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Serenity Lane locations:

Albany: 541-928-9681
Bend: 541-383-0844
Coos Bay: 541-267-5081
Eugene: 541-687-1110
New Hope: 541-485-1577
Portland: 503-244-4500
Roseburg: 541-673-3504
Salem: 503-588-2804

National Websites:

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
www.aa.org or
www.alcoholicsanonymous.org

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
www.na.org

Cocaine Anonymous (CA)
www.ca.org

For Family & Friends:
Al-Anon & Alateen:
www.OregonAl-Anon.org

Adult Children of
Alcoholics (ACA)
www.adultchildren.org

Serenity Lane...
1-800-543-9905
www.serenitylane.org

Stepping Together

Fall/Winter
2008

Serenity Lane's Alumni Newsletter

We've been saving lives and helping put families back together since 1973

Responding to Disaster

by: Elizabeth Call
Portland Alumni Liaison

This past year, after going through CERT (Citizen's Emergency Rescue Training) for the city of Tigard, I found that I needed more opportunities to keep my skills sharpened and learn more about caring for myself and others in a disaster. I saw an opportunity when I received an email from our city's Emergency Management Director stating there was still a great need for Disaster Relief Volunteers for the areas devastated by Hurricane Ike. However, I didn't know it would be so fast. Four days after a condensed Mass Care and Sheltering training with the Red Cross, I was on the plane to Galveston Island, Texas.



During training, the biggest piece of advice that was given to us was to BE FLEXIBLE! You could be pulled out of a tent managing 200 people and put in an ERV (Emergency Rescue Vehicle) in 100 degree weather. You could sit waiting for four hours to be sent to your destination or be given brief instruction before being sent to a new job or area you know little about. It could be compared to a James Bond movie; "When you get to point A, open the letter and proceed."

By the time my team arrived, it had been 2 1/2 weeks since Ike beat against this once beautiful island. The sea waters surged forcefully from the north and south sides at once reaching heights up to 17 feet and combined with the sewer systems leaving everything it touched contaminated. As we drove across the causeway to the island, there were large, damaged boats on the side of the roads, fallen, uprooted trees, "blue roofs," empty, gutted-out homes with the inside contents piled up on the sidewalks and a lot of dead vegetation and enormous amounts of garbage scattered everywhere. There were nearby islands that looked as if a bomb was dropped.

Much clean-up had already begun and other disaster relief agencies were in place. You could see the Salvation Army vans, our Red Cross ERVs and church feeding vans set up alongside the roads and in major parking lots serving food to anyone needing nourishment - no questions asked.

There were several shelters set up in Texas, and I was sent to the Galveston Island

From your Editor



Dear Alumni,

The holiday season is upon us, and this year, most of us will have to cut back on our expenses. As a result, some people may

not be able to spend the holidays with their family. Financial limitations and travel restrictions will influence how we celebrate, but there are still many ways to get into the spirit of the season.

In this special holiday issue of our newsletter, we have assembled information to help you create a memorable holiday without stretching your budget. We included strategies for inexpensive and creative gift giving, as well as reinforcing the importance of sharing experiences, planning activities and giving back to the community. By redefining the word giving, we are reminded that the time we devote to our loved ones is far more valuable than anything money can buy.

For those who will be separated from relatives during the holidays, organizing a pot luck dinner with friends can be a fun and low stress alternative. Instead of being responsible for preparing an entire meal and entertaining a large group, each person brings one or two dishes and shares in the hosting duties. You can promote a festive atmosphere by incorporating holiday movies, music and games into your gatherings.

This is a great opportunity to transform your holiday traditions and explore new ways to connect with your family and your community.

Happy Holidays,

Shely Rahimi
Alumni Coordinator

Newsletter Committee:

Angie Delaplain
Mary Daniels
Neil McNaughton
Shely Rahimi.

Outpatient Happenings

Portland Alumni Holiday Party:

All Alumni Welcome, Past and Present.

Time: Saturday, December 20, 2008
7- 10 PM

Location: Multnomah Arts Center
7688 SW Capitol Hwy.
Portland, Oregon 97219

Kindly RSVP to: 503.244.4500
so we have a head count

Homemade gifts are made from the heart and make wonderful holiday memories.

Giving Christmas Gifts on the Cheap!

by Elizabeth Scott, M.S., About.com

If you would like to cut down on spending in attempts to avoid the stress of holiday debt, here's a creative list of inexpensive Christmas gift giving ideas. Perhaps you can start a new family gift-exchanging tradition, allowing you and your entire family to save more each and every year.

