

The Interfaith Connection



CAST: Meals Served With Friendship, Compassion, Respect

“We serve anyone who comes up and needs a sandwich. Our guys live in camps and don’t have electricity, and can’t take something from the food bank to cook or heat up. They come in off the street and need to eat.”

CAST Director Mary Ann O’Hara coordinates a simple food serving program four nights a week in downtown Bellingham. CAST has a new home under Interfaith Coalition’s umbrella of programs for the county’s homeless population.

CAST (Coffee and Sandwiches Together) began in 2000 through Faith Lutheran Church, First Christian Church and Beth Israel Synagogue. It serves about 700 clients monthly. The program runs on volunteer energy. Mary Ann coordinates about 130 people, who purchase, prepare and deliver the food. Each evening, 8 to 10 volunteers are needed.

St. John’s Lutheran Church recently welcomed CAST to use its kitchen to store and prep the food. “They love having us there,” Mary Ann said. “The pastor and secretary couldn’t be more wonderful and accommodating.”

“We don’t have a mission, except to feed,” Mary Ann said. “No proselytizing. We’re there to chat and be friendly. We value these people. We do see very young children and lots of teenagers if the weather’s good,” she said.

Maureen Dunaway coordinates Sacred Heart Catholic Church’s CAST volunteers, working with Western’s Newman Center students, who serve each Monday. Sacred Heart congregants fill in during school vacations. “There’s not just a need for food, but a real need to be seen, respected, understood and cared about,” she said.

“There’s so much fear out there about people who are homeless, struggling with addiction. I feel they’re so isolated. It’s a place where they can meet, knowing others will be there. We know their names; they aren’t just another person in line.”

CAST is funded entirely by donations. Food and supplies costs up to \$1,000 a month. “We depend on our community to support this program,” Mary Ann said. Maureen adds, “People who aren’t able to come and physically help, maybe they can help financially.”

“This really does change you. I am more blessed by them than they are by me. None of us choose this way in life. We could easily be in that position. There’s not a lot of difference between all of us,” Maureen added.

Inspired to join CAST? Regular sandwich makers needed!

Contact Mary Ann O’Hara (360.325.2613) or maryann.ohara@gmail.com

Make a Difference This Fall with Interfaith Coalition

Opportunity and positive change are the themes for Interfaith Coalition this fall. With you help, we are poised to be able to do more for our marginalized neighbors.

This summer, we welcomed CAST (p.1), a successful volunteer-driven food outreach to the most vulnerable among us. We welcome this program and its volunteers to the Interfaith Coalition family.

With our experienced new Homeless Housing Program Manager Stacy Miller (p.4), the stage is set for potential expansion of our family housing programs, so desperately needed here.

Because Interfaith Coalition and the Interfaith Community Health Center are separate nonprofits with distinct (and parallel) missions, we each raise funds for our own work. This means we are more able to support and even expand our essential programs with these resources. We're grateful that our community affirms, by its stewardship, that every life matters and can be lifted up.

Can you join us this fall? We have several ways for you to get involved.

Annual Hope Meeting, Tues. October 13 at 7 p.m. Bellingham Covenant Church

Learn how individuals and diverse congregations can contribute to our vital work. Come for

inspiration and fellowship, leave with concrete ways to transform lives.



Severe Weather Shelter training

Sign up today as a volunteer for the men's or women's shelter. We'll have on-site trainings for mental health

and substance abuse challenges, boundaries, and shelter basics.



Winter Coat Drive

Collect gently-used and new coats for everyone from babies to seniors. Coats and winter gear are collected at congregations, Banner Bank branches and Ferndale WECU. We'll distribute in Blaine, Ferndale, Bellingham and the Foothills from mid- to late October.

New! Fall Forum for Congregation Staff

The clergy and staff of faith communities are the people most likely to receive requests from help from our vulnerable brothers and sisters who come to their door. A new workshop will provide resource information, some skills training and an opportunity for congregations to share with each other the strategies and programs that have --- and haven't --- worked in caring for those who come to us in need. *Date to be announced soon.*

Project Warm-Up

All knitters and crocheters, start now on warm and handsome handmade scarves, hats and gloves we'll donate to those in need at our winter coat drive and through partner agencies.

We're energized with the opportunities ahead, and are well-positioned to do more for our neighbors in need. **Please join us in being a part of making this community better for every single person.**



SHINING A LIGHT ON OUR PARTNERS IN CARING: PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center



As a faith-based medical center, PeaceHealth St. Joseph has been an active partner with Interfaith Coalition for 30 years. They enthusiastically participate in our Winter Coat Drive, Holiday Gift Program, Hope Auction and other programs.

Amy Cloud, Senior Communications Specialist, says that “initially we partnered with Interfaith because of the shared mission of healthcare for all. Extending the care (with Interfaith’s programs) makes our partnership long-term and holistic.”

One of those “other” programs is the Winter Coat Drive, which Amy reports is one of the most popular events at PeaceHealth. All medical center sites participate, from the main hospital to labs to the Cancer Center. Even patients and clients at these locations donate. Being able to help others appeals to many, and Amy says she is always moved to see the abundance of warm clothes filling the collection barrels.

PeaceHealth’s Director for Planning and Business Development, David Sulier, serves on Interfaith’s board of directors. He became involved when he assisted his son’s Eagle Scout project at Our House.

That experience “gave me a chance to witness firsthand the support Interfaith provides to vulnerable families.” Being a board member “allows me to connect with local community members who have a passion for helping the disadvantaged.”

This special partnership is also a way for suffering to be addressed outside of healthcare. Andrea, a chaplain at PeaceHealth, says that Interfaith Coalition helps reduce suffering. “The consequence is that our community is healthier. Our strength is providing acute care for specific times and place.” She adds that the need for acute care is diminished when other primary needs (such as housing) are met. “In bridging the gaps with Interfaith, the frequency of return to us for acute care goes down. Interfaith Coalition contributes to the healing mission of PeaceHealth and goes beyond by filling in the gaps.”

We are grateful and blessed to partner with PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center!



“Interfaith Coalition contributes to the healing mission of PeaceHealth and goes beyond by filling in the gaps.”



of Whatcom County
2401 Cornwall Avenue
Bellingham, WA 98225

(360) 734-3983
info@interfaith-coalition.org
www.interfaith-coalition.org

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WELCOME TO TRICIA AND STACY!

With a busy slate of programs and events ahead, we're delighted to welcome two new staff members, Tricia Cook and Stacy Miller, to help deliver services and support to our community.



Tricia Cook, our new Administrator and Development Coordinator, replaces Kara Hauerwas. (Kara and her husband, Pastor Jon, accepted a call to a church in Ohio.) "I am

excited to bring my many years of experience in business administration and development to this wonderful, community-minded organization," says Tricia. "My professional skill set also lies in grant management and event organization, and I look forward to helping Interfaith Coalition grow through these means, in addition to assisting with their many other efforts." In her free time, she enjoys "recreating quietly in the mountains, or at her writing desk."



Stacy Miller is our new Homeless Housing Program Manager. "I have been involved with homeless housing for more than 20 years. Fund development, program management and volunteer engagement have

long been a part of my career," says Stacy. "I have come to believe that most folks just need someone to believe in them and walk alongside them, to help them reach their goal of self-sufficiency. I am excited to be a part of Interfaith Coalition and work with the community to help some of the most vulnerable find long term housing and stability. In my free time I like to travel, hang out with my partner and two children and volunteer."