

Summer
2007

Our VOICE

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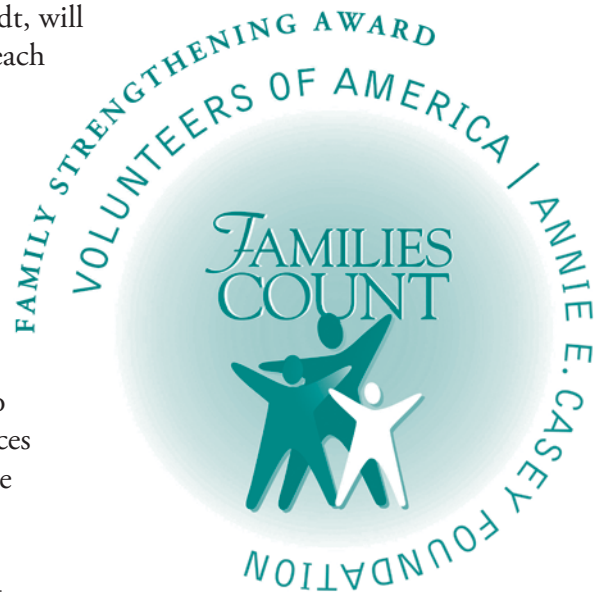
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Home Free Wins Special Award

When the time came for the selection committee to choose recipients for the 2007 Volunteers of America/Annie E. Casey Family Strengthening Awards, Home Free was on the top of the list. Home Free, the domestic violence intervention program operated by Volunteers of America Oregon (VOAOR) under the leadership of Program Director Kris Billhardt, will be among the three local agency programs each selected to receive a \$20,000 award.

Kay Toran, VOAOR President and CEO, will accept the award during a special ceremony on June 26 in Cincinnati, Ohio. The overall goal of the annual award program is to encourage the development of approaches that strengthen families and improve outcomes for children, as well as to recognize those programs whose best practices demonstrate outstanding results. Home Free exemplifies the best of those criteria.

When a study revealed that only 15 percent of Oregon's domestic violence survivors were contacting shelters or crisis lines for help, Billhardt and her staff recognized a need for change.



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Greg Stone Receives Hilltop Award

For more than 15 years, Greg Stone has been the Program Director at Volunteers of America Oregon's Men's Residential Center (MRC), working tirelessly to inspire men toward making positive life changes.

In the 52-bed facility occupied by participants referred from the Multnomah County criminal justice system, Greg has succeeded in creating one of the most highly regarded substance abuse rehabilitation programs in the county—this according to Kathleen Treb, Assistant Director for the Department of Community Justice, Multnomah County.

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Our Vision

Volunteers of America Oregon is a leader in creating vibrant, compassionate communities where every member is valued, every home is safe and every life is self-determined.

Our Mission

Volunteers of America Oregon changes lives by promoting self-determination, building strong communities and standing for social justice.

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Writer: Sharon Rockey

Visit our website for news: www.voaoor.org

From the Desk of the President



Greetings,

It's a pleasure to be able to share our most recent good news about the well-deserved awards received by some of our outstanding programs.

Home Free, our domestic violence intervention program, will be presented with the Volunteers of America Oregon/Annie E. Casey Family Strengthening Award on June 26, in Cincinnati, Ohio. Receiving this \$20,000 award not only brings additional financial support to help further our work, it's a great tribute to Program Director Kris Billhardt and her staff for their dedication and exemplary work.

Another of our program directors was recently honored. Greg Stone, Program Director at the Men's Residential Center received the Hilltop Award on April 25, at a special event hosted by Multnomah County's Commission on Children, Families, and Community. Greg accepted the award in recognition of his many achievements in helping men in the rehabilitation program get a second chance to rebuild their lives.

I'd also like to acknowledge the \$82,000 award received from the Volunteers of America National Endowment Fund. This award will greatly enhance our Food Services program's ability to broaden their

catering services and increase revenues for the Business Enterprise Division, which in turn, supports the cost of our agency's daily operations. *Details on page 6.*

In the midst of all the good news, we were saddened to learn of the death of our angel, Lloyd Forsythe. Lloyd had been a long-time friend and a former employee. As the sole recipient of an estate valued in excess of \$1 million, we continue to be awed and inspired by his generosity. In accordance with his wishes, for a period of time, the interest on the bequest will be directed toward supporting programs for our senior citizens and children. Words can not express our gratitude to Lloyd.

I can't close without thanking so many of you for your continued contributions and support. Please know that your gifts are not only deeply appreciated, they make it possible for us to bring our high-quality programs and important services to the community. With your help we will continue to change lives, recognize individual potential, and create stronger families and a safer community.

