celebrate and honor ecumenism in Oregon.



Photo credit: Lowen Berman

Attending the event were (from left) Ecumenist of the Year, Norene Goplen; Bishop Dave Brauer-Rieke, ELCA Oregon Synod; and the Rev. Aleida Jernigan, Presbytery of the Cascades and EMO president-elect.

While Goplen called the EMO crowd to public service, Editor Scotta Callister told of the courage

of the city of John Day while accepting the Two Pauls Award for community service, dialogue and

relationship building on behalf of the *Blue Mountain Eagle*, Oregon’s oldest community newspaper. The *Blue Mountain Eagle* led the unprecedented community mobilization of the town of John Day to stand up the Aryan Nations hate group. (*See page 4 for Callister’s article on receiving the EMO award.*)

The Rev. Dr LeRoy Haynes, Jr., and the Rev. Dr. T. Allen Bethel accepted the Vollum Humanitarian Award, presented to Albina Ministerial Alliance for their long history of peace and justice work, including the current Coalition for Justice and Police Reform, aimed at

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Build a future on strong foundations

“...you shall raise up the foundations of many generations.”

Isaiah 58:12

How do we understand the times in which we live and our place in history? How will others in the future understand the times in which we lived and our place in history?



David Leslie

These thoughts were on my mind as I wrapped up a trip that took me to The Dalles, John Day, Bend, Redmond and Hood River. In each of these communities, I met innovative and courageous leaders who are burning the midnight oil in service to the congregants, constituents, employees, clients and organizations entrusted to their care. Thankfully this state has a wealth of teachers, retirees, public officials, small business owners, clergy, laity and nonprofit staff who, through their vocational choices and volunteer endeavors, make the world a better place with a commitment to both the here and now and to future generations.

The context within which they minister and serve is becoming more and more challenging. The unemployment rate in many rural communities in Oregon far exceeds the official state rate of 10.6 percent (which itself exceeds the national rate of 9.5 percent). The number of homeless children and families is increasing in almost every county in Oregon.

The foreclosure rate in Oregon continues to rise, making the state number three in the nation for foreclosures—“an ominous sign for the region’s struggling economy” (*The Oregonian*). The gap between Oregon’s richest and poorest citizens continues to grow, as indicated by a recent report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, leaving us even more disconnected as people living in a common land. And compounding these and many other problems we face is the deconstruction of important public institutions critical to the common good and welfare of every Oregonian.

A recent example is the closure of the Hood River County Library System. Due to revenue shortfalls at the county level, the board of commissioners, after several years of reducing financial support for the library system, voted to eliminate funding altogether. This action led to the development of Measure 14-37 to create a new Library District and taxing formula to address both current and future needs of the library system. The Hood River Library System has branches in Hood River, Cascade Locks and Parkdale and has been in continuous operation for 98 years. Sadly, the measure failed, and the doors of the libraries closed on July 1, 2010.

Lost—at least for the moment—is a critical resource that no community should be without. Libraries are part of the foundations needed “to raise up future generations.” Fortunately, efforts are being made to craft a revised revenue measure that hopefully will be supported by a majority of the voters, allowing for the reopening of the libraries.

But this task will not be easy.

Fifty-nine percent of the eligible voters in the county participated in the elections. Of those voters, approximately 54 percent cast their ballots against the proposal. Those in opposition, combined with the 41 percent who did not vote, indicate there is a lot of work needed in the county to build (or maybe rebuild) support for the library.

Will our decisions about the future be based on visionless, short-term losses and gains, further putting stress on our communities? Or will we be about God’s call to build a future on strong foundations to better meet the needs of today and those of the future?

Toward this end, there will need to be opportunities throughout the county (not in just one centrally located public forum) for people to share their hopes, fears and concerns about their lives, their neighborhoods and communities, and the larger county. Through a well-thought-out and sensitive process, a consensus could arise that will allow people of goodwill from differing backgrounds and perspectives to develop a revenue proposal that minimizes the sense of being “over-taxed,” while raising enough funds to sustain this critical public service.

Now, maybe some will find this approach a bit naïve and out of touch with reality. Our experience at EMO while working on other difficult interreligious, environmental and human rights issues suggests that this dialogical process beats the politically-driven, “winner take all” approach, which predictably entrenches positions and makes compromise harder to develop.

Hood River County’s challenges are not unique. Whether it is the closing of a library system or funding cuts to Oregon Project Independence (a support program that serves low-income seniors with special needs), public schools or local law enforcement agencies, the foundations that underpin our civilization are cracking and under great stress.

Today, the church has an important role both to advocate for that which is just and right and to bring people together to vision and respectfully discuss differences, in a search for common ground guided by the Prophet Isaiah’s words, “Come let us reason together” (1:18). This is true in Hood River County and throughout the state of Oregon.

