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Building Bridges, Healing Communities *Benefit Dinner* funds a world of compassion

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) invites you to join us at our *Benefit Dinner & Awards Celebration* on April 24. Savor the timeless elegance and warmth of the historic Benson Hotel. Listen to the cool jazz of legendary Portland musician Danny Osborne and friends. Applaud our game-changing award winners from across the state. Celebrate EMO's many successes in serving our community. Funds raised by this event make possible our work to build a just, equitable and compassionate world. Your participation matters! As Rumi said, "Love is a bridge between you and everything."

Community leaders honored

We will shine the spotlight on public-spirited individuals and organizations whose courage, moral vision and civic engagement are an inspiration to us all.

Our "Ecumenist of the Year" **Kay D. Toran's** lifelong commitment to advocacy and action on behalf of the most vulnerable has made a significant difference in the lives of Oregonians. As president and CEO of Volunteers of America Oregon for nearly 20 years, and as director of Oregon's Services to Children and Families prior to that, she has helped countless members

of our community achieve health, safety and self-sufficiency. "It is my personal joy to serve others," says Toran, who cites her parents' example, her religious beliefs and her love of others as motivations for her beneficent leadership.

Since 1947, the **Neil Kelly family and the Neil Kelly Company** have contributed enormously to Portland's vitality and charitable capacity, and we honor **Neil and Arlene Kelly (in memoriam) and Tom Kelly and Barbara Woodford** with our "Humanitarian Award."

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Kay D. Toran, president and CEO of Volunteers of America Oregon, will be honored as "Ecumenist of the Year" on April 24.

Paying it forward: Refugee creates nonprofit to help other immigrants adjust to a new culture

Saalim spent 23 years in and out of a refugee camp in Kenya. He was born in Somalia to his Indian mother and Yemeni father, but even the cultural diversity of his family and community didn't prepare him for the culture shock he would experience upon arrival in the United States.

"I found myself in America and, of course, we had culture shock in the beginning," says Saalim. "Life is almost the same in the towns of Kenya, but in a refugee camp, things are totally different."

Saalim and his family were resettled through EMO's Sponsors Organized to Assist



Saalim and Fatuma became U.S. Citizens in July 2018.

Refugees (SOAR) in 2012. "They gave us things that we needed to start our new life," remembers Saalim. For nearly a year, he and his

wife Fatuma attended SOAR Immigration Legal Services' citizenship class, led by Eric Dodson, which prepared them to become U.S. citizens

in July 2018.

"The class motivated me," says Saalim. "Eric's class had that welcoming atmosphere, and you like going to class even if you are tired from work."

Saalim was so appreciative of the support he and his family received throughout the resettlement process, he decided to create his own organization, HAKI Community Organization. The nonprofit helps other Somali refugees by offering intercultural education, community engagement, and assistance with rental rights and responsibilities.

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Discovering the power of our shared brokenness

“Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done.”

“The opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice.”

— *Bryan Stevenson*

A remarkable series of meetings have been taking place for the last several years at the Portland Police Bureau’s North Precinct. Originally convened by The Rev. J.W. Matt Hennessee, pastor at Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church, the Interfaith Peace & Action Collaborative brings

together members from law enforcement, the faith community and business community twice each month in an effort to bridge divides—particularly between police and communities of color—and to create a more peaceful city.

The group’s purpose is to honor and promote restraint on the street, to create and maintain dialogue with each other, to increase sensitivity to and for each other, and to be sympathetic to the loss of life on the street no matter who it is and no matter how it happened. In working to improve community and police relations, the goal is to impact the criminal justice system to ultimately ensure real justice for all.

I have been impressed with the level of vulnerability, the genuine humility, and the honesty and respect with which the participants



Jan Musgrove Elfers
President

have engaged with one another, as we discuss very difficult and painful topics such as police shootings of black men. As the years have progressed, we have gradually developed more trust in each other and compassion for the lives and experiences that each of us uniquely brings to the table. This is very hard work. There is no shortcut to the time and commitment it takes to build these relationships.

In late January, our group held a listening session with several Portland gang members. This was one of the most challenging and moving meetings we have experienced together. As I listened, I heard our speaker, a gang member, talk about the brokenness, loss and isolation that bring young people to the place where they join a gang. He spoke of historic injustices and the lack of economic opportunities and resources that contribute to a sense of utter hopelessness. He spoke of love and grace and his gratitude for the fact that we cared enough to listen. This gave him—and all of us—renewed hope.

