

The Connection

Emergency Services



Looking back on 90 days; looking ahead to a new year

With the new year has come the end of my first 90 days as Emergency Services Manager in the Portland Council office of St. Vincent de Paul. I'm very grateful to have been allowed to serve as I have during this time. I have met so many wonderful people dedicated to serving others in crisis that I have been both amazed and inspired.

The tireless work of the volunteers, conference leaders and others I have met has been heart-warming. Their dedication to going above and beyond is an incredible example of the good that people can do when they come together in selfless purpose. Our people undoubtedly serve as an inspiration for many others who would like to create as big an impact as we do.

Together with our conference affiliates, the Portland Council filled more than 3,600 requests for emergency services in my first three months. We collectively helped people across three counties in communities ranging from Canby to Tualatin to Portland, Gresham, Sandy and beyond. We coordinated or filled requests for diapers, local bus tickets, heating oil, food, motel stays, electricity, garbage and gas service, rent, and other needs vital to life in the 21st century. We took in thousands of pounds of donations of food, coats, gloves and socks. We made life better for nearly 11,000 people.

Here's a breakdown of the more common requests filled from October thru December:

Type	Number	People Served
Food	2,650	8,230
Utilities	385	1,063
Rent	294	769
Local Bus	65	116

With so much accomplished, I would dare say we saved lives. And did it following the Vincentian ethos of helping all in need. Characteristics of those we helped spanned a wide range of ethnicities, ages, nationalities and religions. We helped regardless of gender and sexual orientation, regardless of education and family or household status. We helped those who were mentally

challenged, and those who were mentally ill. We worked hard to overcome a lack of interpreters and, when possible, served those who spoke little or no English.

The characteristics of our staff and volunteers during this period also covered a wide background. Some had economic challenges of their own, and others didn't. Although most are middle-aged or older, I have been surprised and pleased to see the immense breadth of histories they represent. The patchwork of their many experiences, ethnicities, cultures, nationalities and genders creates an environment where our clients can feel real respect and empathy.



Volunteers from Clackamas Community College helped process and sort donations in preparation for holiday deliveries.

I was saddened to see during my first months that several wonderful Vincentians were taken from us, among them Gene Killeen and Tom Lewandoski. I know they are sorely missed, and I offer our deepest sympathies to their families and friends.

In closing, thanks to all involved with this great organization. If I haven't met you yet, I hope I will soon. I look forward to doing more great things together in the new year. Kindest wishes.

Craig Loughridge
Emergency Services Manager