So, how will we write our history, and how we will be known a hundred years from now? Will our decisions about the future be based on visionless, short-term losses and gains, further putting stress on our communities? Or will we be about God’s call to build a future on strong foundations to better meet the needs of today and those of the future? Let us pray for the faith, strength and creativity to be about the latter, for this is our calling.

voice

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

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MEMBER DENOMINATIONS

African Methodist Episcopal Church • American Baptist Churches of Oregon
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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America • Greek Orthodox Church
Presbyterian Church (USA)—Presbytery of the Cascades • Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland
United Church of Christ • United Methodist Church
Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

Upcoming opportunities

Sabbatical grants for pastoral leaders

The Louisville Institute’s 2010 National Clergy Renewal Program is offering sabbatical grants for pastors and other church staff members. Supported by the Lilly Endowment, a maximum of 40 awards of up to \$15,000 each will support sabbaticals of up to 12 weeks. The recipients must choose topics or themes that will enhance their leadership skills.

The deadline to submit applications is Sept. 1, 2010.

Additional information is available on the institute’s website at www.louisville-institute.org/Grants/programs/sgpldetail.aspx.

An interfaith journey of peace to Israel and Palestine

From Oct. 26 to Nov. 7, 2010, led by Rabbi Joshua Stampfer and the Rev. Dr. Rodney Page. For more information, call (503) 977-3758 or email information@yallatours.com.

“Get to Work” on climate with the 10/10 Global Work Party



Join EMO's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns and its programs—Oregon Interfaith Power & Light (OIPL) and Interfaith Food & Farms Partnership—and thousand of others around the world who are participating in a hands-on project that benefits the climate on 10/10/10.

This year, 350.org is encouraging everyone to “Get to Work” on Oct. 10, sending a message to our legislators to get to work to address climate change. The momentum will continue as the next United National Climate Conference approaches in Mexico in December, when 350.org will stage the largest piece of public art in the history of the planet.

Bill McKibben, 350.org leader, says of the 10/10 Global Work Party:

We know from the calls and emails we've been getting, that people all over the world are ready to go to work. We think this plan can increase the odds of real action. We know that we have no choice. When, years down the road, the next generation asks what we did to save the planet, we want to be able to say: “We rolled up our sleeves and got to work.” There's no guarantee we can beat the rich and powerful interests that we're up against—but thanks to you, we've got enough momentum to have a real chance. Let's use it now.

We encourage you to start thinking about what type of project your congregation or household might want to organize or participate in as group. Oct. 10 is also “Faith in Action Sunday,” sponsored by World Vision and others, which encourages churches to put faith visibly into action in the community. If you need ideas go to www.350.org/people/faith. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon will also

be partnering with community organizations to organize various projects in Portland and connecting people across the state. The areas of focus will be community gardens, watersheds and energy efficiency. A garden and watershed project with Portland Community Gardens has already been established at Fulton Community Garden in southwest Portland, and other projects are in the works. OIPL is challenging congregations and members to pledge to reduce energy use by ten percent over the next year and to participate in a Cool Congregations workshop in Eugene on Oct. 23 to prepare your congregation for an energy reduction campaign.

If you are interested in volunteering or applying for an unpaid part-time summer and/or fall Event Coordination and Volunteer Management Internship to help organize this event, please call (503) 221-1054, ext. 214, or email oipl@emoregon.org.

Food & faith buying club: Making healthy, sustainable food affordable

The Interfaith Food & Farms Partnership in Portland started a buying club in June to help congregations and households access locally produced food affordably. Buying clubs give people the opportunity to use their collective purchasing power to buy in larger quantities at discounted prices. The produce for the buying club will be supplied by Deep Roots Farm—a family farm located near Albany that is committed to practicing environmentally responsible agriculture and has a wide range of fruits and vegetables available.

Each Friday, a list of available produce will be emailed to individual members and congregations; the deadline for orders will be on Sunday night. There is no individual order minimum and orders can be placed by phone, email or in a Google group. In addition, congregations can purchase farm friendly coffee (benefits similar to Fair Trade) from Portland Roasting at a reduced price.

The pickup time for the orders will be on Wednesday from 4 to 7 p.m. at Holy Redeemer



Photo credit: Liv Gifford

The buying club helps congregations and households access locally produced food affordably.

School, located at 127 N. Rosa Parks Way, Portland. Payments can be made on the day of the pick up by cash, check, Oregon Trail Card, and WIC and Senior Farmers Market coupons.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the buying club or learning more about the project, please email ks Sheridan@emoregon.org or call Alison Warren at (503) 221-1054, ext. 210.

Upcoming events

July 24

Community Gardens Workshop for Faith Communities. 1 to 3 p.m. at First Congregational United Church of Christ, 1220 NE 68th St., Vancouver, Wash. How to create financially and environmentally sustainable gardens that serve community needs. Hear what other congregations are doing and learn from them. A suggested donation of \$5-\$10 supports low-income food access projects. To register, call (503) 221-1054, ext. 201, or email emo@emoregon.org.