One of the police officers present responded to the speaker by recalling the Martin Luther King Jr. Shabbat Service at Congregation Beth Israel that I had also attended just a week before. American lawyer, social activist and author Bryan Stevenson addressed a standing-room-only audience that night about his work as the founder of the nonprofit organization Equal Justice Initiative, based in Montgomery, Ala. Stevenson is nationally recognized for his work challenging bias against the poor and minorities in the criminal justice system and for pushing for reform in the administration of criminal justice. Equal Justice Initiative is committed to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States,

challenging racial and economic injustice, and protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society.

In describing his efforts to transform institutions, Stevenson described four key factors that have helped him to take on challenges and overcome them. To be agents of change we need to:

- **Get proximate.** Draw closer to the issues we are trying to address and to the people we are trying to empower—to those who live on the margins of society, to the poor, neglected and excluded.
- **Change narratives.** Change the narratives that have led to injustice, such as labeling young offenders as “super-predators,” or categorizing drug users and people with addictions as criminals, rather than looking at addiction as a health issue. Address the false narratives of racial difference that justified genocide against Native Americans and slavery in America.
- **Discomfort.** Be willing to be uncomfortable, to do things that are difficult and inconvenient. Don’t take the easy way out; instead, press yourself to go outside of your comfort zone.
- **Keep hope alive.** Hopelessness is the enemy of justice, and without hope transformation will never happen. It takes courage to be hopeful.

Stevenson ended his speech with a truth that has been reiterated over and over again at our Interfaith Peace & Action Collaborative meetings at the North Precinct. The truth is this—we are all broken. Once we discover the power of our shared brokenness, then guided by grace and humility, we can live into a new and transformed way of being in community.

EMO Annual Benefit

Continued from page 1

Kelly family members and employees support a host of community organizations. For example, they have personally served a Meals on Wheels route for more than 40 years, and they have built three Habitat for Humanity homes and are at work on a fourth. The Portland Children’s Museum, Volunteers of America, United Way, EarthShare, Climate Solutions, League of Women Voters, Oregon Environmental Council, and Community Warehouse would not be the robust organizations they are today without significant Kelly support.

Additionally, Kelly scholarships provide tuition for first-generation college students, many from immigrant families. And thanks to a keen interest in protecting our environment, Tom Kelly founded Oregon Business for Climate, a statewide initiative to mobilize industry leaders for climate policy, carbon



Barbara Woodford and
Tom Kelly, Neil Kelly Co.

emission pricing, and investment in Oregon’s clean economy.

Ron Steiner, through his steadfast work for Oregonians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, manifests a bold vision of compassion for all—a calling informed by his Catholic faith and inspired by an encounter with Sister Helen Prejean. We honor his promotion of the principles of restorative justice for everyone affected by crime, including victims’ families and prisoners and their families, with our “Ecumenical Service Award.” The transformative work Steiner does heals fractured communities.

It is a particular delight to recognize the young adults in our midst who are carrying the torch for social justice, and this year we will bestow our “Young Visionary Award” on **Reyna Lopez**, executive director of PCUN, Oregon’s Farmworker Union.

The proud daughter of immigrants from



Ron Steiner, Oregonians
for Alternatives to the
Death Penalty

Mexico, raised in the Catholic faith, Lopez is a fierce advocate for Oregon’s Latinx community. She led the Yes on 88 Campaign, calling for driver’s cards for undocumented Oregonians. She founded Causa’s New American Voters Project, registering thousands of Oregon’s newest citizens to vote, and worked tirelessly to win tuition equity for Oregon’s Dreamer population.

Lopez also fights for gender equity in Oregon’s Paid Family and Medical Leave policy and on national campaigns to protect multiple safety net programs. Lopez’s largeness of heart and appetite for action are already shaping a more generous future for generations to come.

Bronze Sponsors to date include:

John Andrea; Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon; Augustana Lutheran Church;



Reyna Lopez,
PCUN – Oregon’s
Farmworker Union

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Eastern Oregon congregation reduces carbon footprint by joining community-based, biofuel heating system

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's project Oregon Interfaith Power & Light (OIPL) is proud to partner with our member denominations, congregations and others to help raise awareness about faith-filled responses to climate change, including how to green the operations and facilities at your place of worship and advocate for climate-friendly state and national policies.

St. Andrew's Episcopal / Peace Lutheran Church in eastern Oregon offers an inspiring example of this kind of work—a project of that congregation's own initiative. We highlight it in the story below—written by Chris Bates from the congregation—as an example of how our places of worship can be centers for change.

For more information about the project, contact saintandrewsburnsor@gmail.com.

St. Andrew's Episcopal / Peace Lutheran Church in Burns, Ore., is doing something remarkable this year. We had a vision to decrease our carbon footprint for mitigating climate change and safeguarding the integrity of Creation.

