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Faith community responds to growing health care crisis

Measure 50, S-CHIP and formation of Oregon Health Fund Board are a foretaste of health reform challenges ahead —By Kevin Finney, EMO Public Policy director

“Our nation’s system of health care coverage is broken.” This was the opening sentence in a 2005 statement issued by the Los Angeles Council of Religious Leaders Task Force on Health Care Reform. Though per capita health expenditures are rising, fewer people have access to health care. Rising health care costs force employers to shift costs to employees or drop coverage altogether. Government reimbursement rates for providers (doctors, clinics, hospitals) remain stagnant or decline, in turn causing providers to refuse Medicare or Medicaid patients.

In 2007, religious concern with Health Reform continues, largely due to the high number of people lacking health insurance. In 2006, 46.5 million

Americans under the age of 65 lacked health insurance coverage. Moreover, the number of uninsured Americans has been rising. It rose by 8.6 million between 2000 and 2006, due in large part to the decline of employer-provided health insurance. In 2006, one in six Oregonians—576,000 people, including over 116,000 children—were uninsured.

Nationally, 80 percent of the uninsured come from working families. More than 70 percent are from families with one or more full-time workers. Two-thirds of the uninsured are poor (incomes below the federal poverty level) or near-poor (incomes between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty level). Moreover, 75 percent of



Photo credit: Carla Starrett-Bigg

On Oct. 24, a diverse group of Portland area religious leaders organized a press conference in support of Measure 50. Participants included David Leslie (at podium), EMO executive director.

those adults who lack health insurance have been uninsured for at least one year.

A Harvard study released in October revealed that of the 47 million uninsured Americans, one in eight is a

veteran or member of a veteran’s household. Uninsured veterans totaled 1.8 million in 2004, up 290,000 from 2000. “Like other uninsured Americans,

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World AIDS Day is Dec. 1: The time to act is now

By Lowen Berman, EMO Community Ministries coordinator

Reading the daily paper or watching TV news, it is easy to forget that we are living in the midst of the worst pandemic the human race has ever experienced. In Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas, 40 million of our sisters and brothers, our children and loved ones are living with HIV/AIDS. Eight to ten thousand die every day, and every day there are 12,000 new infections. Just last year, 380,000 children died of AIDS. Today, three million children are living with AIDS, and there are 14 million orphans due to the disease.

And yet, we know how to prevent HIV infection in both children and adults. We know how to treat the disease. The expanding pandemic and its associated death toll could be brought to a halt, if only we had

the will to act and to provide adequate resources. There are no yellow ribbons on our trees or AIDS statistics on the front page of our newspapers. Why are we complacent and accepting in the face of so much tragedy? Perhaps it is because the costs of the pandemic are borne so heavily by poor and marginalized people in third world countries and here at home.

In the United States last year, there were 40,000 new HIV infections—75 percent were among African American and Latino people. At the same time, funding for domestic AIDS programs continues to be reduced and Global funding for AIDS prevention and treatment is woefully inadequate.

Dec. 1 is World AIDS Day,

first organized in 1988 by UNAIDS. In 2005, UNAIDS handed over responsibility for World AIDS Day to an independent organization known as The World AIDS Campaign (WAC). The WAC’s slogan for their work is “Stop AIDS: Keep the Promise.”

This Dec. 1, please consider ways that you can support the fight against AIDS at home and abroad. Suggestions from the WAC include speaking to friends and family about AIDS and volunteering or making a donation to an AIDS cause. Every contribution, every act of compassion will save lives.



There are numerous ways to take action in Oregon. On Nov. 30, the AIDS Action Project NW, Medical Teams International and Portland Area Global AIDS Coalition will hold workshops from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and a Remembrance Service from

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Expanding the ecumenical table

“Follow me...”

Matthew 1:17

All too often our congregations, religious and community organizations become closed to the outside world. While we bemoan declining membership and the lack of receptivity to the message and ministry of the church, we invest little in reaching out to the larger community.



David Leslie

Ecumenical organizations also have this problem. Over time, we become complacent with the people and faith communities around the table, mistakenly thinking that those gathered are in fact the sum total of the ecumenical community. The results are diminished financial, intellectual and spiritual resources that lead to an inability to nurture new relations and minister together as called by Christ.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) has faced this type of ecumenical stagnation from time

to time. Our response to these episodic challenges has been to adjust, reorganize and strengthen our ecumenical commitments. Instead of turning inward, EMO leadership has thrown the doors outward, invited participation, and gone out to the church and broader society to listen carefully to the question, “What is God calling us to do and be as an ecumenical organization in this time and place?”

As I celebrate my 10-year anniversary as EMO’s executive director, this willingness to look anew at our mission keeps me in a constant state of awe of this unique and vitally important organization. I am particularly grateful to serve an organization whose leadership takes seriously the principles and people we serve, the faith communities, congregations and individuals who are involved in EMO—as well as those who are not, but should be—and the needs in our state that demand joint religious deliberation and action. As our history testifies, we are always ready to make the adjustments necessary to remain ecumenically alive and vital.

An important result of this ongoing deliberation is the commitment to expand our membership through broad

outreach. EMO extends this outreach both within the Christian community and to our interfaith partners who share the values of unity, peace, compassion and justice. We firmly believe that Christian unity, healthy interfaith relations, eradication of poverty and conflict, and the stewardship of creation are indeed places we can all join together as ecumenical activists and seekers.

So it is within this context that we have launched a new membership outreach campaign and are inviting congregations, ecumenical and interfaith organizations, and new denominations to join the organizing denominations that have faithfully developed and nurtured EMO over the years.

Our outreach efforts have been enthusiastically received. To date, almost 50 new congregations, ecumenical cooperative ministries and interfaith partners have joined EMO. These include Vancouver Avenue Baptist Church-Portland, First Presbyterian Church-Bandon, Benton County Habitat for Humanity, First Unitarian Church-Portland, Church Women United in Oregon, Providence St. Vincent Medical Center Pastoral Services Department, Portland

Mennonite Church, St. Philip Neri Catholic Church and St. Luke’s Episcopal Church-Grants Pass.