October 23

Cool Congregations Workshop. 1 to 4:30 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, 1376 Olive St., Eugene. This interactive workshop will equip a team from your congregation to conduct a nationally-tested program to help members of congregations reduce their carbon footprint, as well as build community and save money. Pre-registration required. Scholarships available. We are also in need of volunteers. Cost: \$20/person or \$50/team of three or more from a congregation. A brochure will be available at www.emoregon.org. For more information, to register or volunteer, contact Alison Warren at (503) 221-1054, or awarren@emoregon.org.

FaithandWellness.org helps congregations foster health

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Congregational Wellness Project has launched a new website, www.faithandwellness.org, to make tools and findings from the project available to congregations in our region and across the United States. The goal of the project has been to engage faith communities in preventing childhood obesity and chronic diseases, both within congregations and in the community. The project focuses on policy and environmental changes so that healthy food and activity choices will be available to everyone in a religious setting. Resources on the website will include:

- The Congregational Health Index or “CHI” that guides congregations through an assessment of their policies, food and activity traditions, and building and grounds use, along with suggestions for creating a plan of action.
- Sample policies.
- Information on obesity and chronic diseases.
- Words of inspiration from a variety of faith traditions.
- Links to community and national wellness resources.



- Tips on advocating for healthy environments at the neighborhood level.

For more information about the Congregational Wellness Project or the new website, contact Laura Raymond, Portland project coordinator, at (503) 221-1054, ext. 216, or lraymond@emoregon.org.

4 Community Ministries

Dining Out for Life raises over \$9,000 for HIV/AIDS services in Portland

On April 29, 21 restaurants participated (up from 16 last year) in Portland's second annual *Dining Out for Life*, benefiting the HIV Day Center, a program of EMO, and OHSU's Partnership Project. Both programs provide services for people living with HIV/AIDS. Restaurants donated between 20 and 30 percent of their sales on April 29 to both programs. Together with additional personal contributions donated that day, the programs netted just over \$9,000.

"We are thrilled with the growth in this event from last year and look forward to another successful event next year," said Julia Lager-Mesulam, LCSW, Partnership Project director. "This event is important to help us raise funds so that our agencies can provide critical services and to raise awareness that HIV/AIDS is still an issue."

Added Lindsay Ross-Hunt, HIV Day Center program manager, "*Dining Out for Life* is not only a fundraiser, it is an opportunity to build community, sustain local businesses, and demonstrate support and solidarity for some of our community's most vulnerable and marginalized members."



Diners at participating restaurants, including Stickers Asian Cafe (above), helped raise funds for HIV services in the Portland metro area.

Photo credit: Elizabeth Wetherell Shaklee

The restaurants who took part in the fundraiser were Bridges Café & Catering, Broder Café, Detour Café, Dingos, Echo, Egyptian Club, Firehouse, Gilt Club, Gracie's Restaurant, Il Piatto, Kir Wine Bar, Lauro Kitchen, Lincoln Restaurant, Pazzo, Por Que No (Hawthorne), Red Star Tavern, Rose & Thistle, Stickers Asian Cafe, Sub Rosa, The Original and West Café.

Dining Out for Life will take place next year on Thursday, April 28, 2011.

Community Ministries by the numbers (First quarter 2010)

HIV Services ... Served over 200 unduplicated clients and provided more than 4,500 meals.

Northeast Emergency Food Program at Luther Memorial ... Received 20,942 pounds of donated food and supplied three- to five-days worth of groceries to 5,976 individuals.

Russian Oregon Social Services ... Provided direct services to over 300 clients including free mammograms for 57 women, legal assistance for 15 clients and ESL classes for 32.

Shared Housing ... Arranged 150 housing matches, providing 416 individual months of housing.

Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees ... Received 59 refugees and asylees from Bhutan, Congo, Cuba, Eritrea, France, Haiti, Iran, Iraq and the former Soviet Union; provided immigration/legal services for 138 Cubans and Haitians.

Commentary: Take a bow, Grant County—this award's for you

By Scotta Callister, *Blue Mountain Eagle* editor

I confess I don't get to the big city much anymore. The allure of the bright lights has definitely dimmed, the longer I live apart from the traffic jams, noise and technological overload of the urban environment.

But I did make a trip to Portland last week that was well worth it. The occasion was Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) annual celebration dinner, which drew about 400 people to a banquet room at the downtown Hilton Hotel.

If the organization is new to you, here's a brief bio: EMO is a statewide organization that draws together an array of religious organizations and individuals to do good works and solve problems. They work on a range of issues—feeding the hungry, helping the homeless and working with communities, urban and rural—to solve their unique problems.

One of Grant County's recent problems was the underlying reason for my trip. I was on hand to collect an honor for the [*Blue Mountain Eagle*], which had been picked to receive EMO's Two Pauls Award. Specifically, the award recognized the newspaper's efforts to create a community response and foster a dialogue after Aryan Nations leader Paul Mullet announced his brash plan to create a compound for white supremacists in Grant County.