This was not the first time we were groundbreakers and trendsetters. St. Andrew's was the first church in Oregon to combine an Episcopal/Lutheran ministry when it joined with the ELCA Peace Lutheran Church. Now we are the first church in the nation to join in a biomass community heating system. Not bad for a little church in the southeastern Oregon frontier. While we might be a small church in the middle of nowhere, we are the first in the nation in heating technology innovations.

In 2012, Harney County School District and Harney County officials in southeastern



A ribbon cutting ceremony was held in Burns, Ore., for the High Desert Biomass Cooperative Energy System, a renewable clean energy heating system with an ultra-efficient wood-chip boiler.

Oregon looked at possible new heating systems for their elementary school and courthouse. The old oil-fired boilers needed to be replaced, so the community cooperative looked for a more viable alternative to heat the buildings during eastern Oregon's sub-zero, harsh winters.

The cooperative research committee found technology in Europe that utilizes hog fuel—forest slash, yard debris, twisted logs—to provide heat to a matrix-type grid that would meet the needs of the school and courthouse, which are situated five blocks away from each other.

The High Desert Biomass Cooperative asked if our congregation would be interested in partnering and joining the heating grid.

This heating grid uses new ecologically sound technology to distribute hot water created by an ultra-efficient wood-chip boiler to all facilities connected to the grid. The cooled water returns to the boiler for reheating. The fuel is garnered from commercial tree services along with local loggers and members of the public who bring their yard debris and branches to the county recycling center, where it is then chipped and stored for use in the boiler. This community-based heating system has a life expectancy of 40 years and requires little maintenance.

The use of biomass in a heating system is beneficial because it uses agricultural, forest, urban and industrial residues and waste to produce heat and electricity with less effect on the environment than fossil fuels.

By partnering and connecting St. Andrew's

Episcopal / Peace Lutheran Church's building to the High Desert Biomass Cooperative Energy System, our congregation is decreasing our winter heating bill, improving the health and welfare of our congregation, and improving the air quality of our community.

The High Desert Biomass Cooperative Energy System was started in Burns to create an alternative renewable clean energy heating system that supported local ecologically responsible stewardship of our community. The old oil-fired boiler systems emitted smoke and oil droplets into the air, causing several unhealthy community air quality days.

To date, those buildings that have been hooked up to the grid have shown a decrease in respiratory infections in their children and employees, had substantial savings in heating costs and decreased the number of black flag warnings for bad air days in the community.

By participating in this community-based project, we can assist the partners in showcasing this ecologically sound method of heating, thereby promoting and expanding this heating grid to more businesses, churches and private homes.

Working with partners, we build trust and community awareness of the importance of mitigating air quality issues. Our church is now providing an ecologically warm, healthy and friendly building in which to gather diverse members of the community to share fellowship and encourage the presence of Jesus.

Grants received from the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon Foundation, Lutheran Mission Endowment Fund and Bisbee Foundation were used to connect our church to the grid by bringing the piping from the edge of the road to the church building and retrofitting our heating system.

On Thursday, Jan. 3, 2019, our congregation had a ribbon cutting ceremony. The event was featured in the local newspaper (*Burns Times Herald*) as the photo of the week.

We invite other churches to explore the benefits of biofuel and the success of working with partners to benefit air quality. Harney County's cooperative project is decreasing our carbon footprint by eliminating the use of heating oil, changing to a more sustainable biofuel heating system, and reducing overall costs for the entire community.

EMO Annual Benefit

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Community of Christ – Greater Pacific NW Mission Center; Concordia University; Robert and Carolyn Cornie; John Dennis; First Unitarian Church of Portland; Kaiser Permanente Insurance, Providence Health Plan, USI Insurance Services; Jim Kelly, Sue Porter; Musgrove Mortuaries & Cemeteries; Neil Kelly Co.; Rodney Page, Ron Means; Presbytery of the Cascades; Providence Health & Services; Marilyn Sewell, George Crandall; Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary; Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Susan Kintner; United Methodist Church Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference; and University of Portland.

Join us!

The *Benefit Dinner & Awards Celebration* takes place Wednesday, April 24, at the Benson Hotel, 309 SW Broadway, Portland. Check-in, silent auction and jazz reception begin at 5 p.m., followed by dinner, live auction and awards celebration at 6:30 p.m.

Admission is \$100 per person (festival seating). Bronze Sponsorships are \$2,000 (includes reserved seating for ten). Make reservations online at emoregon.org or by calling (503) 221-1054.