Kay Toran, President and CEO
Volunteers of America Oregon

Become a Mentor

Mentors are needed for Portland Partners Re-entry Initiative

If you're over 25 and are interested in using your positive social skills to help empower others and create a safer community, the Portland Partners Re-entry Initiative (PPRI) program is seeking mentors like you.

Having just begun the second year of a four-year pilot project funded by the Department of Labor (DOL), PPRI is helping adults who have been incarcerated make the transition from prison back to the community. SE Works, the grant administrator, and Volunteers of America Oregon work in partnership with other agencies* to assist up to 200 men and women annually in finding work, education, and support services.

To become a mentor, you'll first attend a training program in which you'll gain an understanding about the issues that program participants might face. Once in your role as mentor, you'll be a positive influence and offer a listening ear, support, and encouragement. Mentors may also help participants build a variety of simple life skills such as budgeting, grocery shopping, using public transportation, preparing for a job interview, and parenting skills.

How the PPRI program works:

Participants receive employment skills training during their incarceration. Upon release, they meet with a case manager at SE Works, Central City Concern, Better People, or YWCA. If a mentor is desired, a request is made to Cynthia Harrison, PPRI Volunteer Coordinator and AmeriCorps volunteer member, who then arranges a compatible match.

This unique mentor service is being designed by Shannon Davis, AmeriCorps Vista volunteer member, with leadership from Cindy Stadel, PPRI Program Director with Volunteers of America Oregon.

The program also allows the DOL to track how transition services help reduce recidivism. The cost of operating programs like PPRI, which helps individuals return to a useful life in the community, is substantially lower than if that same person re-commits and returns to jail or prison. Also, the importance of having effective transition programs directly corresponds to having safer communities and safer neighborhoods.

While those participating in PPRI have served time in prison, it's important to remember that they're also mothers, fathers, siblings, young adults, and significant others. They have responsibilities, interests, hobbies, aspirations, goals, experience, education, and real concerns. What they typically don't have are resources, support systems, and a clear vision of how to break the cycle of poverty and criminality. That's the real value of a program like PPRI, and the importance of having dedicated mentors. If you're doing well and would like to help someone who is struggling, this program is for you.

For more information on how to become a mentor, you can find details at our websites: www.seworks.org and www.voaoor.org. ■

* Central City Concern, Better People, YWCA, the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice, and the Oregon Department of Corrections



Mentor Qualifications

- At least 25 years old
- Emotionally mature stable lifestyle
- Positive social and communication skills
- Patient
- Flexible
- Respectful of individual, cultural, social and religious differences
- Sincere interest in helping recently incarcerated adults transition effectively into our community
- Clean and sober for at least three years

Benefits

- An opportunity to learn and share experiences
- Help a person mature, progress and achieve goals
- Contribute positively to an individual and to your community
- Exposure to diverse individuals and environments
- Training, group activities and mentor support
- Learn about the justice system and issues facing the re-entry community

Men who had previously never known lives without crime and drug addiction are receiving the level of care and support at MRC that's necessary to live clean and sober lives and to contribute back to the community.

In a greatly deserved tribute for his achievements and commitment, Greg received the "Hilltop" award on April 25 at a special event hosted by Multnomah County's Commission on Children, Families & Community (CCFC). "Hilltop" stands for Heroes Inspiring Leadership, Learning, Teamwork, Opportunity and Pride—and we can think of no better way to describe Greg Stone!

"Greg's professional competence is fueled by his compassion," says Pam Kelly, Rehabilitation Division Director, who nominated Greg for the award. "He gives

the men what most people don't believe they deserve—respect. But in return he asks them to be accountable—perhaps for the first time in their lives—to others and more importantly, to themselves."

Kay Toran, CEO and President of Volunteers of America Oregon added words of praise, "Greg has been a true inspiration to his staff, our staff, the men at the center, and to the community at large. Thank you, Greg, for all you do." ■



Greg Stone, Program Director,
Men's Residential Center

MRC's Annual Alumni Celebration: A Measure of Success

If one can measure a program's success by the loyalty and gratitude expressed by former participants, then the Men's Residential Center (MRC) is doing something right.

On April 27, the annual Alumni Celebration—the largest and most notable event of the year for the MRC—brought 96 men together to reconnect with staff and friends,

share success stories, and celebrate each other's courage for having turned their lives around. Together, they represented over 325 years of sobriety! That's a lot to celebrate and a lot to be grateful for.

Now in its 11th year, the event has become so popular, it's outgrown the previous location and now meets in the great hall at Westminster

Presbyterian Church where everyone enjoys a dinner prepared and served by MRC staff.

In addition to attending the annual alumni event, many of these men—whose lives had formerly been marked by crime and addiction—have returned to the center to be mentors for others.