These new members help make more visible the fullness of the church in Oregon, as well as the diversity of faith communities who are interested in and willing to come together in unity and service. These new members are bringing new energy, programs and ministries, and resources to the ecumenical movement in Oregon, all of which bodes well for the well-being of both the church and larger community.

Jesus’ invitation to those he encountered was so simply stated, “Follow me.” It is in this spirit that we at Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon invite you to “join together” and become a member of EMO, for as the timeless ecumenical adage goes, “We can indeed do much more together than we can do apart.”

For further information about membership in EMO, visit our Web site at www.emoregon.org/membership.php. You may also contact Jan Elfers at (503) 221-1054 or jelfers@emoregon.org.

Conference on Genetics, Biotechnologies and Ministry of Church to be held in South Africa: EMO’s Leslie to attend

More than 50 scientists, theologians, educators and ecumenical leaders will gather in Johannesburg, South Africa, from Dec. 3 to 5 for the Global Consultation on Genetics and New Biotechnologies and the Ministry of the Church. Representatives from the Canadian Council of Churches, National Council of Churches USA, Christian Conference of Asia, Middle East Council of Churches, Pacific Council of Churches, South African Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches will be in attendance.

The global consultation is being organized to develop an international network to help with communication and organizing strategies to increase the competencies of faith communities related to genetic research and biotechnology. Consultation topics include how civil societies and the church are addressing genetic and biotechnology developments in various countries throughout the world; impact of genetic research on indigenous communities; relationship between human rights conventions and biotechnology developments; theological and pastoral care issues; and community education efforts to increase the faith community’s understanding of the related theological, scientific and policy issues.

Recognizing Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon’s (EMO) leadership in this

arena, David Leslie, EMO executive director, was nominated to attend the consultation. EMO’s involvement began with the 35th Collins Lecture entitled “Shaping Our Genetic Futures: Theological and Ethical Implications of Stem Cell Research” that featured the Rev. Dr. Audrey Chapman, director of the Dialogue on Science, Ethics and Religion at the American Academy for the Advancement of Science. The lecture included a pre-conference workshop led by Dr. Marc Marengo, professor of Philosophy at Pacific University and director of the Pacific Institute for Ethics and Social Policy, and Dr. Lisa Sardinia, associate professor of Biology at Pacific University.

“What has been especially important,” Leslie noted, “is the relationship EMO has developed with the Pacific Institute for Ethics and Social Policy, supported by the National Institutes of Health, that led to the Faith Forum on Genetics. The faith forum brought together more than 20 congregations in Oregon who each participated in two plenary and five congregationally-specific dialogue/discussion seminars that allowed congregations to explore the theological, pastoral, ethical, legal and social implications of genetics technology within the context of a faith-oriented community understanding.”

In addition to his work developing resources in Oregon, Leslie served on the National Council of Churches (NCC) Policy Development Committee on Human Biotechnologies, which developed the NCC policy statement “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made” that was adopted

by the NCC in 2006.

Additional regional events following the Johannesburg consultation are planned, including a major event in 2009 to mark the 30th anniversary of the 1979 MIT Conference on Faith, Science and the Future.

The EMO Board of Directors, volunteers & staff congratulate

David Leslie

on 10 years of service and leadership as EMO’s executive director!

On Nov. 29, a celebration in David Leslie’s honor will be held at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, 147 NW 19th Ave., in Portland.

The celebration will include dinner, wine and a “toast and roast.” The reception will be held at 6 p.m., with the dinner and program from 7 to 9 p.m. There will be a special offering for EMO’s peace and justice work.

Tickets are \$35 per person; pre-registration is required. For more information, call EMO at (503) 221-1054.

Assessment aims to make good food available to all

This October, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership (IFFP) completed its "Everyone Eats" north and northeast Portland Community Food Assessment. The assessment featured a variety of community involvement efforts and an in-depth survey conducted in four languages. Four small focus groups conducted in three languages supplemented the survey. The survey was developed by a leadership team comprised of six diverse, low-income residents who interviewed over 200 low-income people in north and northeast Portland.

The survey identified barriers to food access in low-income communities and, specifically, ways to improve access to fresh, healthy foods. Respondents were asked what difficulties they face in accessing foods and if they are satisfied with the foods and stores to which they do have access. Respondents were also asked about their knowledge about locally-grown food and where it can be obtained. Finally, respondents were asked to rate their interest

in IFFP's proposed programs for 2008. These include a free cooking and nutrition class using local, seasonal produce, subsidized Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares for low-income families, and farmers' market coupons. The goal of these programs is to help create sustainable access to healthy food for the residents of north and northeast Portland. *Almost 90 percent of respondents were most interested in subsidized CSA shares; as a result, IFFP will organize such a program for the coming season.*

A community forum was held on Oct. 11 at St. Andrew's Catholic Church in northeast Portland to present the assessment results and hear feedback from those who will benefit from these programs. Residents and local organizations are looking forward to working together to implement these programs!

Copies of the "Everyone Eats" Report and Executive Summary are on the IFFP Web page at www.emoregon.org/food_farms.php.



Photo credit: Heather Burns

Farm stand at Redeemer Lutheran Church, located at NE Killingsworth and 20th Avenue in Portland.

Webcast provides opportunity to discuss "The 2% Solution"

Congregations are invited to join students, faith, civic and business organizations in participating in a national Web cast conversation, "The 2% Solution," on Jan. 30, 2008. The interactive Webcast kicks off the national "Focus the Nation" event to be held on Jan. 31 at locations throughout the nation.

Co-produced by Focus the Nation and the World Wildlife Foundation, the Webcast is hosted by Earth Day Network TV and will feature Stanford climate scientist Stephen Schneider, sustainable business consultant Hunter Lovins, and others. The conversation will revolve around the question: Can we as a nation cut global warming pollution roughly two percent a year for the next 40 years? What would it take?

The goal is to get 10,000 viewing sites across the nation. Participants will have the opportunity to watch and participate via cell phone voting in their own gathering spaces—anywhere with a computer that has broadband internet access. Participants will need Adobe Flash 9.0, a free download. To view on Jan. 30, go to www.earthdaytv.net. Time TBA. Visit www.focus.thenation.org/2percentsolution.pdf for more information.