Voice

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MEMBER DENOMINATIONS

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Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
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Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon
Episcopal Diocese of Oregon
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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

Oregon receives grant to improve educational outcomes for homeless students

Goal to improve success of unaccompanied homeless students by helping communities replicate EMO's Second Home program

Education Leads Home—the only national campaign focused exclusively on addressing the needs of the 1.3 million homeless students enrolled in America's public schools—announced the award of \$20,000 to the state of Oregon to improve educational outcomes for students experiencing homelessness.

This award is part of a first-of-its-kind partnership bringing together policymakers and practitioners from six states—California, Kentucky, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon and Washington—to overcome child and youth homelessness through education. Through the partnership, each state has committed to researching and implementing replicable best practices that address the most urgent needs of their unique homeless student populations.

Last year, public schools reported the highest number of homeless students enrolled on record. Students experiencing homelessness are 87 percent more likely to drop out of school than their peers with stable housing. Without a high school diploma, individuals are 4.5 times more likely to experience homelessness later in life. Over four percent of Oregon's public school students are homeless, and nearly 17 percent of those students are unaccompanied by parents or guardians. While Oregon school districts are consistently successful at connecting unaccompanied youth with educational services and supports, the biggest barrier to high school graduation and overall school success for these young people is often the lack of a decent,



Photo credit: Katherine Kimball

Second Home has empowered its students to earn a 96 percent graduation rate.

regular and safe place to sleep.

By developing an innovative and collaborative “learning lab” of best practices, Education Leads Home is committed to helping states like Oregon break the cycle of poverty and homelessness.

The activities pursued by each grantee state are based on their respective educational priorities and unique demographics. Oregon's State Partnerships on Student Homelessness Project grantee team—a collaborative effort of the Office of the Governor, the Departments of Education and Human Services, and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO)—seeks to significantly improve the high school success of unaccompanied homeless students by helping communities replicate EMO's Second Home program, a proven host home model that partners with school districts and local dispute mediation center staff.

By providing stable housing and ongoing

support for unaccompanied students experiencing homelessness, Second Home allows students to focus on completing their secondary education and discover and realize their gifts and potential. The program currently serves school districts in Washington, Gresham, Clackamas and Lincoln Counties. Second Home has empowered its students to earn a 96 percent graduation rate, while the overall four-year graduation rate for homeless students in the same district is only 49 percent.

“Having safe, stable housing is foundational to students' success in school,” said Governor Kate Brown. “With this additional funding, we have the opportunity to match students in more areas of our state with caring adults to provide them with a place to call home as they complete high school.”

The team will increase programmatic awareness, solicit host home volunteers, and rally financial support throughout Oregon, with the ultimate goal of connecting eligible students with family hosts and increasing collaboration between school, housing providers and community-based organizations.

The State Partnerships on Student Homelessness Project is a nonpartisan effort to develop best practices that can be replicated by communities and states nationwide.

For more information about Education Leads Home, please visit educationleadshome.org. Learn more about Second Home at emo-secondhome.org.

Thursday, April 25: Dine out, end HIV

Join EMO's HIV Services on Thursday, April 25, for Portland's tenth annual *Dining Out For Life*.

Dining Out For Life is an annual international event to raise funds for AIDS service organizations. When you dine out at a local participating restaurant, 20 to 35 percent of your purchase will go directly to local programs serving people with HIV/AIDS. The fundraiser is held in over 60 cities throughout the United States and Canada. In the Portland metro area, Dining Out For Life benefits EMO's HIV Services and OHSU's Partnership Project.

Dining Out For Life provides the opportunity for Portland's communities to nourish ourselves and directly contribute to the nourishment and support of others in need. At EMO's HIV Day Center, we provide hundreds of meals a month for low-income, HIV-positive clients, and we support them in accessing critical medical resources such as medical case management at OHSU's Partnership Project.

Last year, 40 Portland restaurants participated in *Dining Out For Life* in every quadrant of the city. Diners also had the opportunity to give personal donations that night. In total, over \$28,000 was raised for the two organizations.

Great Portland metro area restaurants are



lined up again this year, including (but not limited to) 3 Doors Down, Al Amir, Beesaw's, Bison Coffeehouse, Bridges Café, Extracto, Ford Food & Drink, Garden Bar (Old Town location), Gracie's, Hale Pele, La Luna Café, Las Primas, The Original, P & Q's Market, Peter's Bar & Grill, Pie Spot, Red Sauce Pizza, Rose & Thistle, and 17 McMenumins locations—and more restaurants are signing on daily. Dine out at one of these restaurants on April 25, and be sure to mention that you're there for “Dining Out.”

For more information and a full restaurant listing, visit diningoutforlife.com/portland or call EMO's HIV Services at (503) 460-3822.