"This event is a wonderful way to thank the alumni for all they do in supporting new clients entering treatment at the MRC, and for the strength they've shown in their own recoveries," noted Greg Stone, Program Director. "They're helping spread the possibility of recovery and empowering others to become more accountable, and they're helping create a safer community for everyone."

Congratulations to Greg, his staff, and to the men who are giving back in appreciation for all they've received at MRC.

For information about the program at The Men's Residential Center, visit our website at www.voar.org. ■



L to R: Joe Kleinhenz, Treatment Coordinator; John Williams, former MRC participant; Greg Stone, MRC Program Director.

After decades of offering short-term emergency shelter for women and children, Home Free closed its shelter and expanded its reach to be more accessible and to better meet the needs of the underserved survivor population in the Portland area.

Home Free's model provides for survivors' immediate safety needs through a motel vouchers program, expanding the emergency housing options in our community. Better access to domestic violence services is possible through advocates stationed in community-based settings such as the courthouse, child welfare and self-sufficiency offices, and the domestic violence unit of the local police bureau.

Critical to the program's model is a commitment to stay involved with families and focus on needs that persist

well beyond flight from immediate danger. Home Free's "Housing First" program assists survivors in obtaining housing and helps with rent, utilities, and other costs of setting up and stabilizing a home.

Of equal importance, advocates work actively with each survivor for as long as two years helping them navigate through issues involving law enforcement, child welfare, and civil legal processes. Services are aimed at reducing the vulnerability to return to an abusive partner by helping survivors establish lasting safety—a life no longer defined by domestic violence.

Twenty-one hard working staff members assisted by 30 volunteers keep the program running. Volunteers play a variety of roles that include staffing the crisis line, co-facilitating

support groups, helping in the restraining order advocacy program at the Courthouse, and supporting Home Free's children's programs.

Home Free has now helped thousands of domestic violence survivors thrive. "Before our redesign, our shelter housed about 150 people annually. Last year, we served 4,300 women and children. That gives you a sense of how much more reach we have," says Billhardt.

It's easy to understand why the Home Free program won the best-practices award of \$20,000.

We congratulate Kris and her dedicated staff for providing this critical service to our community. ■

Gardening Lifts Spirits at Lambert House

Choosing just one favorite would be impossible. "There are my pansies, my orange lanterns and my roses. I have to admit that I love them all," said Viola Lemoine, a regular participant at Volunteer of America Oregon's Adult Day Services Center, Lambert House.

A life-long flower lover, Viola is married with two grown children and now struggles with memory loss. She lives with her daughter, Linda, tends to the front-porch flower boxes and helps as she can with some 25 rose bushes in the yard. She especially enjoys the Gardening Club and Horticultural Therapy offered at Lambert House.

"Providing purposeful, quality activities that help participants remember and find comfort in the familiar are important goals at Lambert House," said Lynn Schemmer-Valleau,

Senior Division Director. "We know that being involved in the nurturing of plants and other success-oriented projects gives our participants an opportunity to be productively engaged in life."

The best thing Viola feels when gardening and attending the gardening-related events at Lambert House: "It make me feel I'm worth something."

The Gardening Club and Horticultural Therapy (with a licensed instructor) meet year-round at Lambert House. Both are available at no cost to regular participants at Lambert House. The classes are open to the public on a space-available basis for a fee of \$15 per session. Contributions to assist

with gardening classes as well as other activities are always welcome. For more information, contact Lambert House at (503) 760-2075. ■



Viola tending a new plant.

Catering For a Cause to Expand

Volunteers of America Oregon's Food Services is pleased to announce plans to greatly enhance our operations. Thanks to having won an \$82,000 grant from the Volunteers of America National Endowment Fund, expansion plans will soon be underway.

"We were very pleased to win this one. With 39 other VOA affiliates, there was stiff competition," said Greg Meenahan, Director of Development and Communications. "It was a real team effort writing the grant and creating the business plan and it couldn't have come together without the help of Alexa Heinicke, Development Associate, and Patrick Malone, our Chief Financial Officer."

Food Services—part of our Business Enterprises Division—currently provides 450 meals a week for the Women's Residential Center (WRC), our two Adult Day Centers, and the Family Relief Nursery, in addition to other local agency programs. They

also cater events for clients including the Portland Trail Blazers, The Commerce Bank of Oregon, and the Multnomah County Health Department, as well as offer a Dessert of the Month Club to subscribing members. This award will allow them to service more external customers.

Currently all meals are prepared in the 600 sq. ft. kitchen located on the WRC property. The kitchen was originally designed to provide meals for the 42 residents of WRC, but with the additional funds, the program will be able to secure a new and larger kitchen site, launch a marketing campaign, and build on a growing customer base for our catering business.