Focus the Nation is a nationwide movement started in Portland, Ore., that provides a powerful way for people to be a part of a nationwide voice on global warming solutions. Months of planning and activism are culminating toward a national teach-in on Jan. 31, 2008, with events around the country. Locally, EMO's Oregon Interfaith Power & Light is organizing an interfaith Focus the Nation worship event to rekindle our love of creation and commitment to take action on global warming. It will be held on Jan. 19 at First Unitarian Church at SW 12th and Main in downtown Portland, time TBA. For more information, call (503) 221-1054, ext. 214.

EMO's Interfaith Food & Farms Partnership receives \$253,000 USDA Grant

USDA Grant will emphasize low-income leadership and support faith communities in improving community food security

Acting Agriculture Secretary Chuck Conner announced on Nov. 1 the awarding of \$4.8 million as part of the USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service's (CSREES) Community Food Projects (CFP) program. The grants, given to 34 organizations in 20 states, will help low-income people meet their food needs. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership is one of the awardees, receiving a grant for \$253,000 for a three-year project in Benton County.

"These grants offer exceptional opportunities to make food available so that disadvantaged communities can move toward self-sufficiency," Conner said. Representative Diane Hooley, whose district benefits from the grant, said, "These funds will help Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon continue their notable efforts to make food available to disadvantaged communities." She noted, "Collaborative partnerships over the past few years helped Oregon shed its dubious distinction of

being one of the hungriest states in the country."

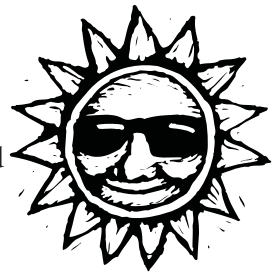
The CFP program has been meeting the food needs of low-income people for the past 11 years, while increasing the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food, farm and nutrition needs. The program is currently at risk for having its funding become discretionary rather than mandatory in the Farm Bill reauthorization currently before Congress.

The new project, *Toward a Vibrant Food System: Faith Communities and Low-Income Leadership*, will link three key assets commonly found in congregations—land, parking lots and commercial grade kitchens—to increase food and economic security for small farmers and low-income families and create an innovative model.

Building upon the success of a previous USDA Community Food Projects grant, the project broadens the manner in which faith communities confront hunger and poverty by using existing physical, educational and economic resources.

Solar Congregations Program launched

In response to the growing number of inquiries from congregations interested in solar electric systems for their rooftops as an expression of caring for creation, and to help Oregon meet its new renewable energy goals, Oregon Interfaith Power & Light (OIPL) has developed the Solar Congregations Program to make it as easy as possible for congregations to support solar energy.



New policies at the national and state level have made it possible for non-profits, including congregations, to be able to purchase a solar electric or hot water system at a fraction of the overall costs through third-party financing.

This spring, OIPL sent out a request for proposal to a number of firms providing installation and financing services. The project was awarded to Commercial Solar Ventures because of their collective expertise in finance, taxation, law and energy, as well as their interest in working with the non-profit community. A first round of congregations throughout Oregon has signed up to be a part of the program. The deadline for the second round is Earth Day, April, 22, 2008.

For more information, call Jenny Holmes, director of EMO's Environmental Ministries, at (503) 221-1054, ext. 214. Informational presentations are being scheduled for January and February for the second round.

The project will 1) develop a community kitchen at Corvallis First United Methodist Church as a resource for underserved populations, 2) enhance a community garden at Calvin Presbyterian Church to provide demonstration, teaching, food production and community-building opportunities, 3) increase access to farmers' markets by people with low incomes, 4) support several kitchen-based micro-enterprise projects, and 5) publish a comprehensive resource manual for creating congregation-based community kitchens, gardens and markets, and offer four seminars for replicating the model. A minimum of 50 percent of project leadership will be low-income people.

For more information about the project, contact Liv Gifford, project coordinator, at (541) 207-2001, or Jenny Holmes at (503) 221-1054, ext. 214.

4 Community Ministries

U.S. Bank supports arts program for Portland International Community School

On Oct. 24, U.S. Bank presented a check for \$2,500 to EMO's Portland International Community School (PICS) in support of an innovative arts program to serve the school's refugee, immigrant and first-generation-American high school students.

U.S. Bank vice president and manager of Community Relations, David Wynde, presented the check to PICS director, Skip Adams, during a student assembly at the school to appreciative applause from the multi-national student body. Student Chuanhtee Saivifane-Smith presented Wynde with a thank you card created by the students in their multiple languages of origin.

Over the last five years, PICS has focused on developing "state of the art" programs for the school. The arts program is the second stage of the school's Arts and Literacy Enhancement Program, following last year's establishment of a comprehensive computer and media literacy program. The new arts program will include the

hiring of two half-time artists—one visual and one performing—to offer professional instruction in visual arts, music and drama, culminating in a community display highlighting students' accomplishments. The program will help increase students' self-esteem, build their English proficiency, enhance relationships with the community, provide for artistically talented and motivated students, and strengthen students' cultural identity through opportunities to express themselves through the art forms of their indigenous cultures.

U.S. Bank's gift will be matched by The James F. & Marion L. Miller Foundation, which has approved a challenge grant of \$30,000 to help PICS raise the money to support this vital program.

For more information about PICS, contact Skip Adams at (503) 232-5334. If you would like to make a contribution to the challenge grant, contact Carla Starrett-Bigg, EMO's Development and Communications director, at (503) 221-1054.



Photo credit: Carla Starrett-Bigg

PICS student Chuanhtee Saivifane-Smith presents U.S. Bank Vice President David Wynde with a thank you card created by students in their multiple languages of origin.

World AIDS Day

Continued from page 1

5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, located at 147 NW 19th Ave., in Portland. The workshops will include "The Face of AIDS," "Taking a Leadership Role" and "Taking Action." Suggested workshop registration donation is \$10; lunch is included. Register by Nov. 16 by sending an e-mail to pdxaids@comcast.net. No registration is required for the Remembrance Service. For more information, call (503) 764-8714.

Another way to take action is to support EMO's HIV Day Center. Although not a medical service, the HIV Day Center saves lives right here in Portland.