Looking around the banquet hall, I couldn't help but muse on the irony of the name of our award. Paul Mullet could be the third Paul in this saga, but he probably wouldn't enjoy the company. The award was named in recognition of two prominent Oregon clergymen, the Rev. Paul Wright and the Most Rev. Paul

Waldschmidt, who were noted for their community contributions.

No, Paul Mullet would be an odd fit here. Enjoying the event was a wonderfully diverse crowd, with an array of religions, races and political bents represented. A common bond was evident, however, when the group joined for a prayer, indulged in some light-hearted jests during installation of the new officers, and clapped hands for a rousing gospel number.

The *Eagle's* award was one of five—others went to the Albina Ministerial Alliance, the Hood River Valley Christian Church, the Luis Palau Association's Season of Service partnership, and Norene Goplen, a longtime leader and activist in an impressive array of social services.

I took my turn at the podium a bit in awe of the others receiving awards. Our actions seemed a flash in the pan by comparison. But the comments from people attending the banquet were reassuring; they applauded—not for me—but for the *Eagle* and for Grant County, for taking a strong stand against racism and hate. There was applause for the new human rights coalition, and an audible sigh of relief when I mentioned that to date, the Aryan Nations organizer has not been back to the county.

It was a reminder that an extraordinary thing happened here last February.

As I told the crowd last week, I accepted the award not only on behalf of the *Eagle* staff but also on behalf of the community of Grant County. Folks here should be proud that together, we confronted a hateful movement and did so with peaceful, legal means. Along the way, we confronted some of our own fears



Scotta Callister (left), editor of the *Blue Mountain Eagle*, congratulated for receiving the Two Pauls Award by Carla Starrett-Bigg, EMO's Development and Communications director.

Photo credit: Lowen Berman

and learned something about our place in a larger world.

That world was evident last week, as total strangers approached me to offer their appreciation for what we—the *Eagle* and the community—had done. Some had been to Grant County and recalled it fondly; others probably couldn't find it on a map. Even so, it was a reminder that we are not alone. We have friends, even in the big city. And these friends agreed on one thing—that folks here did the right thing in taking a stand against the neo-Nazi interlopers.

One result is perhaps a stronger sense of community. Another, of course, is the shiny Two Pauls Award that sits on display at the *Eagle* office. Come by and see it—it belongs to you, the community that spoke out against hate.

Published in the *Blue Mountain Eagle*, June 2, 2010.

PICS graduates find success through the new “three R’s”: Rigor, Relevance & Relationship

On July 11, five Portland International Community School (PICS) students graduated from the high school. Not a big deal, until you realize the odds against this happening. Each of the five graduates is an immigrant, refugee or first-generation American. Three were born on foreign soil and spoke a language other than English at home. And all but one of the students entered PICS with low test scores and lacking credits. One graduate for example, while expecting her third child, had to wait for a year to receive her transcript from Somalia, because her teacher had been killed and no one else had access to her records.

The school attributes the students’ success to what we call the new “three R’s”: *Rigor, Relevance and Relationship*. The students attribute it to being believed in. “In the last few years, I have been able to focus on my strengths,” said one of the PICS graduates. “What I can do outweighs what I can’t do.”

“At PICS,” this young man told staff, “I learned how to care for myself and care for others. When I went to other schools, I didn’t care about anything, because I didn’t feel like anyone, especially the teachers, cared about me.”

Another graduate, Hannah Beazely, an adopted Romanian orphan, tells her story:

“I came to PICS after I had an emotional breakdown when I was 16.

In my other school, they put me in a room with kids they considered retarded and made me sort recycling. They believed we could not handle change and made us do the same games on the computer every day.

“At first I was terrified of everyone [at PICS], because I had been beaten up at my other school. No one beat me up at PICS, and everyone was kind to me. I really like PICS because I had never met such kind teachers in my life. I learned that you can never judge appearances because you meet the kindest students here.

“My teachers have helped me a lot. Skip has taught me about history, and Lisa has taught me about writing and government. My other teacher taught me about literature. I learned more than I ever learned from my other school. The best thing about this school is the people I have met and feeling valued and accepted.”

“The staff at PICS are so proud of these and all our graduates and students,” said Skip Adams, PICS program manager. “This graduation proved again my belief, best expressed in the words of former first lady Lady Bird Johnson: Children are likely to live up to what you expect of them.”



The Portland International Community School is sponsored by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon and is one of over 20 community-based alternative schools that serves Portland Public School students. For more information about PICS, contact the school at (503) 232-5334.

First-time summer school offered for English as a Second Language students

For the first time, Portland International Community School is offering a free summer school session for ESL students. After a first day meeting at PICS, classes will be held at Concordia University from July 19 to Aug. 6. All classes have ESL support from Concordia University’s TESOL master degree candidates, and credits are transferable. The summer school is made possible by grants from the Templeton Foundation, the Autzen Foundation and other generous donors.

