

## 2015 NCW Community Success Summit Story Exchange

**Eastmont High Emergency Shelter** Contact: Mark Marney, [marneym@eastmont206.org](mailto:marneym@eastmont206.org)



**Situation:** On a hot, windy Sunday night, June 28, 2015, the Douglas County Sheriff's office called to ask us to work with the Red Cross to open Eastmont High School as an Emergency Shelter for those affected by the Sleepy Hollow Fire. We learned early on that some of the evacuees were coming from an assisted living, long-term care facility. Our Student Senate Advisor sent out a tweet asking for help and within an hour many student volunteers responded to the call.

**Challenge:** We strategized that the typical evacuees would be in the Main Gymnasium and the assisted living folks would be in the Auxiliary Gym with handicap access nearby. This area was separate from the main parking area where most of the evacuees were arriving; this was very helpful as many of the residents arrived via ambulance and handicapped accessible LINK buses. It looked a lot more like a MASH unit with all the necessary medical equipment, than a gymnasium. Many family members arrived in support of their parents who resided at the assisted living facility. Although it was night and dark, the temperatures were still in the 90's; we were experiencing extreme heat. Many evacuees were staying outside in the heat with their dogs due to the "no pets" in school rules.

**Key Activities:** Eastmont provided an effective shelter for the emergency because:

- The facility has several spacious commons and gym areas and is air-conditioned.
- The word for help got out quickly and many students, nurses, and others stepped up to help when they saw they were needed and could contribute.
- People worked in teams to set up the facility and care for the evacuees. Students helped lay a tarp over the Main Gym floor, set up cots, and assist elders as they arrived. They were very comforting to the elders as well as the medical and care-giving staff. It was touching to see students holding an elder's hand and comforting them with the "everything is going to be just fine" attitude teenagers exude.
- Volunteers and evacuees worked together to make a difficult situation better. Students were willing to "dog sit" in the Agriculture Shop so evacuees could take shelter from the heat. The students also appreciated being needed and doing something for the cause.

**Successful Outcome:** About 80 Eastmont students, 20 staff, and 40 adult volunteers helped people find shelter and comfort during the crisis. The students - great kids with a lot of positive energy - worked together to comfort some very stressed and confused evacuees.

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### **Pateros Fire Relief**

**Contact:** Kimberly Gormley, [gormley@nwi.net](mailto:gormley@nwi.net)



**Situation:** An active Facebook user, Waterville resident Kimberly Gormley became aware of emergency housing needs when she heard about people sleeping in the Pateros Park following the Carleton Complex Fire on July 18, 2014. Motivated to help, she pooled funds with friends to buy a trailer and then asked others, via Facebook, to help furnish it. Many people responded and within a couple days Kimberly and her friends, Windy Osborne and Kim Katovitch, delivered a fully furnished trailer with title to Marcel McArthur, who Pateros relief workers said needed a new home. This

success spurred others as Kimberly spread the word via Facebook, the newspaper, and word-of-mouth, that donations of goods and cash were needed to help those displaced by the fires. By late-fall Kimberly had received \$58,000 from people in and out of state who had responded to her appeal. She purchased seven more trailers, coordinated the donation of eight more and saw that they were all furnished and delivered to those in need. Remaining funds were directed to helping others with short-term housing needs, e.g., utility bills and well permits. She donated the rest of the money to the Carlton Complex Fire Long-term Recovery Fund managed by the Community Foundation of NCW.

**Challenge:** Kimberly's biggest challenge was matching the flood of donations, coming in through calls, Facebook, and surface mail, with the true needs. She became a full-time relief coordinator for at least six months as she worked with others in Pateros to steer the donations to those most in need.

**Key Activities:** Reflecting on this experience, Kimberly describes a few conditions that led to her success in connecting people in need with those who wanted to help.

- She kept her focus on how she could help rather than why she shouldn't. She didn't overthink it.
- A long-time resident and business owner in Douglas County, she is a known entity with a deep understanding of the community and their strong tradition of helping their neighbors.
- Kimberly serves as a community connector, frequently sharing news of events and needs frequently though Facebook and other means.
- People responded with generosity, many of them anonymously.

**Successful Outcome:** Kimberly and her friends created a new model of giving which has strengthened the community bonds between Waterville, Pateros, and other parts of the country. Forty thousand dollars of the funds she raised provided emergency housing for 16 families. Most of these families have passed the trailers on to others as they have rebuilt their homes. The remaining \$18,000 was directed to long-term recovery. To contribute to that fund contact the Community Foundation of North Central Washington, <http://www.cfncw.org/fire/>

## 2015 NCW Community Success Summit Story Exchange

**Oroville Seed Lending Library** Contact: LaVonne Hammelman, lavomsn@hotmail.com



**Situation:** The cost of purchasing quality vegetable seeds from seed companies has grown dramatically since the 1980s. That situation, coupled with the desire to identify plant varieties adapted to the very different growing conditions of the Okanogan Valley and the Okanogan Highlands, inspired LaVonne Hammelman and Julie Ashmore to search for local sources of garden seeds. They knew that many of the lifelong home gardeners in the Oroville area saved seed; they figured that learning from

their experiences and growing out the seeds they had saved would increase the bank of seeds adapted to the local area.

**Challenge:** Initially, the challenge was locating seeds and determining the best way to organize them for distribution. LaVonne and Julie recognized that a seed library, hosted by the North Central Regional Library (NCRL), could provide the vehicle they needed to help reconnect the Oroville area to traditions of food self-sufficiency, promote cultivation of cold-adapted plants along with the practices of seed saving and food preservation. Organizing the program, along with securing seeds and the funding to support the program, was up to them.