According to Wayne Miya, executive director of Our House of Portland, a residential care facility that provides services for people with HIV/AIDS, deaths at Our House have been higher this year than in any of the previous five or six years. He attributes this fact not to HIV disease directly, but rather to conditions of homelessness, addiction and mental illness experienced by so many in the HIV positive community—conditions which often lead to poor adherence to medication regimens. Miya stated, "By the time they get to Our House, they are resistant to the meds, and it is too late."

It is exactly these conditions that EMO's HIV Day Center community strives to alleviate. The HIV Day Center is a multi-service drop-in center for low-income people living with HIV/AIDS in the Portland metro area. Services include nutritious meals, counseling, phone and mail services, a washer and dryer, showers and hygiene supplies, a clothes closet, computers with internet access,



Photo credit: Lowen Berman

EMO's HIV Day Center provides services, such as hot meals, for low-income people living with HIV/AIDS.

haircuts, massage, foot care, and much more.

To illustrate the importance of the services and the community available at the HIV Day Center, members of the HIV Day Center community shared one morning in September how their lives have been impacted by EMO's commitment to assist people living with HIV/AIDS.

G. C. – *The Day Center is a refuge from the streets. Here everyone is very friendly, like a family. There are so many abundant services. Without the Day Center, I would not have breakfast, I wouldn't have a place to shower, do laundry, make phone calls or even talk to people. I feel welcome here. Nobody is judging us, putting us down or demeaning us. They help me connect to other services. I don't feel so alone.*

R. R. – *If it wasn't for this place, I would be dead right now. Before I came here, I was crazy. I wasn't eating. No one would hire me. Now I am taking medicine. I am working. I am painting houses. I come here every day. I get so much from here. I get a bus pass, do my laundry, get my meals. I really appreciate the people who work here, that is why I help out cleaning every day.*

D. O. – *At times in my life I have been homeless, addicted, mentally ill, depressed and frightened. The Day Center became the only home I had. When I was homeless, I was desperate for food and a coat and got both at the Day Center. Now I come to the Day Center to socialize and to use the internet. I found my apartment on the internet [while using a computer] at the Day Center.*

S. K. – *In my worst days, when I found myself too sick to work and therefore homeless, the Day Center was there for me. I lived in an abandoned VW bus and went to the Day Center every day for a hot meal, a hot shower and facilities to wash my own clothes. There was always someone there to talk to about what I could do to make my situation better. There was always a non-judgmental, friendly face. Now I have a home, and my life is much better. I still come to the Day Center to connect with community and strong advocates.*

World AIDS Day is a once a year event, but AIDS continues to take its toll every day of the year. Let this year's commemoration be a reminder to us all to renew our commitment to provide loving support to those living with HIV/AIDS.

For more information about the EMO HIV Day Center and World AIDS Day activities, please call (503) 460-3822 or visit the WAC Web site at www.worldaidscampaign.info/.

"Season of Giving" Wish List

Below are items needed by EMO's Community Ministries programs. During the upcoming "season of giving," please consider making an in-kind donation or a financial contribution to help purchase items from the "wish list." For information on how to forward your gift to a specific EMO program, call (503) 221-1054. You may also donate on-line at www.emoregon.org.

HIV Day Center – Razors for shaving, toothpaste, shampoo and conditioner (in small sizes), warm hats and gloves, socks, cooking oil, dishwasher detergent, high efficiency liquid laundry detergent, hot chocolate, large cutting boards, large mixing bowl, large and medium plastic food containers, and a 15-passenger van.

Northeast Emergency Food Program at Luther Memorial – Newer computers; three two-line wireless phones, wall mountable would be nice; 20 compact florescent bulbs (75W equivalent); clean, useable clothing; volunteers (drivers, food pickup, clothing room workers, social service room workers and cooking class teachers); food/personal care items (cereal, proteins, fruit, toilet paper, laundry powder); mop heads; and white vinegar (gallon) for cleaning.

Shared Housing – Small duplex-capable office copier, laser printer, and two-line phones.

Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees – Furniture (twin mattresses, table/chairs, sofas), household items in good condition (microwave ovens, bedding, silverware, plates, pans, TV's), food baskets, hygiene baskets, school supplies, and money for emergency situations.



NEFP celebrates move to Luther Memorial with open house

On the afternoon of Sunday, Nov. 4, Northeast Emergency Food Program (NEFP) at Luther Memorial held an open house to celebrate the program's grand reopening. Its new location at Luther Memorial Lutheran Church is in the Cully neighborhood in northeast Portland.

Approximately 75 people attended the open house and toured the new facility. Guest speakers included Sean Cruz, staff member for State Senator Avel Gordly; the Rev. Greg Ames, pastor of Luther Memorial; Kathy Fuerstenau, president of the Cully Association of Neighbors; David Leslie, EMO executive director; and John Elizalde, NEFP program manager.

Northeast Emergency Food Program, a community ministry program of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, serves more than 1,400 people each month by providing a three- to five-day supply of nutritious groceries to north and northeast Portland neighbors in crisis. NEFP's work is grounded in the belief that nutritious food is a basic human need and a building block for a healthy life of possibility.

With an expanded program, NEFP now offers a shopping-style pantry, allowing people to "shop" for groceries in quantities consistent with NEFP standards based on family size. This

approach will hopefully enhance the experience for food recipients and should reduce waste or returns, allowing people to get food they like and better fit their needs and preferences. The Luther Memorial clothing program has been joined with NEFP so that people can get needed articles of clothing for family members. Volunteers, food and clean/usable clothing are needed.

NEFP officially opened for business at the new site on Monday, Nov. 5, with over 30 families receiving food and clothing in the new pantry. "Operations were smooth, and people were pleased with the new system," reported Elizalde.

Northeast Emergency Food Program at Luther Memorial is located at 4800 NE 72nd Ave. (at Wygant), in Portland. For more information about the program, call (503) 284-5470 or e-mail nefp@emoregon.org.



Photo credit: Michelle Bush

Ribbon-cutting ceremony at NEFP grand reopening (from left): Rev. Greg Ames, pastor of Luther Memorial; Kathy Fuerstenau, president of the Cully Association of Neighbors; David Leslie, EMO executive director; and John Elizalde, NEFP program manager.

