

From the Director's Chair

This has been the most challenging professional adventure I have ever encountered in my 30+ years of social services. I've known for quite some time how dire the financial situation was for Sojourners' Alliance. The lay-offs and my absorbing case management positions were wearing thin. The first time I vowed to never again absorb a staff position was December 2014. The second time was during the summer of 2015, half way through the time our Office Manager was laid off. The third and final time I vowed to never absorb a position was March 2016 while remembering how hard it was to maintain my role and taking care of our participants' needs. Unfortunately, what I vowed to NEVER do again occurred on May 2, 2016 when I was verbally informed that our grant for Transitional Housing was not going to be renewed June 1, 2016.

Lots of feelings and thoughts ran through my being, multiple paths opened up all of which seemed sorrowful. I lost hope, briefly. Quickly thoughts ran to our folks (I like to think of them in this personal form of 'Folks' rather than participants or clients or guests). The most painful moments I experienced during these initial days was when I was informing each of our folks that we lost our funding and would be shutting down. The devastation, hopelessness, pain, and confusion were palpable. On reflection of my career, I had never dealt with so many people at one time, imparting a decision that would impact their lives and create sooooo much pain.

Idaho Housing & Finance Association, which is the administrator for the federal grants from HUD, stepped up in a huge way and provided a stipend, utility deposit and rental de-

posit for each person. HUD gave a waiver that allowed anyone affected by the loss of funding to be moved to the top of the Section 8 waiting list and immediately receive rental subsidies. The outpouring of support whether it was financial, emotional, mental or physical was incredible. The belief in our organization and the services we provide was validated 100 fold.

Of the 17 folks we had living in our program, 16 were able to transition into their own housing, mostly with Section 8. One individual has remained in our housing. That person had major back surgery that prevents them from working. As of this writing, their workman's comp claim is in the judge's hands to rule on, and their application for Social Security Disability is in the third appeal with a hearing scheduled in four months' time. There was no way I would allow this person to have to move to another homeless shelter and begin all over in developing a support system.

In regard to our potential closure, I was asked, "What are you going to do personally?" My response was, "I need to stay focused on our folks and our organization. If I start thinking 'what am I going to do' then it diverts my thoughts and energy." The experience and even the questions really challenged me about how much faith I have in that it all will work out. I had a few moments of near hopelessness. And one time, I had absolutely resigned myself to the fact we would not be able to re-open. Even my Board President, Carl, had the same feeling. What brought this about was being asked by HUD technical assistance if we would adhere to the Housing First

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Wish List

If you can help by contributing any of these items, they would be greatly appreciated.

- Twin size sheet sets
- Bed pillows
- Blankets
- Bath towels
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Kleenex
- Large garbage bags (30+ gallon)
- Kitchen garbage bags (13 gallon)
- Dish soap
- Sanitizing/disinfecting wipes
- Hand sanitizer
- Cleaning supplies
- Nonperishable Food

- Mattresses (full & twin)*
- Dressers*
- Televisions*
- DVD/VHS players*
- Various other furnishings*

*Most of our furniture was given to participants as they moved out this past summer. We will know exactly what and how many we need after we return to the office full-time starting December 5.

If you have items you would like to donate, or are wondering if we can use a particular item, please give us a call at (208) 883-3438. Thank you!



Sojourners' Alliance

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Support your local United Way



Mission Statement

Sojourners' Alliance is a private, non-profit organization working toward a vision of dignity and respect for all people. Our mission is to confront the barriers that lead to hunger, homelessness and poverty through direct intervention with those in need by providing a safe and comfortable living environment while receiving intensive case management. We are actively engaged in community efforts to address root issues while advocating for those in need.

A Message From the President of the Board

It seems that 2016 was just like every other year – full of challenges. However, the challenges that we confronted in 2016 seemed to be particularly stressful as there were fiscal challenges that placed into question our future existence. We hope the saying that “that which does not kill you will make you stronger” will hold true for us this year! Following the announcement in May that Sojourners' Alliance was to permanently lose its federal funding (approximately \$100,000), we certainly observed an outpouring of concern and generosity from our loyal supporters; indeed evidence that we will become stronger as a result of the challenge of lost federal funding. Logically, without federal funding, we will need to become a more local-based organization that relies more heavily on local funding for our operational needs. I feel very strongly that, in the end, we will be a better organization when we fully discover how to reinvent ourselves in this way.

This newsletter has details of our fundraising activities during the month of December. As you consider what you are able to donate to Sojourners', I suggest that you also think of friends and relatives who are not currently supporters of Sojourners' Alliance and ask them donate as well. We would be glad to add them to the newsletter distribution list or answer any questions that they might have. More than ever, we need everyone's help to carry on our very important mission. Thank you so much and please enjoy the holidays.

—Carl Hunt

Director's Chair: Final Thoughts

I made a final vow this summer that ultimately has led to a culmination of our organization's issues: we will either be stronger for this experience or we will end. I knew, as my board came to fully understand, that we were not capable of continuing as we had been [see next page for an overview of our financial struggles through the years]. I have heard it said that you have to be careful for what you ask for!

I recalled the previous ten years of my employment with Sojourners' and wondered if I was capable of going through the same problems/issues/financial challenges for the next ten years. The answer was strongly NO.