EMO Annual Celebration

Continued from page 1

bringing us a more just and civil community for generations to come.

Kevin Palau of the Luis Palau Association accepted an Ecumenical Service Award for the organization’s innovative Season of Service, uniting churches in service to the community for schools, health and wellness, hunger, poverty and the environment.

The Rev. Linda Presley accepted an Ecumenical Service Award for Hood River Valley Christian Church by honoring the many lay members of the congregation who run the church’s diverse service programs. Presley emphasized the importance of involving young people in service at an early age: “Children and youth in our congregation work side by side with adults helping to change and improve the



Photo credit: Lowen Berman

Albina Ministerial Alliance (AMA) received the Vollum Ecumenical Humanitarian Award. From left: The Rev. Dr. T. Allen Bethel, AMA president; the Rev. Alcena Boozer; the Rev. Dr. LeRoy Haynes, Jr., AMA vice president; and the Rev. Mark Knutson.

world we live in.”

Gospel singer and Humbolt School Principal Willie Poinsette led the crowd in song, and 2009 EMO Board President the Rev. Dr. Lowell Greathouse of First United Methodist Church of Portland turned over the gavel to 2010 Board President the Rev. Lynne Smouse López.

Many thanks to our major sponsor, Providence Health & Services, to our sponsors Augustana Lutheran Church, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Kaiser Permanente, Legacy Health Systems, Oregon Food Bank, the Rev. Dr. Marilyn Sewell and George Crandall, the Willamette Quarterly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends and Wright Land Company, and to the denominations, faith communities and ecumenical partners across the state who hosted tables at this inspiring event.



Photo credit: Lowen Berman

From left: David Leslie, EMO executive director; the Rev. Lynne Smouse López, EMO president and pastor of Ainsworth United Church of Christ; Wajdi Said, Muslim Educational Trust executive director; and the Rev. Dr. Héctor López, United Church of Christ retired executive.

“Come and join the table” Excerpt from acceptance speech by Ecumenist of the Year Norene Goplen

“I want to encourage you to move into public policy. You will find it exciting work. You will meet committed persons working to affect important changes for Oregonians and the nation.

“And we cannot forget that God has placed our lives at this time, in our nation, and has given us voice. Unlike those in so many countries, we live with the ability to speak to one of history’s great democracies and affect its future by our advocacy.

“We have all learned much as we have worked among those impacted by poverty, illness, hunger, loss of jobs, homelessness and disasters. We are witness to the struggles that our neighbors face. We need to carry their needs to those who fashion public responses.

“To your many great skills, add that of speaking out in the development of sound public policy. *Come and join the table.*”

6 Public Policy Advocacy

Interfaith summit

Continued from page 1

Like families in poverty that are stably housed, homeless families tend to have limited education and work histories. The stresses put on young families by the recent birth of a child can often trigger a first episode of homelessness for a young family, according to a report cited by Lyons (“Ending Homelessness for Families,” by Marybeth Shinn).

Speakers offer guidance on effective solutions

Crager also discussed solutions that have been proven effective in reducing family homelessness. State homeless policy emphasizes prevention, supportive housing and a policy known as “Housing First.” This approach emphasizes the benefits of securing stable housing quickly for those families that have become homeless. Stable housing makes it much more likely that a formerly homeless parent can secure employment or enroll in school or job training programs. Having a stable home address also makes it more likely that families will receive the public benefits they are entitled to, such as food stamps, rent assistance or TANF benefits, and it contributes to increased sobriety, increased school attendance, decreased recurrence of domestic violence and higher rates of health care coverage.

Lincoln County Commissioner Bill Hall, who along with Crager is a co-chair of the state’s Ending Homelessness Advisory Council (EHAC), discussed the importance of building broad community engagement in addressing homelessness at the local level. One good way to do this, he suggested, is by developing a county or community plan to end homelessness. About a third of Oregon’s 36 counties already have developed ten-year plans, and another third have plans in development. Once the community has been engaged in developing and adopting a ten-year plan, the next step is to maintain high levels of engagement as the plan moves into the implementation stage, added Hall.

Several speakers noted that preventing family homelessness is generally more cost-effective than providing emergency shelter after a family has become homeless. Prevention also avoids



At the *Interfaith Summit*, nearly 250 people participated in a walking vigil and rally. Speakers at the vigil included the Rev. Dr. Dan Bryant (right), senior pastor of First Christian Church in Eugene.



Photo credit: Carla Starrett-Bigg

the disruption of children’s lives and education associated with periods of family homelessness. Prevention programs are sometimes as simple as providing short-term assistance for paying the rent, but funding available for emergency rent assistance programs falls far short of current levels of need.

Another major focus of the day was the education of homeless children and youth. “Every child, whether homeless or not, has a right to public education,” emphasized Barbara Duffield, the policy director for the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY), in her keynote speech.