Shared Housing moves to new location

Shared Housing has moved to a new location at First Baptist Church, 909 SW 11th Ave, Portland. The program's phone and e-mail remain the same: (503) 225-9924, housing@emoregon.org.

EMO endorses the Portland ASK Campaign

According to the *Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics*, 40 percent of homes in Oregon have a gun, and in 10 percent of those households the gun is fully loaded and ready to fire. *As many as 74,000 of Oregon's children live in homes with firearms.* ASK (Asking Saves Kids) is a national public safety campaign that encourages parents to ask a very simple question: "Are there guns in the home where my child will be playing?"

The ASK Campaign has been a part of Ceasefire Oregon Education Foundation's (COEF) public education and outreach activities for over three years. COEF is now taking the campaign to the next level by implementing a comprehensive ASK Campaign in Portland. This initiative will penetrate the more than 220,000 Portland households with a child under the age of 18. Billboards, transit advertising and public service announcements will reach thousands of Portlanders each day. Celebrities and community leaders will be featured, thus raising community awareness about the dangers of firearms in the home and linking the public to ASK resources and information. Education workshops, community events and speaking engagements will reach parents on a grassroots level.

COEF has built a coalition of community partners to support the ASK Campaign. The project has already received endorsements from Governor Ted Kulongoski, Mayor Tom Potter, Police Chief Roseanne Sizer, the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office, Doernbecher Children's Hospital and the YWCA of Greater Portland. In addition, EMO has pledged its support of this campaign as well.

Your organization can participate in the campaign by: 1) attending ASK events, including a large launch event, tentatively scheduled for November 2007; 2) distributing and displaying materials such as brochures and posters, and 3) including the ASK message in your community education programs.

For more information, contact Ceasefire Oregon at (503) 220-1669, info@ceasefireoregon.org or visit www.ceasefireoregon.org.

Creating healthy relationships

Research shows that regardless of gender, culture, socioeconomic status, skin color and language, nearly everyone wants a lifelong, secure, happy and committed relationship. In his book, *Fighting for Your Marriage*, Howard J. Markman shared, "If you want to have a great relationship, the way you handle differences matters more than what those differences are."

Sometimes in our relationships, our focus turns more to "pleasing" or trying to meet the needs/ desires of our partners, while overlooking our own. Or, we may try to hide/deny differences between us, to avoid conflict.

As noted by renowned relationship specialists Ellyn Bader and Peter Pearson, virtually every relationship will experience problems and disillusionment, due to "differences." The differences can be real and/or perceived. How you perceive your differences, how you manage your feelings, where you focus your attention and how you act and communicate under stress, will determine the quality of your relationship. If you can change your belief that your partner is the source of your happiness or unhappiness—if you can understand that differences and the struggles they create are not a sign of a failing relationship—if you can see your relationship as a journey along a path of development, then you will be well on your way

to a more fulfilling relationship.

If you would like to learn more about how to create a healthy, loving relationship, attend one of the following relationship workshops:

- 1) *Let's Talk: Communication for Couples*
- 2) *Everyone Fights: Do it Right*
- 3) *Where Is the "Me" in "We": Breaking the Ties of Co-Dependence*
- 4) *The Nuts and Bolts of Love: Commitment, Friendship and Intimacy*

Samaritan Counseling Center (SCC) is offering this series of four Relationship Workshops monthly. To sign up, please call SCC at (503) 281-3318, ext. 0. SCC also offers parenting classes, premarital education and counseling, and therapy. To learn more about these services, go to www.sccpdx.org.

Samaritan Counseling Centers promotes psychological and spiritual health and wholeness through accessible, highly competent counseling, education and skill-building services. Their approach embraces the belief that an integrated mind-body-spirit is optimal. By integrating spiritual and religious beliefs, therapy sessions hold more personal meaning, and the results achieved will be more effective and longer lasting. SCC is affirming of all spiritual practices and staff will integrate yours at your request.

By Michael Sorensen, Samaritan Counseling Center

voice

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

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Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
David A. Leslie, executive director
Michelle Bush, graphic designer, editor

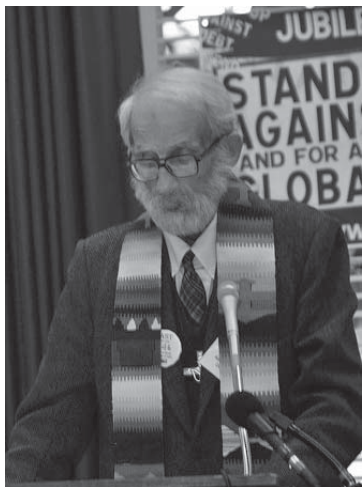
Telephone (503) 221-1054
Fax (503) 223-7007
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African Methodist Episcopal Church • American Baptist Churches of Oregon • Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) • Christian Methodist Episcopal Church • Church of the Brethren • Community of Christ • Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon • Episcopal Diocese of Oregon • 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

UCC clergyman fasts for 40 days in support of Jubilee ACT to end global poverty — *By Pat Rumer, Jubilee Oregon*

On Oct. 16, the Rev. David Duncombe, retired United Church of Christ clergyman from White Salmon, Wash., broke his fast at a Congressional Prayer Breakfast, hosted by Congressional Reps. Maxine Waters and Spencer Bacchus.



The Rev. David Duncombe broke his 40-day fast at a Congressional Prayer Breakfast on Oct. 16.

Duncombe shared a loaf of bread with the more than 150 people in the audience. There was tremendous spiritual energy in the room with speakers from the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, American Jewish World Service, Bread for

the World and Episcopal Conference of Bishops, who thanked Duncombe for his prophetic witness to end global poverty and to support the Jubilee ACT.

The Jubilee ACT cancels impoverished country debt; removes economic conditionalities from the cancellation process; mandates transparency and accountability from governments and international financial institutions; and moves forward with more responsible lending practices.

At the breakfast, three Senate representatives announced the introduction of the Senate version of the Jubilee ACT. Representative Greg Walden from Oregon told Duncombe that he would sign on as a cosponsor of the Jubilee ACT. By the end of the week, all five of Oregon's Congressional representatives signed onto the Jubilee ACT as cosponsors. Pat Rumer, co-chair of the national Jubilee USA board, thanked all 14,000 fasters who accompanied Duncombe during his 40-day water-only fast. Also thanked were all Oregon fasters who helped achieve the following:

- More than 8,000 nuns from 150 different

provinces fasted for one or more days.