**Key Activities:** LaVonne notes that the success of the Seed Library is linked to the success of several other programs and partners they work with.

- The Oroville Librarian Barbara Pollock and library staff have been instrumental in the success.
- Their partnership with the non-profit Slow Food Okanogan enabled the seed library to secure a generous donation from Irish Eyes Seeds which they used to organize the first seed catalog.
- Ready access to the seed library is provided by their partnership with the Oroville Library which hosts the Farmer's Market during the growing season.
- With the help of Spanish translator and library host Rosa Cervantes, all community members have access to classes, recommended reading, and seeds.
- The Seed Library initiated a "Grow a Row" program to inspire gardeners to donate produce to the Oroville Food Bank, a relationship that adds food to the bank while growing public awareness of the Seed Library.

**Successful Outcome:** Now in its third year, the bilingual Seed Lending Library is a formal, NCRL program hosted by library-approved volunteers, some of whom are also WSU Master Gardeners. The seed library catalog contains over 800 donated vegetable and flower seed packets that are checked out and grown by 60 people each year. Future plans include offering workshops such as a "Lunch 'N Learn" series on Saturdays.

## 2015 NCW Community Success Summit Story Exchange

### **Orondo Fire District**

**Contact:** Jim Oatey, 509-789-2941, [joatey@gmail.com](mailto:joatey@gmail.com)



**Situation:** In the 1940s the community of Orondo was largely made up of families farming fruit on 20 to 30-acre farms. Farms were passed down through families along with the tradition of serving as a volunteer for the local fire district. This pattern began to change in the 1980s as orchards were sold and either consolidated into larger blocks of land or developed for vacation and recreational homes. At the same time, increasing numbers of Latino families began moving to the area to work in the orchards. By 2010 when Jim Oatey became the fire chief, the volunteer base had decreased from what had been a stable and sizeable crew with experience in the landscape and knowledge of the community to one with less than a dozen people. And as the land uses changed and the population increased, the need for

emergency response also grew; the Orondo Fire District responded to 72 calls in 2004, for example, whereas in 2014 that number had increased to 178 calls.

**Challenge:** Jim's challenge was to reinvigorate the fire district volunteer force in a community that now included people new to the area – those who came from Mexico and other places to work in the orchards as well as new second-homeowners, retirees and seasonal recreationists.

**Key Activities:** Jim attributes his success in building the volunteer force to several factors including reaching beyond the traditional sectors of the community when recruiting volunteers, being persistent, building fun and social activities into the program, and providing a variety of ways for people to help.

- Recruiting is continual through personal contacts and recommendations, Facebook, newsletters and events. Jim says he often recruits new volunteers through existing volunteers, i.e., “good people attract other good people.”
- Persistence is required; don't be afraid to step up and ask and if someone says no move on to someone else. More people can get more done for the community he says. And in a small community with fewer organizations to help such as service clubs, the need to support the fire district is apparent. Many people are responding to this need.
- People enjoy the social aspects of volunteering. Jim and his wife Jennifer reinvigorated the Fire District Auxilliary to provide opportunities for those who want to support but don't want to be on the fireline. They fundraise, provide meals at fire district meetings, and organize summer picnics and a Christmas party.

**Successful Outcome:** By 2015 Jim had succeeded in increasing the volunteer force to 36 active volunteers that includes a mix of men, women, young, old, Latino, Anglo-European, and others.

## 2015 NCW Community Success Summit Story Exchange

### Leavenworth Grocery Rescue

**Contact:** Bob Mark; bob@uvmend.org; 509-548-0408



**Situation:** The Community Cupboard, a foodbank-thrift store-emergency assistance program of Upper Valley MEND (Meeting Each Need with Dignity), is housed in space donated by the City of Leavenworth. Part of a larger foodbank network, the Community Cupboard is connected to Second Harvest, a statewide food distribution organization based in Spokane. In partnership with various grocery stores including WalMart and Safeway, Second Harvest has initiated a Grocery Recovery program, designed to prevent food waste. The Community Cupboard had been doing grocery recovery through Second Harvest at the

Wenatchee Walmart, every Monday, since it became a Super Walmart in 2013. At the same time, Community Cupboard volunteers were picking up bread donations from Safeway in Leavenworth. When the Leavenworth Safeway store began participating in the broader Grocery Recovery program, Second Harvest invited the Community Cupboard to pick up from the other departments as well, which includes items such as bagged salads, deli sandwiches, meat, fresh fruits and vegetables.

**Challenge:** The biggest challenge with being able to take advantage of the food provided by the Grocery Recovery program is providing enough volunteers to pick up the Safeway donations six days a week. For the most part, the volunteers that had previously been picking up bread donations continued, adding the additional groceries on their pick-up day. A few new volunteers, able to lift heavy crates of food items, were recruited to fill in the gaps. Another challenge has been creating adequate refrigeration and freezer space for the additional food in the Community Cupboard foodbank. Fortunately, food moves so quickly through the doors that this hasn't been too much of a problem.

**Key Activities:** Some of the circumstances that Bob says helped foster this success include:

- UVMEND collaborating with Second Harvest and Safeway to launch the Grocery Recovery program.
- UVMEND's ability to recruit new volunteers to help with the daily pick-ups.
- Because the Community Cupboard is open six days a week it makes a reliable location and partner for the Grocery Recovery program. Most food banks are only open a day or two a week, which makes it hard for them to pick up and distribute all the food from the grocery rescue efforts.

**Successful Outcome:** Each day the Community Cupboard receives hundreds of pounds of food from the Leavenworth Safeway store that would have otherwise been thrown away. With fresh items making up most of this food, their clients and customers have many additional healthy food options to choose from. Safeway staff are also extremely happy because they no longer have to continue throwing away so much food!