Paying it forward

Continued from page 1

“Since coming here, I received lots of help,” says Saalim. “One day I thought it's time to give back. That's why I decided to start a nonprofit organization, so I can help people reach their goals.”

As a U.S. citizen, Saalim reflects, “I feel more confident. I stand with two feet on the ground. I stand upright [knowing] I'm a citizen now. I have more rights and more confidence.”

If you or someone you know is interested in taking a free citizenship class, view our current schedule at emoregon.org/soar-legal/citizenship-classes/ or contact Angie Kelly at SOAR Legal at (503) 384-2482 or akelly@emoregon.org.

Introducing “Highlight of the Week”

Saalim's story is the first in an ongoing series, “Highlight of the Week.” Each week on EMO's social media platforms, we highlight one of EMO's programs with either information about an upcoming event or an inspirational story featuring one of our clients.

Follow EMO on Instagram @e_m_oregon and Twitter @EcumenicalO.

Meet our new program managers

Oksana Davletshina, Russian Oregon Social Services (ROSS)

Tell us about your background.

I grew up in Russia and moved to Portland with my husband and three children in 2016. We sought asylum in the United States, because of the war between Russia and Ukraine. We moved to Portland, because of the huge Russian-speaking community here and the amazing nature. It was a big change in every aspect of our lives. In Russia, I had obtained a JD in Criminal Law and established my own law practice. I miss that career, but am grateful I changed to the nonprofit sector. My passion lies in helping people who are in need, who often are not able to afford private services. I have been a human rights activist all my life. This is partly why I had to leave my home country—because I was advocating for people who were victims of the oppressive political system.



Why did you choose to work for Russian Oregon Social Services?

I joined ROSS as a sexual assault advocate in 2017 and was promoted to the program manager position last year. As an immigrant myself, I am passionate about helping people from the Russian-speaking community build new lives here. I want them to feel safe in the United States and to learn how to embrace their new culture. It is a challenging task because of cultural and language barriers. As program manager at ROSS, I am doing my best to make a difference and love every day at work.

What is your vision for ROSS?

ROSS is the only agency in the nation that provides services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in the Russian-speaking community. We receive calls from different parts of the country, and even from foreign countries. We wish to open an office in Vancouver, Wash., because we have a huge Russian-speaking community in this area, and people really need our services.

We are also very interested in working with youth. Our vision is that by promoting a culture of respect and nonviolence with children and youth at an early age, we can prevent future

violent behavior. And we would like to build bridges with faith communities, because faith leaders have an important role to play in ending domestic violence in all forms. Clergy are often the first resource a person turns to in times of trouble, as they seek counsel, support and safety. Faith leaders must be trained to deal with these situations.

What do you find most rewarding about your work?

It's most rewarding to see how survivors' lives change after they find the courage to leave abusive relationships and stand up for themselves. Our organization plays a crucial role in this challenging, transformational process. We provide emotional support, help navigate the legal system and connect clients with available resources. We build relationships with our clients based on respect, a positive attitude and understanding. It's a joy to see survivors become self-sufficient, find inner peace, regain confidence, and plan their future based on hope, not fear.

What can volunteers do to assist your program?

There will never be enough people to do all the work that needs to be done here! Volunteers can mentor survivors, help us organize events, and plan activities for survivors and their families. They can also help with fundraising and research available funding sources. Other opportunities include leading ESL classes, community orientation and support groups.

Andrew Brown, Metro HomeShare (MHS)

Tell us about your background.

I have been in Portland for eight years and love being in this community. My professional background in this area has been in homeless services. I ran homeless shelters for two different agencies and then moved into supportive services for public housing. I volunteer for Friends of Trees and at a local hospice. I am a woodworker, a cook and a voracious reader.



My other name is Bokudo. I am a practicing Zen Buddhist and am deeply involved in my Zen community. I live in the Woodstock area with my lovely spouse, a terrier mutt and a wee cat.

Why did you choose to work for Metro HomeShare?

It spoke to me on multiple levels. First, it was a lot of fun. There is joy to be found in helping others expand their capacity for generosity. Opening up one's home and sharing space with a stranger is an act of deep faith and kindness. It is an honor to help manifest that courage and humility in the world.

Secondly, I was excited to work for a faith-based organization. The mission and vision of EMO and Metro HomeShare resonates with my own personal vow to care for all beings. The fundamental value of all humanity and the earth is integral to our work and informs how we show up.

Lastly, there is room to grow. There is an enormous potential for the Metro HomeShare, and I am anxious to see what we can make of it. The staff is amazing, and they have redoubled their efforts towards seeing us succeed. I am humbled by their enthusiasm and cannot wait to get to work every day.

