

My Life as an Intern Part Deux: A Case Manager is Born!

By Megan Dicken

Hello Again Friends of Sojourners' Alliance! My life at Sojourners' Alliance has evolved quite a bit over the last several months! When we last spoke I had been working on grants. I am proud to say we were able to get funding from all the grants I spent time on. I am still able to spend part of my time here working on grants, and I am enjoying that.

As 2013 came to a close Steve and I started looking at opportunities to expand on my learning experiences here. Steve approached me with the idea of taking on some case management duties involved with one of our housing programs, the Emergency Shelter Grant. The thought was exciting and I jumped at the chance.

In February I took over case management of the program, which helps pay a few months rent or a deposit in order to prevent homelessness. This has given me an opportunity to learn the ins and outs of being an empowering part of

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In This Exciting Episode

We hear from our recent interns and service learning students as they recount experiences and insights from their time spent at Sojourners'.

The Evolution of a Volunteer

By Nick Montanari

My experience with Sojourners' Alliance started a few years back when I worked for the Center for Civic Engagement as a Project Leader. I would lead

groups of WSU students to volunteer at Sojourners' for their Thursday night dinners. Eventually, this project ceased, but I left with a good impression of Sojourners'. Fast forward, I have now graduated from WSU and have moved on to Graduate school at the University of Idaho. I am working on my Master of Public Administration to become a leader in a non-profit. Part of my program asks for me to do an

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Kaitlyn Boseck, Megan Dicken and Nick Montanari

Real World Applications Expand an Undergraduate's Education

By Kaitlyn Boseck

During my time as an intern at Sojourners' Alliance, I have been given the opportunity to contextualize my undergraduate education in real-world application. As the scope of my knowledge has broadened outside of classroom parameters, I have been challenged beyond my comfort zone, strengthened professional and interpersonal skills, as well as get a taste of what working in a non-profit organization is really like.

When I started my internship in January, I honestly had no grasp of what I was getting myself into. I had no experience working with non-profit organizations or any familiarity with working with the homeless. Being a part of the team at Sojourners' Alliance has been one of the greatest opportunities that I have come across during my college career. As an intern I have been able to sit in on case management meetings, participate in solution building during all staff meetings, have guidance and

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This issue of *Sojourners' Alliance News* was edited by Elaina Pierson.

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Mission Statement

Sojourners' Alliance is a private, non-profit organization working toward a community vision of dignity and equality for all people.

Our mission is to promote the personal growth, empowerment and self-sufficiency of people in transition by providing basic services, and education in interpersonal and life skills.

From the Director's Chair

I am fast approaching my eighth anniversary of being the Executive Director here at Sojourners', and it has been an adventure to say the least. One of the highlights throughout my tenure has been our rubber band fights. Every new participant has a meet and greet with me where I go over a number of things with them and usually end up telling them about our rubber band fights: "If you see me crawling on the floor, I am looking for rubber bands." I also tell them that I don't know them well enough to shoot them, but given time that may change.

One day, as the story goes, we were having a rubber band fight. The youngest was six and the oldest was 63. The group was made up of numerous participants, several staff, and one board member, and it lasted two hours. At one point, as I was getting tired, I asked the young one if I could use her as a human shield. She looked up at me and said, "Of course you may, Steve." Soooo, I picked her up and she began shooting everyone for me. I guess my best moment was when I stood behind a woman and her baby as a shield. I thought it was brilliant myself because who is going to shoot an infant? I've even gone so far as to wear my Storm Trooper helmet and stuff unopened toilet paper packages inside my shirt for protection.

About a month ago, I had the opportunity to present to the PEO Sisterhood an overview of our organization, and provide insights into our day to day operations. I related our office rubber band antics. A couple of weeks later, while staffing our booth at the Renaissance Fair, one of the members of the PEO walked up to me and gave me a bag of slightly used green newspaper rubber bands (by the way, those are my favorite. Probably goes back to the four years I delivered newspapers as a kid). Anyway, I of course was very appreciative and thanked the person. My devilish side started growing and I was thinking about how I could abuse my staff, but then the angel came out and the thought occurred that perhaps I should train my staff and interns on how to properly shoot a rubber band. It is a little unfair to most of them who do not have the experience, but hey, that is what life is about.