Draw Names

Many families, especially large extended families who are spread out in different cities, adopt the name-drawing tradition for gifts. Basically, each family member only buys one gift. Who you give to, and who buys for you, is determined by drawing names from a hat. This is known around many office circles as "Secret Santa."

This strategy can really save you money in terms of buying for and shipping gifts to several individuals. Not only does it save you the stress and expense of shopping for multiple people, but it can also ensure that everyone gets one nice gift. The drawback is that you may end up paired with someone who you aren't close to, or you may find it difficult to not buy a special gift for the relative to whom you feel closest.

Just Gift the Kids

Another strategy for large extended families is to have each relative only buy gifts for family members under 18. This greatly cuts down costs and ensures that those who might appreciate the gifts most – kids – are the ones who get them. It then becomes a sort of rite of passage when the kids grow older and switch to the gift-giving role.

Place a \$15 Limit

Another strategy people employ is putting a spending limit on each gift. While you and your family can choose whatever number you want, keeping the dollar amount low can sometimes spark people to become more creative with the money that they do spend, taking advantage of sales or putting a lot of thought into the best way to make the most of the allotted budget. While this may cut down on the number of expensive gifts exchanged, it also takes a lot of the pressure off of the situation. There's no more feeling like you need to spend a lot to show people how much you love them, worrying about spending more or less than they spent on you.

Books Only

Agreeing to give books only can be an excellent way to keep costs down. Buying loved ones just the right book is a way to show that you know them well and understand their taste. Books also provide hours of fun reading in addition to some interesting topics of conversation. Giving paperbacks can ensure a pretty low cost, and including a gift receipt can basically make any book a "coupon" for any other book the recipient wants.

Homemade Gifts

Most of us have some sort of creative side, and you'd be surprised by what you can create if you put that creative side to work. Some of my favorite gifts to make and receive have been family photo albums, quilts, custom-made place mats, crocheted blankets, custom-made CDs, hand-painted pottery, and cookies. Some gifts do take considerable time to create (especially en masse), but those who enjoy creating often find it a worthy trade-off.

Thoughtful Cards

If your group is really on-board with saving money, and truly believe "it's the thought that counts" you may want to consider just exchanging heart felt greeting cards. The key is for the card itself to be blank – you create the meaningful message. For those who want to try their hand at poetry, even an average quality poem goes over really well with most recipients – how many of us get poetry written especially for us? For those who can't even force a crude limerick, writing about fond shared memories or the qualities you love most about the recipient tends to work just as well.

Coupon Books

Creating a book-o-favors for your loved ones, including good deeds especially for them, can be an incredibly thoughtful money saver. Coupons offering free baby sitting to busy parents, airport trips to the frequent traveler, or a hand-delivered homemade meal can be a welcome and thoughtful gesture. The key to making this one successful is to be sure to follow up and push people to actually use the coupons, or include a specific date or expiration date if possible.

Yummy Gifts

While cookies, brownies and bars tend to be gone within days, few faces fail to light up when presented with tasty treats. If the sugary stuff would be an unwelcome diet saboteur, you can always assemble a healthy fruit basket or come up with your own cheap-and-tasty basket idea. ■

The Holiday Spirit: ways you & your family can make a difference

Looking for a perfect volunteer opportunity for your family? No matter what your interests or time constraints are, there is sure to be an organization that fits your needs providing you the chance to make a difference.

Here are a few:

Alleviate hunger

Work with your family to bake your favorite kind of bread and drop it off at your local food pantry, fire station or police station. Help those in need or honor your local heroes. For more information, please look online at www.oregonfoodbank.org



Keep someone warm

Collect your old coats and those of your family and friends. Your efforts will ensure that the homeless in your community don't get left out in the cold this winter. For more information, look online at www.onewarmcoat.org



Help animals

By simply baking dog biscuits, making cat toys or donating blankets, you can provide support to animals in need and their caregivers. To find a shelter nearby whose animals need your help, go to www.pets911.com



Make a child smile

Make cards for other children, their parents, or their siblings – all of whom are going through a difficult period in their lives. Log on to www.makeeachildsmile.org for more information.

Clean the environment

Join the Green Revolution! Write letters to your policymakers to promote environmental change both locally and nationally. There are templates for letters to take action on global warming bills, fuel economy standards, and renewable energy. Log on to www.ucsaction.org for more information.

Deliver a meal and a smile

To an elderly or disabled person in your community. Visit www.mowaa.org to find out more about Meals on Wheels Association of America.

Have you ever helped clean up your local park, sung holiday carols at a local senior center or donated canned goods through a food drive? Chances are you're already doing great things in your community. Now, it's even easier to continue giving back, and to get young kids involved, too!