What is your vision for Metro HomeShare?

For now, we are really tightening up our processes. The program is at a very good place for an evaluation and assessment, and we have learned a great deal about our efficacy.

Metro HomeShare is poised to grow into Washington, Clackamas and Clark Counties over the next year. Our focus is to establish solid work processes that can be reliably replicated in three different communities. The next area of focus is to broaden our outreach to increase the number of home providers. The affordable housing crisis in our region is pervasive. Metro HomeShare must concentrate on the recruitment and retention of people and families who have room in their homes and hearts.

That's actually quite a handful for the first year. With the thrills and chills that are a natural part of any nonprofit program, I think we've got a pretty full plate.

What do you find most rewarding about your work?

The most rewarding aspect of the job so far has been the reception this program has gotten. There is something so simple and direct about our efforts that it speaks to people. The lack of complexity is reassuring, as is the thought of people being comforting to each other. We all feel better knowing we live in a community where people open their doors to those in need, which hopefully challenges us to open doors in our own lives.

What can volunteers do to assist your program?

We really need to get the word out to seniors and empty-nesters who have extra room in their homes. We would love to have volunteers who could help us with outreach in their communities. MHS staff would love to come and speak to your faith or community group about our program. As we grow, we will build out our volunteer opportunities to better meet the needs of those wishing to serve with us.

Metro HomeShare helps Home Providers stabilize and retain their housing, while offering access to affordable rent or services to Home Seekers. To learn more, visit metrohomeshare.org, or contact staff at metrohomeshare@emoregon.org or (971) 271-5195.

Russian Oregon Social Services celebrates 25 years of service!

Russian Oregon Social Services (ROSS) was established by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon in 1994 to serve the needs of Russian-speaking refugees and immigrants. The program aims to provide services that increase independence, enable economic self-sufficiency, and improve mental and physical well-being for this community. ROSS is currently the only agency in the nation that works exclusively with the Russian-speaking population. Census figures show that no other place in the nation has had more of an influx from the former Soviet Union than the Pacific Northwest. More than 100,000 Russian-speaking refugees and immigrants from the former Soviet Union currently reside in the Portland metro area.

Learn more about Russian Oregon Social Services at emo-ross.org, or contact ROSS staff at (503) 777-3437 or ross@emoregon.org.

6 Public Policy Advocacy

Community of faith advocates for shared goals during 2019 Oregon Legislative Session

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) and eight other faith-based organizations have joined forces to advocate for a shared 2019 legislative agenda. Faith Action Oregon members are focusing their collective efforts on housing, immigration and health care, as we push for a state budget that reflects our moral responsibilities to one another, and as we stress the need to stand with the marginalized.

The other Faith Action Oregon members include the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon, Interfaith Council of Greater Portland, Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, Muslim Educational Trust, Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices, Portland Spirit Led Justice Alliance, and United Methodist Women Oregon-Idaho Conference.

At *Interfaith Advocacy Day 2019* on March 4, nearly 300 people of faith gathered in Salem and met with their legislators to advocate for these issues.

If you were unable to attend *Interfaith Advocacy Day 2019*, you can still make sure Oregon's faith voice is heard at the Capitol! Call 1-800-332-2313 or search online for Legislator Lookup Oregon to tell your state senator and state representative you support the Faith Action Oregon agenda. The following is a brief overview of each issue area and the related legislative agenda items.

Help End Child & Youth Homelessness

When it comes to the rate of child and youth homelessness, Oregon is worst in the country: 21,750 K-12 students experienced homelessness in 2017-18, and 3,493 of those students were



Photo credit: Michelle Bush

During *Interfaith Advocacy Day 2019* on March 4, people of faith gathered at the Oregon State Capitol building to meet with their legislators to advocate for affordable housing, welcoming refugees and access to health care.

separated from their families, many sleeping in parks or cars.

Faith Action Oregon calls on the Legislature to:

- Invest \$50 million for emergency rent assistance and other supports to individuals and families.
- Invest \$10 million for housing, meals and educational stability for unaccompanied homeless youth.

Stand with Refugees and Immigrants

The federal government has made drastic cuts to programs and services that enable refugees already living in Oregon to start new lives free from fear and persecution. And the separation of immigrant families continues with hundreds of Oregonians facing deportation because they can't afford an immigration attorney—assistance that makes them over five times more

likely to avoid an unjust deportation.

Faith Action Oregon calls on the Legislature to:

- Pass HB 2508 (see article below for more information) to provide education, employment, domestic violence survivor, health, housing and other key supports for up to 1,800 refugees who have recently arrived in our state.
- Invest \$2 million over the next two years to provide legal support for those facing deportation.