“To ensure that this right is made available to children whose families are experiencing homelessness, Congress established the McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program,” added Duffield. “Though never fully funded, this federal legislation has been effective in many cases in removing the barriers that have too often prevented homeless children and youth from continuing in school.” Information about current federal legislation to strengthen homeless education programs can be found at www.naehcy.org.

The specific needs of homeless and runaway teens, also known as “unaccompanied youth,” were also discussed during the day. Jean Lasater, the Homeless and Runaway Youth Initiative coordinator for the Oregon Commission on Children and Families, discussed roll-out programs the Commission has been able to fund in eight Oregon counties that respond to the special needs of homeless and runaway teens.

A representative of one of those eight programs is Andrea Logan, who coordinates a youth shelter for Boys and Girls Aid. She discussed the emotional profile of the homeless and runaway teens who they work with. “Most have been through some kind of trauma,” she said. “Consequently, they have a hard time trusting adults, they often act impulsively, they may ignore some basic elements of self-care and, without early intervention, they are likely to end up being exploited by others.”

As a result, Logan emphasized, Boys and Girls Aid maintains highly trained staff, volunteers and foster parents who ensure the physical and emotional safety of the youth they work with. “We operate according to the belief that every single interaction between adults and youth is important—every moment matters,” said Logan. “We also maintain a commitment to each youth’s right of self-determination. We take them as they are, and we realize that their behavior today is the result of some unsafe or unhealthy relationships with adults in their past, but that history doesn’t have to determine their future.”

Shelter and services workshop looks at successful models

Panel discussions and a workshop also focused on successful models for congregational involvement in providing shelter and services for homeless families. In Portland, for instance, First United Methodist Church and First Unitarian Church cooperate on supporting two shelters for families.

Brandi Tuck, executive director of Homeless Family Solutions that oversees both of these shelters, described the benefits of running both a day and a night shelter for the same families: “One great thing is that moms get to be moms again. They can spend more relaxed time in the day shelter, playing with their kids, or reading to them, or even cooking meals for them. Opening the day center has also dramatically reduced the time that families stay in the shelter before they re-locate to more permanent housing, because families are better able to access services and look for jobs and housing if they have a central place to work from during the day.”

Another model is the Daybreak Shelter network, supported by 30 congregations in east Multnomah County. Jean DeMaster, whose organization Human Solutions provides staffing and services to this network, explained that a successful congregational shelter network has to be supported by four key functions: coordination, shelter staffing, case management and fundraising.

Andrew Lane, the executive director of the Salem Interfaith Hospitality Network, echoed this emphasis on core staffing. In the case of the Salem network, they have an executive director, case manager and two van drivers who work with 25 congregations. But Lane also emphasized the important role of client screening. “We carefully screen all families before we admit them to our shelter network,” said Lane. “We want them to understand that they will be moving from congregation to congregation on a weekly, rotating basis, and we want to make sure that everyone in the network is safe to be around the children who are present.”

At the end of the day, a quick survey of those in attendance indicated a strong desire to keep this work going—there was support for a faith role in advocacy for homeless children, youth and families—but also in continuing to look at ways the faith community can better support homeless education programs and improve and expand the shelter and services it provides to homeless families.

If you or your congregation would like to be involved in this effort, or for more information, contact Kevin Finney, Public Policy director, at (503) 221-1054, ext. 204, or e-mail kfinney@emoregon.org.

Homelessness increasing

Recent state data reported by OHCS indicate that both individual *and* family homelessness are increasing in Oregon.

- From 2008 to 2010, the total number of homeless persons in Oregon increased by 53 percent, and the number of families with children is up by 55 percent.
- In the one-night count conducted statewide in January 2010, fully 31 percent of those counted were children.
- Over two years the number of homeless two-parent families increased by 75 percent.
- The number of unaccompanied youth (homeless or runaway teens living without parents or adult guardians) increased by 81 percent.
- When families were asked what caused their homelessness, they were most likely to identify unemployment and the high cost of housing as the primary factors.

Oregon Christian leaders gather to discuss hospitality in the 21st century church

A large group of clergy and lay leaders met on May 11 to share their best practices, discuss current challenges and network with one another at the *Fostering Hospitality in the 21st Century Church* forum sponsored by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.

Over 170 Christian leaders from across the state attended the event at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland, reflecting the diversity of EMO's demographic and denominational membership. Participants traveled from Pendleton, Bend, Eugene, Albany, Corvallis, Klamath Falls, Hood River, Salem, Vancouver and the greater metro Portland area. They represented 12 denominations and several non-denominational churches.

Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, pointed out in his keynote address what many religious leaders in Oregon living in the "none-zone" know well—the religious makeup of our state is a dichotomy. "The state of Oregon is interesting," Lugo noted. "Twenty-seven percent of its residents claim no religious affiliation—a full ten percentage points above the national average. In contrast, 30 percent identify themselves as Evangelical Christians, topping the national average by four percent. But all churches are gaining and losing members."