- A commitment to a fall hearing on the Jubilee Act (H.R. 2634) in the House Financial Services Committee.
- More than 20 additional House bill sponsors.
- The introduction of the Jubilee Act in the Senate (S. 2166).
- The Cancel Debt Fast has generated 10 co-sponsors to the Senate bill!
- During the 40-day fast, Jubilee activists in 33 states wrote messages to their Senators and Representatives on 8,000 empty paper plates, calling for an end to hunger and poverty; some plates were delivered by Duncombe, others have been or will be delivered directly by constituents.
- More than 14,000 people made a fast pledge and contacted their Senators and Representatives about the Jubilee Act in the House and Senate.

For more information about the Jubilee ACT, visit www.jubileeusa.org/jubilee-act.html.

Health care crisis

Continued from page 1

most uninsured vets are working people—too poor to afford private coverage but not poor enough to qualify for Medicaid or means-tested VA care,” said Harvard professor Dr. Steffie Woolhandler.

Health and economic consequences are serious when families lack health insurance

When people lack health insurance, they are more likely to postpone or go without health care altogether, and they are less able to afford prescription drugs or to follow through with recommended treatments. The consequences of this are pretty clear—the uninsured are more likely to end up hospitalized for avoidable health problems, and they are more likely to experience declines in their overall health, or even premature or unnecessary death.

Lack of health insurance also can impose heavy economic burdens on struggling working families. According to the National Coalition on Health Care, every 30 seconds in the United States, someone files for bankruptcy in the aftermath of a serious health problem. The percentage of Americans under age 65 whose family-level, out-of-pocket spending for health care (including health insurance) exceeds \$2,000 a year, rose from 37.3 percent in 1996 to 43.1 percent in 2003. The average employee contribution to company-provided health insurance has increased more than 143 percent since 2000. Average out-of-pocket costs for deductibles, co-payments for medications, and co-insurance for physician and hospital visits rose 115 percent during the same period.

Rising health care costs reduce economic competitiveness in the international marketplace for firms that do provide health care coverage and may lead to loss of jobs. Increasing health care costs mean that government is paying more and more for the health care services it funds, and that those with health insurance are paying higher premiums.

Containing rising health care costs will pose challenges

Why are health costs rising? Part of the problem is the demands doctors and hospitals make to have the latest, most expensive health care technology available. Another big contributor to rising health care costs is the increasing cost of prescription drugs. Inefficiency is another problem. A significant percentage of the American health care dollar goes

for paperwork and administrative costs. Too often, insurance companies are paying staff to deny claims or to refuse coverage to individuals with chronic or pre-existing conditions.

Some specific reforms, like developing easily portable electronic medical records, may increase efficiency and make medical care more effective. Others believe a more dramatic change, like the adoption of a single-payer health care system that eliminates the role of the insurance companies, is what is needed. Another approach, taken by the Oregon Health Plan, seeks to control costs by funding only the most effective and medically necessary care—a form of health care rationing.

Lesson of Measure 50: Funding is the hardest nut to crack

While health reform can contain rising costs and help create a more efficient and effective health care system, those savings alone cannot fund health access coverage for all uninsured low-income families—significant new government revenues will be needed as well. Health advocates in Oregon and nationally have focused in part on raising tobacco taxes to expand coverage to uninsured children, as a first step toward expanding health coverage for all. In states that have recently tried to move toward universal coverage, like California, efforts have sometimes been stymied over how to fund the expansion of coverage. Most proposals include some form of employer tax imposed on businesses not providing health coverage for their employees.

Throughout 2007, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) primary health care focus has been on the passage of the Healthy Kids Plan—which appeared on the Nov. 6 statewide ballot as Measure 50—and to a lesser extent, on support for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP) in Congress. Both have relied on increasing tobacco tax revenues as a way to fund health care coverage for children. Unfortunately, a massive \$12 million media campaign, funded primarily by out-of-state tobacco companies, led to the defeat of Measure 50 by a margin of 59 to 41 percent. Similarly, S-CHIP reauthorization has been vetoed by President Bush—who opposes any increase in the tobacco tax—though that fight is not over yet, and efforts to reauthorize this program through an increased tobacco tax will continue in this session of Congress.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon played a key role in mobilizing faith community support for Measure 50. Faith leaders from various

regions of Oregon signed an official voters' guide statement in support of Measure 50. EMO's Public Policy Advocacy program also sponsored a faith community organizing meeting in September, which featured a briefing on Measure 50 by Rep. Tina Kotek.

Throughout the fall, a broad group of faith organizations and leaders endorsed Measure 50 and worked for its passage. In addition to EMO, organizations included the Oregon Center for Christian Values, the American Jewish Committee Oregon Chapter and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland. These groups joined with the Urban League of Portland to sponsor a press conference on Oct. 24. Held at St. Philip the Deacon Episcopal Church, a historically African-American congregation in northeast Portland, religious leaders spoke out about their belief that Measure 50 is a fair and effective response to the crying moral injustice of more than 100,000 Oregon children who lack health insurance.

Health reform focus turns to OHFB

Despite the defeat of Measure 50, EMO will continue efforts to secure health care access for all uninsured Oregonians, including uninsured children. One government process, already underway, is being overseen by the Oregon Health Fund Board (OHFB), which was established by the passage of SB 329 during the 2007 Legislative Session.

The Board will report to the Legislative Assembly by Feb. 29, 2008, describing the progress of the Board toward developing a comprehensive plan for health care reform in Oregon. The members of OHFB and several sub-committees have been appointed and so has its executive director, Barney Speight. Information on upcoming meetings, members of the Board and other resources on health care reform can be found on their Web site at www.oregon.gov/DAS/OHPPR/HFB/index.shtml.

As efforts for real health reform continue, let's remember these words from the Los Angeles Council of Religious Leaders Task Force: "Health care is everyone's problem. It is everyone's sacred obligation. There is something everyone can do to contribute to the solution. This is our call!"