Since its inception in 2001, Food Services has built a reputation for high-quality cuisine, while at the same time providing an entry-level training experience for clients interested in



L to R: Greg Meenahan, Director of Development and Communications; Patrick Malone, Chief Financial Officer; Alexa Heinicke, Development Associate

obtaining employment in the food services industry—primarily women in recovery at WRC .

The potential increase in revenues that will be generated from broadened services translates to an increase in the agency's capacity to assist those in our community who need our services.

If your company or group is planning an event, you can download a copy of our catering brochure with a menu and ordering instructions at

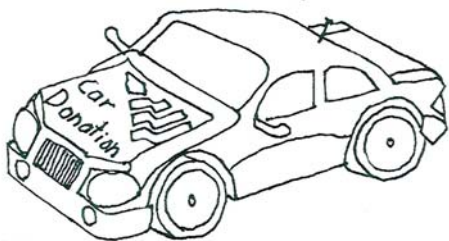
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Design-an-ad Contest Winner: Ryan Dehart

"This was the second year we participated in the *Oregonian's* Design-an-ad Contest," said Kevin Stephens, Program Director for Volunteers of America Oregon's Vehicle Donation Program. "It's a unique way to call attention to our program and it gives students a chance to be creative in the process."

For the students in Portland and SW Washington schools grades four

through 12, creating ads for various businesses was an exercise in marketing, media literacy, ad design and persuasive writing.

Ryan Dehart, fifth grader from St. Ignatius School was this year's winner in Kevin's program, selected from the 37 entries.

The winning ads appeared in a May 17 special section of the *Oregonian* called "Portland Zone." ■

For information about our Vehicle Donation Program, contact Kevin at (503) 239-7944

Powered by Volunteer Energy

Dominique: Being in the Moment

We've all heard it before, "Stop and smell the roses," but who really makes the time? Dominique Roberts, that's who! After 16 years working in the hospitality and event planning industry, she's discovered a very meaningful and enriching way to slow down.

After Dominique transitioned out of event planning, she began looking for a volunteer opportunity—something to provide a little work experience continuity. But in September when she started volunteering at the Family Relief Nursery (FRN), Dominique got a lot more than she'd expected.

FRN, one of many community service programs offered by Volunteers of America Oregon, provides respite childcare and development assessment for at-risk children as well as parenting skills training, home visits, and coordination with other social service programs. In addition to a program for pre-schoolers and toddlers, they also provide infant care.

Twice a week Dominique comes to assist in the infant classroom where up to six little ones ages 6 weeks to 18 months are nurtured and cared for. Being there has turned out to be more rewarding than she could have imagined.

"Event planning can be so stressful and fast moving," Dominique said. "You're always planning ahead and constantly having to think into the future—there's no time to stop. But working with these infants has been a complete reversal of that. It's brought me back into balance by reminding me of the simplicity of being in the moment—something we all lose sight of so easily."

Dominique does whatever is needed each day, whether it's helping to serve the food, cleaning up after, or helping in the outside play area. But most rewarding for her is the one-on-one time with the infants.

"There is nothing more important than taking care of the needs of an infant," she said, "holding them when they take a bottle, giving them consolation if something hurts, or just sitting on the rug and playing with them. They can play with a little scrap of fabric and it becomes their whole world. They are completely in the present moment."

But there's more to the story about why Dominique likes being there. "The staff at FRN does a remarkable job," she noted. "It's organized, it's clean, and there's a great feeling when the parents walk in – it's just such a positive and uplifting atmosphere."

And the staff praise her. "Dominique is a wonderful addition to the infant room. The joy she takes in spending time with the kids is evident," says Bethany Froese, Infant Interventionist at FRN. "She's willing to do anything that needs to be done and goes above and beyond expectations. The babies love her and we love having her in the classroom."

We thank Dominique for the dedication and genuine compassion she brings to her work. She exemplifies the mission of Volunteers of America Oregon—bringing a greater level of care and safety to the community. ■



Will You Volunteer?

We could not touch the lives of so many children, families, adults and seniors without help from our volunteers.

Come support the community by volunteering your time and skills. It's fun and rewarding and you'll be truly appreciated!

Here are just a few suggestions to get you started:

FAMILY RELIEF NURSERY

Classroom Assistant

Assist Family Relief Nursery teachers with small groups of children ages 6 weeks to 5 years.

Administrative Assistant

Occupy front desk, answering and routing calls, taking messages as necessary, greeting public, filing, and other office duties as assigned.

SENIOR SERVICES

Activities Assistant

Assist frail elderly in various activities: arts and crafts, physical and cognitive enhancement exercises

Dance, Music or Drama

Do you dance, play an instrument, sing? Are you in a drama group? Come share your talents!

For details on these and the many other volunteer opportunities, please call Doran Whipple, Volunteer Coordinator at (503) 235-8655 or visit our website at www.voaor.org



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