Help families in need

The Volunteer Family connects families, especially families with children, with volunteer opportunities in their own neighborhoods. Through volunteering, children learn compassion for others and families are able to spend quality time together. It is a terrific way to contribute to your community in today's hectic world. For more information, visit www.thevolunteerfamily.org.

Heather Jack of Ashland is the founder of The Volunteer Family.

Back issues of our alumni newsletter will soon be available online: Go to www.serenitylane.org, click on the Alumni tab and you'll find pdf files of many past issues.



continued from page 1...

Alamo Shelter situated on the playground of Alamo Grade School. It consisted of four tents: three for housing and one for feeding. The additional units were semi trucks converted into laundry and showering facilities and long lines of porta-potties. In addition, clients had access to medical and mental health services, and phones were available to contact needed agencies.

My first duties were “ground sanitation,” which translates into garbage detail for 800-1000 people! Three of us spent the next four hours completing the round, and then...time to start all over. I spent one day, (my shifts were 3 pm -11 pm), doing registration at the gate - a very interesting job! This is the first contact with clients literally coming off the street, being told they could no longer stay in their homes or being sent from another shelter.

Many of these people had no identification (swept away with the water), and some had only what they carried in a garbage bag. A few came to get a hot meal and slept elsewhere. Some were working in the area and had no other means of shelter. The tent that I was eventually assigned to was for families and singles, but after a few days, most of the three tents were mixed.

During my deployment, I sat down and visited with a client who just found out that his sister and nephew’s bodies were discovered. This sweet man didn’t know what to do, so I put everything else aside and spent the next half-hour listening to him and comforting him. We gave each other a big hug, and I went back to my tent. The next day, my supervisor gave me a precious letter from this man, and his words of gratitude instantly brought tears to my eyes. This experience touched my heart. This is why I came. This is why I’m a Red Cross Volunteer.

The Red Cross is not a government agency nor is it affiliated with any political or religious sects, which allows it to do humanitarian work all around the world. I may not have many opportunities to do national disaster relief like this one, but I can be ready when local disaster strikes and be of value to my family, community and workplace. ■



Elizabeth (left) and two other volunteers

Other Local Volunteer Opportunities

LIVE UNITED



Give an hour. Give a Saturday. Give your best. We all have special talents. Things we can do to help. And when we reach out a hand to one, we influence the condition of all. Whether it’s reading to children, or leading financial literacy classes for hard-working families, or delivering meals to homebound seniors, there are hundreds of volunteer options available every day.

Give the gift of you. Volunteer.



Help Us, Help Others.

Every day St. Vincent DePaul helps hundreds of thousands of people trying to overcome poverty,

homelessness, substance abuse and domestic violence. Your contribution helps improve our world by helping one person at a time.



The need is constant. The gratification is instant.



American Red Cross Give Blood...

Every day, there are people who count on blood to be available to help save

lives. Accident victims, premature babies, people undergoing cancer treatment, organ recipients, and many others rely on the generosity of blood donors to ensure that blood is available when it's needed.

What Stops Us from Stopping Them?

by: Jerry Gjesvold, Manager of Employer Services


will happen during the holidays this year.

This isn't to say that we haven't made progress. Most of us can remember when there was no such thing as a "designated driver." Increased DUI penalties have made a big difference, as have laws holding people legally responsible for accidents caused by those who consume too much alcohol on their property.

So while it may be challenging to speak up in this situation, it's much less difficult than it used to be. But just in case you face it yourself this holiday season, here are a few ways to do what's necessary.

- First, plan ahead. Most of us have never thought about how, exactly, we could handle this situation. It helps to think it through, then tell someone else. If we can't describe our strategy during a quiet conversation with a friend, how can we expect to act effectively in the heat of the moment?
- Second, secure allies. Who will be there that might back you up? Can you ask them beforehand to help if needed? Drinkers are much less likely to get their way if two or more people say, "you're not getting in that car."
- Third, practice. Role-play with other members of the family or friends. This might seem silly. But if you've practiced how you're going to respond, you'll be much less susceptible to arguments. It will help you stay with your plan when things are most challenging. Just 10 - 15 minutes of practice can be enough preparation. It can also get you laughing.
- If all else fails, just step in anyway. Do something. Ask yourself what you would do if someone was unaware of a grave danger and you needed to save their life. If we thought there was even a chance that someone was getting ready to walk over a cliff, we wouldn't hesitate to stop them. We could argue about it later, but in that moment, we'd override the norms without thinking.