If you would like to be involved in EMO's efforts to support health care justice, please contact Kevin Finney at kfinney@emoregon.org, or (503) 221-1054.

Interfaith community responds to poverty crisis with conference and Collins Lecture

More than 500 people from around the state gathered on Oct. 18 at First United Methodist Church in Portland for a conference on poverty and the 39th annual Collins Lecture. The event was presented by EMO and funded by the Collins Foundation.

The all-day conference, titled "From Despair to Hope: An Interreligious Response to the Crisis of Poverty," brought together people from across Oregon to discuss the moral challenge of poverty in our society. Religious leaders from the Jewish, Muslim and Christian traditions began the day with a conversation about what our spiritual traditions teach concerning material and spiritual poverty. The panelists were: Laila Hajoo, president of the Islamic Society of Oregon; Dr. Brad Harper, Multnomah Bible College; Rabbi Annette Koch, Beit Haverim South Metro Jewish Congregation; and Father Paul Schroeder, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral.

An overriding theme reiterated by each religious leader was the moral imperative people of faith have to actively engage not only in caring for the poor but also in addressing the underlying systemic structures that perpetuate the growing disparity between the rich and poor.

A second panel expanded the conversation about



Attendance at the conference on poverty, held in the Collins Hall at First United Methodist Church in Portland, was near capacity.

Photo credit: Carla Starrett-Bigg



The conference keynote speakers were Hulen Grogans Brown (left) and Tanya Harris (right), activists from New Orleans. EMO staff member Jan Elfers (center) was the lead organizer of the event.

Photo credit: Carla Starrett-Bigg

poverty to discuss demographics and issues specific to populations around the state. Victor Merced, director of the Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services, gave a general overview of poverty in the state of Oregon. He shared the "2006 Report on Poverty" issued by the OHCS, which reports a 13.4 percent level of poverty in the state. Charles Hudson, a member the Mandan/Hidatsa tribe of Fort Berthold, North Dakota, and the public affairs manager for the Portland-based Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, gave a unique perspective about issues specific to Pacific Northwest Native Americans and spoke of the continued difficulties facing the tribal people living at Celilo on the Colombia River. Judge Laura Pryor of Gilliam County spoke for central and eastern rural Oregonians. Her assessment included a discussion about the limited access to services, such as health care, experienced by many living east of the Cascades. Portland Commissioner Erik Sten described the 10-year plan to end homelessness, currently being implemented in Multnomah County.

During lunch, native New Orleanians Tanya Harris and Hulen Grogans Brown described

the impacts of the Hurricane Katrina disaster and rebuilding efforts that have taken place in New Orleans since 2005. Harris is a Lower Ninth Ward resident and an activist with the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). Brown serves as church clerk, global missions interpreter and chair of the Social Action Committee for the United Church of Christ in New Orleans. Both lost their homes in the hurricane and are working within their respective communities to bring hope in the midst of the devastation.

Eight workshops offered during two sessions served to educate, and they allowed opportunities for networking and moving to action. Organizations who presented included Oregon Food Bank, Oregon Farmworker's Ministry, Jobs With Justice, the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, St. Vincent de Paul Downtown Chapel, In Our Own Voices, Interfaith Disabilities Network, Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns, Samaritan Counseling Center, Jubilee Oregon, Central City Concern, Oregonians for Health Security and Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center.

E.J. Dionne, Jr., capped off the day with the evening keynote lecture. In his address, "The Politics of Hope," Dionne provided a historic perspective on the Christian response to poverty in society. He emphasized the necessity to take a conceptual knowledge of poverty to a personal and relational understanding. Dionne stated, "Social justice requires economic support from government, a concern for family life and serious efforts to strengthen community institutions and to restore public order." He believes that while "compassion is good, justice is better," and argues that "while government cannot solve all problems, what it does and doesn't do matters enormously."

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox elevated to cathedral status

On Oct. 21, the Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco addressed the Greek Orthodox congregation in a ceremony elevating the church to cathedral status.

The Metropolitan quoted Christ's words in Luke, saying that the leader should be "like one who serves."

He acknowledged the honor of the Elevation in recognizing the many accomplishments of the Portland Greek community, but he emphasized that the honor of servitude and the refusal of exaltation brought the only true badge of glory.

"By entering these doors today," the Metropolitan continued, "you will be proclaiming to the world your readiness to serve as a beacon of the Orthodox faith to the entire Pacific Northwest."

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral is located at 3131 NE Glisan in Portland.

Kinnamon to lead NCC

The Rev. Michael Kinnamon, an ecumenical leader and pastor in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), was elected general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) at the council's annual governing board and general assembly held Nov. 5 to 8 in Iselin, N.J. He will assume his new responsibilities in January 2008 as the council's ninth general secretary since its beginnings in 1950. He succeeds Rev. Bob Edgar, who resigned Aug. 31 to lead the advocacy group Common Cause.

The New York-based NCC is the ecumenical voice of 35 of America's Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, historic African American and traditional peace churches, with a combined 45 million faithful members in 100,000 congregations. NCC is currently undergoing a reorganization and reduction in staff because of reduced revenues.

From 1999 to 2002, Kinnamon served as general secretary for the group that became known as Churches Uniting in Christ. Since 2000, he has served as executive secretary of the Commission on Faith and Order for the World Council of Churches and has been a professor at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis.

Kinnamon is a member of the NCC's governing board and was primary drafter of the council's strategic plan over the last three years. He earned his bachelor's degree from Brown University, his doctorate from the University of Chicago Divinity School and studied at Tel Aviv University.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Celebrating 100 years of prayer

Jan. 18 to 25, 2008, marks 100 years since the Society of the Atonement began praying for Christian unity during the first Church Unity Octave.



Throughout 2008, Christians everywhere are encouraged to join in prayer. The chosen theme is "Pray without Ceasing."

The Church Unity Octave, a forerunner of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, was developed by Father Paul Wattson, SA, at Graymoor in Garrison, New York, and was first observed at Graymoor from January 18 to 25, 1908. Today, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity invites the whole Christian community throughout the world to pray in communion with the prayer of Jesus "that they all may be one" (John 17:21).

Materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2008 can be ordered from Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute at www.geii.org/.