Fully Fund Medicaid

Roughly 1.1 million Oregonians receive Medicaid services through the Oregon Health Plan.

Faith Action Oregon calls on the Legislature to:

- Fully close the \$7.38 million Medicaid budget gap, ensuring coverage for all who need it.

Oregon Legislature introduces “Welcoming Refugees” bill

Oregon has long been a critical player in the global response to the refugee crisis. Oregon has welcomed over 67,000 refugees since 1975, and 600 are expected to arrive this year. But our state's history of welcoming refugees is threatened. Refugee resettlement services have historically been funded by the federal government, but that funding has eroded rapidly over the past few years.

Oregon's Refugee Resettlement Coalition (RRC) is a group of direct service and advocacy organizations who have come together to support House Bill 2508 to protect refugee resettlement services in Oregon.

Resettlement services include housing support, tenant-landlord dispute resolution, health care, advocacy following incidents of domestic violence or hate crimes, employment referral, educational support, family-school engagement, disability benefits navigation and English language learning programs, among others—all tailored to the unique needs of refugees.

The RRC is led by Oregon's three refugee resettlement agencies—Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, Catholic Charities of Oregon and Lutheran Community Services NW—with Unite Oregon and Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization (IRCO).



Countries in blue are where refugees come from who arrive in Oregon.

What is HB 2508?

HB 2508 will provide 1,800 refugees with Extended Case Management (ECM) over two years, including employment services and supports to school-aged children. Refugees who receive ECM for two years are significantly less likely to depend on public assistance long-term. In addition, these funds will stabilize the resettlement process to ensure that refugees can reunite with their families and Oregon will remain a welcoming state for refugees.

The Problem

Cuts in refugee admissions and funding at the federal level put local refugees at risk of falling through the cracks, experiencing economic hardship, and jeopardizing their path to

becoming full participants in our communities. In addition, funding gaps from federal sources for refugee resettlement are threatening Oregon's history of welcoming refugees.

The Solution

Investing in refugees from their first few years of arrival accelerates their trajectory for success. Studies have shown that with proper support and case management, refugees are generally employed within six months and bring immense contributions to the economy, diversity, and social fabric of the state. When refugees are better equipped with support services and Extended Case Management, crisis situations are less common, thus saving taxpayer money going toward emergency responses, emergency room visits and public assistance.

Call 1-800-332-2313 or search online for Legislator Lookup Oregon to tell your state senator and state representative you support refugees and HB 2508.

On March 13, the bill was unanimously passed out of the Human Services and Housing Committee to the Ways and Means Committee. Find the latest status of the bill at <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2019R1/Measures/Overview/HB2508>.

Diverse faith leaders put aside differences, rediscover shared beliefs & focus on peacemaking at *Common Table Retreat*

In an era of unprecedented division, strife and polarization, the Common Table offers a glimmer of hope: last fall 30 faith leaders from all around Oregon gathered to put aside their political and ideological differences to rediscover what they have common.

Participating faith traditions included: Muslim, Jewish, Evangelical, LGBT Christians, Buddhist, Catholic, Sikh, Indigenous, Lutheran, Church of Latter-Day Saints, Baptist, Presbyterian, Metropolitan Community Church, Episcopalian, Methodist, Church of God, Quaker, Christian Missionary Alliance, Mennonite, Young Life, and United Church of Christ.

The central metaphor for the Common Table is a kitchen table—one where family members gather in love and vulnerability to talk from their hearts instead of their playbooks.

Tired of being turned against one another by a political landscape that seems to thrive on animosity and vilification, participants gathered as wisdom keepers to reimagine how Oregon's rich and varied faith traditions might demonstrate peacemaking in the public square.

The central metaphor for the Common Table is a kitchen table—one where family members gather in love and vulnerability to talk from their hearts instead of their playbooks.

Difficult conversations were had, and everyone present expressed their desire to move beyond the kind of pseudo-community that says one thing and then does another. Naturally, leaders were reminded that there are many places where they would continue to disagree. But everyone present committed to remaining at the table, to go on learning about one another, trusting one another and standing together—even in the midst of their differences. In the friendships that were formed, we were reminded that what unites us far outweighs what divides us, and that we could all stand to give more weight to what we are *for* instead of what we are *against*.

In March, the faith leaders gathered again to deepen relationships and discuss the next steps



Last fall, 30 faith leaders from across the state gathered at the Oregon coast for the first Common Table Retreat.

for the Common Table. For the first year this will involve a “mapping” project to discover the collective faith-based impact on hunger and housing throughout Oregon. This work will be kicked off in the spring with the launch of a Common Table website, and later this year we hope to duplicate this gathering in regional hubs throughout the state.