The statistics Lugo presented also reflect the influence of immigration on the religious landscape. Because of immigration, the

percentage of Catholics in the U.S. population has remained steady, despite the fact that for every four who leave the church only one joins. And half of the adults polled stated that they had changed their religious affiliation at least once in their lifetime.

Lugo's keynote address was preceded by a Bible study on hospitality given by the Rev. Paul Schroeder, faith-based service coordinator for JOIN, a nonprofit organization helping people transition out of homelessness into permanent housing.

A panel of local religious leaders offered their perspectives on the meaning of hospitality in their own communities. The panelists included Msgr. Charles Lienert, St. Andrew Catholic Church in Portland; Deborah Loyd, adjunct professor at George Fox Seminary; and the Rev. Vicky Stifter, Riverside Community Church, United Church of Christ, in Hood River.

Breakout sessions in the afternoon provided an opportunity for leaders to go into greater depth about a topic of interest and to discuss their perspectives in smaller groups. The breakout session topics included: Changing Demography of Religion, Innovative Technology, Creative Worship and Community Mission.

The majority of those responding to an evaluation survey at the conclusion of the event stated that they would like to see more events such as the *Fostering Hospitality* forum offered in the future. The topic of "hospitality" was of

special interest to the participants, and most would like to see that same topic explored further. A PDF of Lugo's presentation can be downloaded at EMO's website at www.emoregon.org.



From left: Keynote speaker Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life; David Leslie, EMO executive director; and Jan Elfers, EMO Membership Relations director.

Photo credit: Michelle Bush



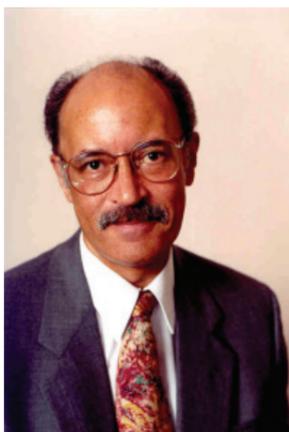
Participants at "Fostering Hospitality."

Photo credit: Carla Starrett-Bigg

Downtown Portland congregations welcome new leadership

The Rev. Bill Sinkford, First Unitarian Church

On Sunday, May 2, the members of First Unitarian Church in Portland voted overwhelmingly to call the Rev. Dr. William "Bill" Sinkford as senior minister. Sinkford, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association from 2001 to 2009, was the first African American to lead the predominantly white denomination. His tenure was marked by strong public witness for social justice and support for marginalized communities.



Sinkford received his bachelor's degree from Harvard in 1968 and his Master of Divinity from Starr King School for the Ministry in 1995. He also holds honorary doctorates from Tufts University and Meadville/Lombard Theological School. He was named one of the ten most influential African American religious leaders in the United States in both 2005 and 2006.

In accepting the call, Sinkford stated, "I am thrilled to accept the call to the pulpit of the First Unitarian Church. The opportunity

to serve this congregation is the fulfillment of my calling to ministry. I've enjoyed a week of meeting members and leaders of the church. We share a vision of nurturing the human spirit and continuing the history of work for justice and civic leadership of this church here in Portland. I hope and pray that my ministry here and our ministry together will bless us all. My wife, Maria, and I look forward with eager anticipation to joining this community."

Sinkford will be at First Unitarian Church in Portland beginning Aug. 1, 2010.

The Rev. Dr. Anton DeWet, First Congregational United Church of Christ

The Rev. Dr. Anton DeWet was called to pastor the First Congregational United Church of Christ in downtown Portland on May 9, 2010, by congregational vote.



Prior to accepting the call in Portland, DeWet had 15 years experience as a pastor in other congregations in the United Church

of Christ. Throughout his ministry, DeWet has been active in issues of social justice and community outreach, always striving to communicate Jesus' message of hope-inclusive love to all.

DeWet and his family are natives of South Africa, but they immigrated to the United States in 1993. His focus on equality and justice grows out of a deep and personal history in Africa, including living through a civil war and revolution.

When talking about his move to the United States, DeWet says, "I have come to know and love the United States and the people I serve as my very own. I bring with me my African experience that includes a deep love and respect for the natural world and a profound resistance to any form of discrimination or exclusion."

DeWet has a bachelor of arts degree (1979) and bachelor of divinity degree (1986) from the University of Pretoria. After graduating from seminary, he chose not to serve in the Dutch Reformed Church because he opposed the church's position on Apartheid and its rigid theological conservatism. He was ordained by the United Church of Christ in 1994. DeWet went on to get his Doctor of Ministry degree (2006) at the Florida Center for Theological Studies in Miami.

DeWet's first Sunday at First Congregational Church was on June 13, 2010.