Part of the method to my madness is that laughter is good medicine. It stimulates the brain chemistry and provides the same relief that crying does. How often does one witness adults playing and laughing in the same way we once did as children? I believe it is important to shed the intensity of our work day in harmless ways and remember that life does not have to be all serious, thus the motto: "Laughter is Contagious".

—Stephen Bonnar

Thoughts from our Service Learning Students

By Gina Crestor

When I chose Sojourners' Alliance as a required service learning interaction, I had many questions running through my head. What was a transitional housing facility? Who was in charge? How many people worked there? Who lived there? What service did they provide? Would it be a comfortable place to spend time?

The moment I set foot inside Sojourners', Steve (executive director) and his crew made me feel like part of a community. It was an environment of equality among all, the workers, interns, as well as the clients. As I gained a better understanding of the logistics of running a facil-

ity like Sojourners', I was struck by the fact that each and every person receiving services was an active part in their own rehabilitation and reconnection with non-homelessness.

Sojourners' crew provides an environment that seems to bring out the best in people. They truly care about what they are doing. They follow a strict code of ethics, which I was expected to adhere to as well. The clients and the staff showed respect for each other, even when situations became tense. Overall, it was a great experience and I am glad Steve and his crew put forth the effort to allow interns and service learners to be a part of Sojourners' Alliance. □

By S. E. Brown

I first started volunteering at Sojourners' Alliance because I was enrolled in a spring semester Sociology class that required us to participate in 15 hours of service



learning with an organization. I felt an obligation to choose Sojourners' because I, for about 10 years, battled a horrible meth addiction that contributed to my own homelessness. Now that my service learning is done, I still show up on Mondays to hang out with Steve, Tanya and Elaina because the experience has been such that I feel like I am part of a family. □

An Overview of Recent Fundraising Efforts

Of all the fundraising efforts we have participated in, the Avenues for Hope Housing Challenge was monumental. A little over \$4,000 was directly donated while the remaining \$6,736 came from challenge grants. This fundraiser, which is sponsored through Idaho Housing & Finance Association's non-profit Home Partnership Foundation, provides a tremendous opportunity for our organization to raise a significant amount of money.

- Alternative Giving Market- \$837
- University of Idaho Holiday Concert- \$1,350
- Avenues for Hope Housing Challenge - \$10,736
- Academy Awards Gala - we were not able to procure a location to host the event this year.
- WSU Greek Week- \$4,650 and at least 2,000 pounds of food.
- Huckleberry Squares @ Ren Fair- \$840



Our first time selling Huckleberry Squares at the Renaissance Fair was very successful, not so much financially but due to our presence and visibility. The numerous interactions with supporters who stopped by to visit were incredibly enjoyable. The best part of the event was watching people's facial expression when they took their first bite.

We had a double whammy surprise when we received huge donations of food and household supplies from both WSU's Greek Week and the PEO Sisterhood. We now have more toilet paper than we've ever seen at one time! And not only is our pantry full stocked with lots more in storage, we were able to share supplies with Moscow Food Bank, Trinity Baptist Food Pantry and Family Promise of the Palouse.

(Megan Dicken, continued from page 1)

a family's journey toward housing stability. I meet with these participants once a week during their time in the program. We discuss budgeting, paying down debt, looking for work, and explore other ways to stabilize their income.

In March I took over half the case load of the previous Project Warmth Case Manager, Mary Walsh. Mary worked alongside me to help develop my skills, and I am thankful for all of her insights. In my short time as a Case Manager on Project Warmth, I have been able to share in the joy of an individual who transitioned out of the program successfully into Section 8 approved housing. It was a special privilege to see the joy and pride on the face of a participant as I filled out their successful discharge summary.

Project Warmth can be a long journey, as the wait list for a Section 8 housing voucher can be over two years. Because of this it is important to celebrate all the successes along the way. These include being able to establish a stable household, establishing a stable income, and paying down their debt. I feel honored to be along to celebrate their successes.

As my anniversary fast approaches I have taken some time to reflect on the opportunities my time here has provided. When I started here a year ago in May, I had no idea the journey I was setting out on. I feel so lucky to be able to share in such a wonderful place, and to work with such wonderful people. The amount of generosity in this community is wonderful and we are all so thankful for the support.