The loss of funding in May gave me the clarity to see why we struggled so severely and to discover something that had been there all along. The value of the \$100,000 grant that had remained the same my entire ten years, today based on inflation would be \$120,185. Calculating the value for inflation each year amounted to \$125,000 less in buying power. This further explained to me the reason behind the need for layoffs, pay cuts, etc.

We cannot and will not go back to bare bones survival. I believe that we are going to ultimately make our goal of having \$125,000 in commitments and pledges as we plan to begin bringing folks back into our program no later than January 10, 2017.

In the horizon,
 Steve

Timeline of Financial Actions

Summer 2009 : 12 utility shut-off notices over two months.

Summer 2010 : 28 utility shut-off notices over four months.

January 2011 : Absorbed on-site Case Manager position for five months.

January 2012 : Office Manager hours reduced to 32 hours per week (still in effect). All other staff took a \$1 an hour pay cut for seven months.

August 2012 : Absorbed on-site Case Manager position for three months.

July 2014 : Absorbed 20 hour a week Case Manager position for 10 months.

May 2015 : Laid off Office Manager for 3.5 months.

December 2015 : Laid off on-site Case Manager position. Intended on absorbing position for five months but due to loss of funding, had to absorb the position indefinitely.

May 2016 : Notified May 2nd that our Transitional Housing grant was not renewed, 20 working days before expected renewal. Part-time Case Manager was going to shift into full-time on-site Case Manager position but left for another job opportunity. Absorbed that position as well (still in effect).

September 2016 : Office Manager and Executive Director laid-off. Currently, maintaining basic operations 10 hours a week.

December 2016 : Executive Director goes back to full time hours. Office Manager goes back to work 24-30 hours a week.

January 2017 : Full time Case Manager takes over both on-site and off-site housing programs. Office Manager resumes 40 hour work week. Estimated: 16 people re-entering on-site housing services and 12 people entering off-site housing services.

February 2017 : Full capacity reached for housing services (variable dependent on family size): 25 people on-site, 18 people off-site = 15,695 bed nights at maximum capacity.

Timeline of Repairs/Costs

June 2007 : Repaired 100 ft. retaining wall with drain tile and waterproofing. Repaired Men's upstairs bathroom from water damage—\$4,000.

August 2008 : Repaired apartment—\$16,000.

Winter 2010 : Repaired bathrooms in each family unit from severe water damage—\$30,000.

Summer 2010 : Repaired water-damaged floor in Men's kitchen—\$3,000.

Summer 2011 : Repaired apartment—\$6,000.

Summer 2012 : Replaced/repared multiple issues identified by HUD Inspector General—\$25,000 (Idaho Housing & Finance contributed an additional \$30,000). Repaired Men's basement bathroom from severe water damage—\$4,000.

Summer 2013 : Repaired apartment—\$6,000. Replaced damaged carpet and furniture from companion animals—\$1,500,

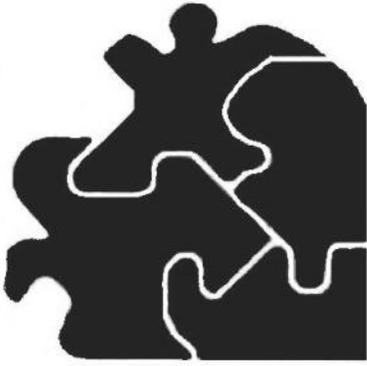
Future Repairs : Damaged apartment from companion animals—Estimate \$21,000 to become habitable. Main water line broken (second time) and needs full replacement—Estimate \$6,000.

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model for our potential future programs. Our unequivocal answer was NO. There was no way we could have folks living in our housing that would be allowed to drink, use drugs, have visitors at all times of day and night nor have a curfew. It would be complete and utter chaos, much like it was when I first started. I felt that that decision would doom us. The following day, I went to Boise for a state meeting. After the meeting I was approached by the head of the division who informed me that a new proposal would be put forth that would allow us to continue the type of program we had previously. So, in a span of 48 hours, I went from despondent to incredibly joyous. The solution is workable.

This has been an amazing roller coast ride that I really would only recommend once in a lifetime, but maybe not for the faint of heart.

—Stephen Bonnar



Sojourners' Alliance
Bringing the Pieces Together

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Organization
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If you would like to make a change to the name or address by which you are receiving this newsletter, or would like to be added or removed from our mailing list, please contact Elaina at 883-3438, or email sojourners.alliance@gmail.com

25th
Anniversary
1991 — 2016

The Avenues for Hope Housing Challenge is currently our most successful fundraiser, earning our organization over \$20K each December for the last three years!

When: Starts December 8, 2016 at 7 a.m. (PST). Ends December 31, 2016 at 10:59 p.m. (PST)

Where: avenuesforhope.org/#npo/sojourners-alliance

How: Donations of \$25 or more can be made with a credit card at the address above, or checks of \$100 or more mailed to PO Box 7899, Boise ID 83702 with "Sojourners' Alliance" in the memo line (must be received by December 30).

Why: The Housing Challenge includes a number match funds and prizes that greatly increase the overall amount of money gained by a participating nonprofit, with a Grand Prize of \$10,000 to the organization with the most unique donations! (One person, one donation of \$25 or more = one unique donation. Each member of the same household can donate individually and be counted as a unique gift.) Last year, our donors gave \$13,000 with an additional \$9,500 received through match funds and prizes! **This kind of success is especially important to us after the loss of our main source of funding earlier this year.**

**I gave,
will you?**



Avenues  for Hope
Housing Challenge