8 Development & Fundraising

EMO welcomes new members

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) welcomes the new members listed below, which have been approved by the EMO Board of Directors. Our growing list of members reflects the vibrant community of faith in Oregon and enables us to establish partnerships, so we can better serve the needs of people in our state.

Congregations: Bethel Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC), White Salmon, Wash.; Bridgeport UCC, Portland; Cherry Park United Methodist Church, Portland; Congregational Church of Lincoln City; First Congregational UCC, Eugene; and St. Mark Presbyterian, Portland.

Ecumenical Organizations: United Campus Ministry at Oregon State University, Corvallis.

Interfaith Partners: Muslim Educational Trust, Beaverton.

For information on how your congregation or faith organization can become a member of EMO, contact Jan Elfers, Membership Relations director, at (503) 221-1054, ext. 208, or jelfers@emoregon.org.



Collins Foundation challenge grant doubles all gifts to EMO

We are deeply grateful to the Collins Foundation for leading the way again in Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) 2010 Annual Fund drive with a \$70,000 challenge grant. Your donation to EMO will be matched at 100 percent by the Collins Foundation.

As a supporter of EMO's Annual Fund, you serve as a faithful partner with EMO in bringing together Oregon's faith community for interfaith dialogue, peace work, direct service to those who need it most, and advocacy against the root causes of poverty and against environmental degradation.

Founded to provide funding for religious, charitable and educational purposes in the state of Oregon, the Collins Foundation has a rich history of supporting community organizations like EMO and has been an essential partner in our work for many years.

For more information on the challenge grant, please contact Carla Starrett-Bigg at (503) 221-1054, ext. 275, or csbigg@emoregon.org.

Help EMO reach the goal of raising \$70,000 for the Collins Foundation challenge grant. Double your gift today!

Name _____
 Address _____
 City/State/ZIP _____
 Phone _____
 E-mail _____

Please make tax deductible checks to EMO or pay by:

Visa MasterCard American Express

Card No. _____ Exp. Date _____

Amount: \$2,500 \$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50
 Other _____

Please send your gift to:

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, 0245 SW Bancroft St., Suite B, Portland, OR 97239. You may also make a credit card donation over the phone by calling EMO at (503) 221-1054 or make a secure on-line donation at www.emoregon.org.

EMO celebrates recent grants & gifts

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Board of Directors and staff extend their appreciation to those who have supported EMO's ministries. The following is a partial list of foundation and community support received by EMO since the *Voice* spring issue.

Donor (Fund)	Program
Autzen Foundation	Portland International Community School (PICS)
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation	2010 Annual Fund
Equity Foundation	HIV Services
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	Northeast Emergency Food Program (NEFP)
Herbert A. Templeton Foundation	Portland International Community School (PICS)
Legacy Health System NW	2010 Annual Fund
Luis Palau Association	2010 Annual Fund
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.	Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns (INEC)
Oregon Food Bank	2010 Annual Fund
Providence Health & Services	2010 Annual Fund
Starbucks Coffee Company	2010 Annual Fund
The Jackson Foundation	Interfaith Food & Farms Partnership (IFFP)
Wessinger Foundation	Portland International Community School (PICS)
Wright Land Co.	2010 Annual Fund

Honor & memorial gifts

Gifts in Honor January through May

In honor of Phil Bernstein
Victoria Nesbit

In honor of Alcena Boozer
Roberta L. Recken

In honor of Larry Cwik
Hagerman Frick Obrien, LLC

In honor of Norene N. Goplen
Lynn & Rebecca Dodson;
Emily Gottfried; Robert,
Kathleen & Zach Joy

In honor of Lowell R. Greathouse
Cheryl A. Bittle

In honor of John & Shirley Ihle
Gary & Leslie Hidle

In honor of Elizabeth Lasker
Calvin & Janet Brockman

In honor of Terry Moe's 60th birthday
Karen E. Anderson; Ned & Karen Carr; Richard & Carole Harmon; Robyn Hartwig; Kevin & Judith Parsons; James & Janet Pence; Michael & Laurie Sloan

In honor of Andrew Plambeck
Michelle Rogelstad

In honor of Lynne Smouse López
Tara Wilkins & Carole Isaacks

In gratitude for the joy and well-being of Ely & Noah Spiering
Patricia E. Blakeslee

In honor of Rita Studd
Robina Ingram-Rich

Gifts in Memory January through May

In memory of Marjorie S. Abramovitz
Marshall Goldberg;
Patricia & Roy Guptill

In memory of Bill Connor
Sonja J. Connor

In memory of Doris Defenbaugh
Helen Felt

In memory of Helen Harlow
Christine Tanner &
Lisa Chickadonz

In memory of Thelma Jensen
Calvin & Patricia Brockman

In memory of Helen Lewis
Brent Carlson

In memory of Oscar V. Luchs
Arvin R. Luchs

In memory of Arthur J. Markewitz
Milton O. Markewitz

In memory of John C. Wiley
Alison Wiley & Thor Hinckley