As someone who works professionally with these situations, I can tell you that it's common to feel awkward in them. After years of learning and teaching about this, I still feel the pressure to do nothing. But I've also sat with far too many people who said, through tears, "I just wish I had said something." And for those whose intervention was ignored before tragedy struck, they will know they took steps to prevent it.



Between now and the Super Bowl, some of us are going to find ourselves in a very awkward situation. We'll be at a holiday get-together and notice that someone who's been drinking too much is getting ready to drive. Should we stop them?

It's odd that this situation even comes up. We all know that no one who's been drinking should drive – that driving under the influence is dangerous and illegal. The answer to the question "should we stop them?" is "of course."

Yet far too often we do nothing. "It's none of my business," we think. "It'll probably be all right." We don't want to be seen as a prude or a killjoy. We don't want to ruin everyone's fun by making a scene. So we let an intoxicated person go out the door.

All of this comes from unwritten rules, or "norms," about how to behave in social situations.

They're very powerful – enough so to get people killed. Don't think so? Tragically, despite all our efforts to raise awareness, it

The Alumni Website has Moved.

Our alumni website has merged with Serenity Lane's main website at www.serenitylane.org and includes an events page, helpful links and patient testimonials. In an effort to reduce our impact on the environment and make our newsletter more accessible, we are providing electronic versions of current and past issues of the alumni newsletter in pdf format. Go to www.serenitylane.org for more information.

We are always interested in feedback, so if you have any comments or suggestions for improving our alumni website, please contact us.

The Alumni Newsletter is Online

We encourage you to "opt out" of receiving a hard copy. Send an email to: alumni@serenitylane.org with "Going Green" in the subject line. Please include your mailing address in the email. In the future, you will receive an email with a link to our next issue when it becomes available.

Address Changes/Deletions

Help us keep our mailing list current: clip and send this form to:

Serenity Lane Alumni Office
2133 Centennial Plaza
Eugene, OR. 97401

or email us at: alumni@serenitylane.org

We're going all digital soon. We encourage you to send us your email address, so you don't miss out on future issues.

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An email from a grateful alumnus.

My name is Mark G. and I was a patient at Serenity Lane in 1995. While I was there, Jim Creasey was one of my counselors, and he had a profound effect on my life and recovery. He was like a father to me, and I had great love and respect for him.

He was tough on me at first, but I think that is what brought the connection between the two of us. I'll never forget those 3 weeks there with him.

I was thinking of him today and I decided to look him up online. I am very sad to discover that he passed away from lung cancer in 2004.

Last time I spoke with him, he had just retired from Serenity Lane. I know he passed away 4 years ago, but I just wanted to write and share my thoughts about him. Jim was a great man. I am still shocked and saddened to think that he is gone. He really touched my life, and we connected in a way I can't describe. I think of him all the time because he made me a better person. I know there are hundreds of others who feel the way I do too. I actually just found his son on Facebook, so I've been talking with him a little bit.

Would you mind sending me a photo of Jim? I would really like that, unfortunately I don't have any photos of him and it would mean a lot to me to have at least one and yes, you may absolutely print my letter in the upcoming newsletter. That would be so nice.

Thanks again,
Mark G.
Dallas, Texas

Editor's note: Mark received his photo of Jim Creasey.

"What sunshine is to flowers, smiles are to humanity. These are but trifles, to be sure; but, scattered along life's pathway, the good they do is inconceivable".

~ Joseph Addison

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Inside:

- **Holiday Giving**
- **Volunteer Opportunities**
- **One woman's story**
- **Games**
- **You might save a life**

Try these games at your next family holiday gathering:

Family Trivia Game

from Family Fun Magazine

Supplies:

- Colored index cards and pens
- Optional: photographs, tape recordings, game boards

Learn all about your family history with this homemade version of the ever-popular Trivial Pursuit. Before play begins, family members write down trivia questions that only relatives might know:

Example:

"How did Billy lose his front tooth?", "What was Uncle Pete's first wife's maiden name?" and so on. For a multimedia effect, cards can also ask questions accompanying photographs or tape recordings.

The game can then be played in any number of ways – individually, in teams, on a game board or just as a quiz contest.

Two Truths, One Lie

from partygameideas.com

Supplies:

- Paper and pen
- Knowledge of family events and the year they occurred

This is a great game for people who are trying to get to know each other. Everyone sits in a circle and takes turns telling 3 things about themselves. However, one of them is a lie.

Example:

I have been to 3 continents in the world.
I won't use green towels.
I once had a ferret but it was killed by my cat.

Once you make the statements, everyone then votes on which one is the lie. It's really funny to see what people come up with for their lie and learning about the stories behind the true statements.

Happy Holidays • Peace • Feliz Navidad • Paz • Good Will to All