If you have questions about the Common Table or if you'd like to learn how to be involved, contact Jan Musgrove Elfers at jelfers@emoregon.org.

Public Witness in the Pews Harnessing the power of congregations for positive legislative change



During the 2019 Oregon Legislative Session, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) is developing a new resource for congregations seeking to engage members on key legislative issues relevant to people of faith. We have created a new series of worship bulletin inserts, “Public Witness in the Pews,” for free use in congregations across Oregon.

Each bulletin insert highlights one of the key legislative priority areas that EMO and its partners are working on this Legislative Session—climate justice, youth homelessness, criminal justice reform, and refugee services—as well as ways congregations can take action.

The bulletin inserts are available for use at any point this spring. Join member congregations across the state in raising

awareness and taking action for an Oregon alive with our shared values.

You may download the Public Witness in the Pews bulletin inserts at emoregon.org/advocacy-action/legislative-priorities/.

If you use the inserts in your congregation, please let us know so we can share how faith communities are participating. If you have prayer resources or reflections about legislative issues, please share them with us for future publications. And, if you have other ideas for how EMO can help you get your congregation involved in advocacy issues, please contact us at cosa@emoregon.org.

Together, we can work for the common good and make Oregon a healthy, safe home for everyone.

Save the date for the 2019 *Collins Summit*

Building Bridges & Healing Communities through Mutual Accompaniment

The 2019 *Collins Summit*, scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 16, will explore mutual accompaniment in building the beloved community.

The *Collins Summit* will focus on a specific theological challenge: building bridges and healing communities, coming from a place of one's own brokenness into friendship and solidarity with our most vulnerable neighbors.

The guest lecturer will be Dr. Carlos Mendoza Álvarez, associate professor and researcher at the Department of Religious Studies and coordinator of the Faith and Culture Program at Iberoamericana University in Mexico City.

Mendoza Álvarez completed his post-graduate doctoral studies in theology at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and he has been a visiting research scholar at Fordham University, New York. He was the chief editor of the review *Justicia y Paz (Justice and Peace)*. He has several publications to his credit.

Please check EMO's website at emoregon.org for developing details.

EMO celebrates grants & gifts

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon’s board of directors and staff extend their appreciation to those who support EMO’s ministries. The following is a partial list of foundation and community support received by EMO since the last issue of the *Voice*.

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American Immigration Lawyers Association	SOAR Immigration Legal Services
Autzen Foundation	NE Emergency Food Program
Cascade AIDS Project, Inc.	HIV Services
The Collins Foundation	Annual Fund
DDI Benefits	HIV Services
Episcopal Diocese of Oregon	Criminal Justice
Broadway Cares Equity Fights AIDS	HIV Services
Harris Family Foundation	Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees
Hart Family Foundation	NE Emergency Food Program
Hoover Family Foundation	Second Home
Irwin Foundation	NE Emergency Food Program
Juan Young Trust	Second Home
Kaiser Foundation Hospitals	NE Emergency Food Program, Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees
M.A.C. AIDS Fund	HIV Services
Multnomah Bar Foundation	SOAR Immigration Legal Services
National Christian Foundation Northwest	NE Emergency Food Program
Oregon Community Foundation	Russian Oregon Social Services
Oregon Environmental Council	Oregon Interfaith Power & Light
Oregon Law Foundation	SOAR Immigration Legal Services
Portland Leadership Foundation	Common Table
Portland Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence	HIV Services
Pride Foundation	HIV Services
St. Luke Lutheran Church	NE Emergency Food Program
United Methodist Women of Hillsboro	SOAR Immigration Legal Services
Joseph E. Weston Public Foundation	Annual Fund, Second Home
Wieden + Kennedy	SOAR Immigration Legal Services

The 2019 Collins Match: A challenge worth taking

We are deeply grateful to the Collins Foundation for leading the way in Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon’s (EMO) 2019 Annual Fund drive with a \$70,000 challenge grant. New and increased donations made to EMO will be matched by the Collins Foundation. Your support will bring together Oregonians for interfaith dialogue, direct service to those who need it most, and advocacy addressing the root causes of poverty and environmental degradation.

To double your new or increased gift to EMO, please use the form below or make a secure online donation at emoregon.org.

Double my gift to EMO with the Collins Match!

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please make tax-deductible check payable to EMO or pay by:

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express ZIP code _____

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

Please send your gift to:

EMO, 0245 SW Bancroft St., Suite B, Portland, OR 97239.

You may also make a secure online donation at emoregon.org.

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September 2018 - February 2019

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