A part of EMO's future: The Letty Owings stewardship story

"EMO is always in my heart." – Letty Owings

When Letty Owings became the first woman president of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO), the first thing she learned was "so much good work is necessary that no single church or faith group could possibly do it all." Owings was profoundly impressed with "how much more can be done when we join hands at EMO and work together as the Bible mandates."

A lifelong Presbyterian, Letty Owings retired from teaching only to take on ecumenical work on a statewide and national level.

"I've worked with ecumenical groups all over the United States," Owings says. "EMO is by far the shining star. No organization can compete with the complex balance of dialogue, education, political and social work." She set up a charitable remainder trust with EMO as beneficiary, "because I wanted EMO to have some encouragement after I was gone."

Remainder trusts like Owings' are part of "planned giving" financial instruments through which donors can fulfill their stewardship and charitable goals, while providing for their own financial stability. In a remainder trust, a donor can receive a guaranteed income from assets (often a higher return than with a

conventional savings), while helping to ensure the future of a favorite charity.

Both the 300-year-old Presbyterian Foundation and the Oregon Community Foundation work with EMO donors free of charge to advise and help create such trusts, large and small. Owings chose the Presbyterian Foundation to work with her own financial advisors to invest and administer her gift.

While president of the EMO Board, Owings worked with former EMO Executive Director the Rev. Dr. Rodney Page and Nancy Anderson to create the *Letty Owings Center*, which provides comprehensive residential treatment to poverty-level women who are pregnant and/or parenting young children. The center opened in May 1989 to a need so great that in its first year, 24 families received treatment services and more than 500 families were turned away. EMO grew and developed the center for the next eight years.

Now a program of Central City Concern, the Letty Owings Center has 42 funded beds. As of June 2005, 179 drug-free babies have been born in the program and over 1,000 families have received treatment.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon sought funding and struggled with multiple issues to create this essential

resource for women and children in need. "Without EMO," Owings says, "there wouldn't be a Letty Owings Center."

But it's not only the social work aspect of EMO that inspires Owings. "EMO gave me a chance to sit at the feet of such thinkers as William Sloan Coffin, Hans Kung and so many others. It gives us in Oregon a chance to meet the movers and shakers of our time. It brings faith groups together. It breaks race barriers."

"I know," she continues, "how helpful it is when doing good work, to know there is something set aside for your future. I wanted to help provide that for an organization I believe in so strongly."

"I am proud to be a part of EMO," Owings says when speaking of her planned gift. "The organization and the people are always in my heart. I believe in its future and am glad to be a part of that future too."



Letty Owings

You can join Letty Owings in creating a legacy of caring to help future generations of Oregonians. You may simply choose to remember EMO in your will. Or, for information about remainder and lead trusts, estate planning, and gifts of land, stock or other appreciated securities, please contact David Leslie or Carla Starrett-Bigg at (503) 221-1054, or speak to your own financial advisor.

Honor & memorial gifts

July through October 2007

Gifts in Honor

In honor of John Elizalde
Julie E. Adams

In honor of Richard Royse's birthday
Otto Blumhagen

In honor of Sandy Roumagoux
Rev. David Brauer-Rieke

In honor of Ian, Audra and Madeline
Margaret E. Brown

In honor of Pam Buresh
Steve Buresh

In honor of Carla Starrett-Bigg
Steve Cahill

In honor of Janice Orloff's 90th birthday
Madeline B. Nelson

In honor of Tammy Burres
Barbara A. Olson

In honor of Sue & Rob Posey
Robert Peckham
Edna Roesler

In honor of Don and Margi's 43rd Anniversary
L. Fraser Rasmussen

In honor of Jane R. Tatreau
Norine R. Reres

In honor of David Leslie
Barbara Rice

In honor of Rev. Dr. Rodney Page
Fred Rosenbaum

In honor of Arthur Levinson
Hans G. Spalteholz

Gifts in Memory

In memory of Katherine Bentley, who gave so much as a volunteer
Lorna H. Grohman

In memory of Brian Bounous
Brenda Mendiola

In memory of John Casas
Raymond L. Barnes
Alexander Ruff

In memory of Jeff Edwards
Ester E. Edwards

In memory of Charlotte Juhnke
Audrey Keller & Bruce Shelquist

In memory of Arlene Kelly
Mike Delman

In memory of Alice & Fenn Laursen
Paul F. Laursen

In memory of Rosemary Maresh
Edmund J. Maresh

In memory of Roy L. Metcalf
Julie E. Adams



In memory of John Palensky
Julie E. Adams

In memory of Donald W. Sandau
Lisa M. Wenzlick

EMO celebrates recent grants & gifts

EMO's Board 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 Summer 2007 issue of the *Voice*.

Donor (Fund)	Program
American Baptist Church, National Ministries	Theological Education/ Collins Lecture
The Brainerd Foundation	Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns
Central Lutheran Church	NE Emergency Food Program, 2007 Annual Fund
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	2007 Annual Fund
The Collins Foundation	2007 Annual Fund
Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund	NE Emergency Food Program, HIV Services
First Christian Church, Portland	2007 Annual Fund
First Presbyterian Church, Portland	2007 Annual Fund
June and Julian Foss Foundation	Portland International Community School
James F & Marion L Miller Foundation	2007 Annual Fund
Kiwanis Club of Portland Foundation	NE Emergency Food Program
The M.A.C. AIDS Fund	HIV Services
Moreland Presbyterian Church	2007 Annual Fund
Oregon Food Bank	NE Emergency Food Program
Presbytery of the Cascades	2007 Annual Fund, HIV Services
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon	2007 Annual Fund
Rose E. Tucker Charitable Trust	Portland International Community School
St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church	Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees
St. James Lutheran Church	2007 Annual Fund
St. Luke Lutheran Church	NE Emergency Food Program
St. Mary Catholic Church	Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership
St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church	2007 Annual Fund, HIV Services
The Susan G. Komen Foundation	Russian Oregon Social Services
Tides Foundation	Oregon Interfaith Power & Light
Umpqua Bank	2007 Annual Fund
United Methodist Church	Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership
Until There's a Cure Foundation	HIV Services
U.S. Bancorp	Portland International Community School
Westminster Presbyterian Church	NE Emergency Food Program