In a few short months I will be leaving Sojourners' Alliance to pursue my Master of Social Work at Eastern Washington University. I am looking forward to the challenges ahead, and will always cherish the opportunities presented and relationships built during my too short time here. □

(Kaitlyn, Boseck, continued from page 1)

assistance in grant writing, along with learning about financial burdens and constraints that non-profit organizations face on a daily basis while trying to better the financial stability of individuals in need.

It has been an enjoyable journey being a part of a team that flourishes on working together for a cause that

(Nick Montanari, continued from page 1)

internship. Now, living only a block away from Sojourners' and from my past experience, I looked to volunteer here. I started in January 2014 as just a volunteer before doing my actual internship, which will officially start this summer.

I started volunteering at Sojourners' apart from receiving internship credits because I didn't just want the credits, but to truly learn about non-profit management from Steve Bonnar, Sojourners' Executive Director. At first I would just come by on Thursday for half a day to observe and to discuss the workings of Sojourners' with Steve's help. I had mentioned to Steve my additional interest in learning about case management as well. Well, coincidentally our case manager at the time for Project Warmth announced her departure from Sojourners' to a full

time position at Alternatives to Violence on the Palouse. This opened up the position for Megan Dicken and me to take over.

I am now not just volunteering my time and learning about the administrative side, I am also getting firsthand experience of case management and the ability to directly help others! I love telling others about this story because it

truly embodies what volunteering can do for both the volunteer and the organization. From leading volunteers for dinner to becoming a case manager for Sojourners' Project Warmth, I have reaped the benefits of the awesome opportunities Sojourners' gives people to be involved in their work and in helping others regain independence and stability in their lives. □



To ensure proper operation, do not place interns in direct sun.

is too often overlooked and misunderstood, all while maintaining positivity and individuality. Getting to witness the impact this organization has made on the revival of lives of citizens in the Palouse that were at, or close to, rock bottom has been a humbling and valuable experience that I would recommend for anyone to take part in if presented the opportunity. □

Maintenance Update

We have expended \$26,219 in repairs and maintenance since August 2013. I also learned a new term: egress. Egress relates to the dimension of the window as defined by city code, and ensures that a window can be used as an exit in case of an emergency. In our case, we replaced 14 windows, of which nine windows did not meet egress standards.

There were a lot of other repairs made in order to bring our housing up to standard. Idaho Housing & Finance Association covered nearly \$30,000 in electrical and HVAC repairs. We still have a minimum estimate of \$85,781 in repairs that will either be dealt with over time or, if we are able to move through the hoops, will be dealt with through new construction. If we are able to proceed with new construction, we can use three of the four existing foundations. The tenants or participants living in one of the buildings would have to be relocated while the new construction occurs. However, we are exploring the idea of having a two story building which would allow us to add additional low income housing and make it simple to transition any other tenants or participants into the new building while another building is being constructed. We will keep you up-to-date as things progress.

—Stephen Bonnar



The Theresa Sharrock Memorial Right of Way Garden to the north of the Sojourners' office is getting cleaned up and prepared for the 2014 growing season!

Wish List

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

- Paper towels
- Kleenex
- Large bath towels
- Large garbage bags (30+ gallon)
- Kitchen garbage bags (13 gallon)
- Razors
- Dish soap
- Laundry soap
- Sanitizing/disinfecting wipes
- Working vacuum cleaners
- Mops & mop buckets

Our needs are always changing. If you are unsure about particular items you would like to donate, don't hesitate to give us a call at (208) 883-3438. Thank you!

Garden Wish List

- Seeds/starts: Lavender, thyme, oregano, chives, rosemary, peas, red potatoes
- Lots of natural twine (no plastic please)
- Old rain gutters (up to 6) any size
- Succulents
- Large terra cotta pots
- Boards: Six 2 x 4s; Six 5 x 7s
- 16 ten feet tall bamboo sticks
- Silicone caulk
- Chicken poop!
- Sea weed food for plants
- Potting soil



Sojourners' Alliance
Bringing the Pieces Together

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4th Annual Yard Sale ***at the Kibbie Dome***

**Saturday,
August 16
8 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

**Volunteers
Needed!**

Now through August 16

- Accept & pick-up donations
- Organize & price
- Trucks & hands to move items to the Dome
- Set-up at the Sale
- Salespeople & security
- And many more ways to help!

Previous Yard Sales were a success thanks to the efforts of our tireless volunteers. Call Sojourners' Alliance at 883-3438 to find out how you can be a part of the team!