

Conversation
Welcome Home Skagit
Mt. Vernon Seventh-day Adventist Church
4520 East College Way, Mt. Vernon, WA 98283
October 25, 2019

Started at 8:30 am - closed at 9:30
Larry Paise – Facilitator

Northwest Career and Technical Academy students: This group of students were welcomed at the meeting today. They are working on a Civics project focused on those experiencing homelessness.

Safe Parking: The 10/21 mtg. at Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church to discuss the ordinance & encourage churches went well. Four new churches not represented at previous meetings were at the meeting. Three people are signed up for a field trip to visit safe parking sites that are currently in operation in other places. Last Wednesday the City Council held a public hearing to review the Safe Parking ordinance. There was a sense that previous negative discussions were transformed due to the education and community discussions that have happened. This transformation is an outstanding result. We are grateful for all the work everyone has put into this project.

Welcome Home Skagit: Welcome Home Skagit submitted our first grant request yesterday. We will hear very soon about the outcome. The grant would provide core operating funds. We would partially fund care coordination services, community services, etc. with hired employees. Operating expenses will be covered. This grant could fund up to \$75,000 per year for the next three years.

Resources for Homeless Community Members: Welcome Home will be applying for transit tickets soon. Care kits for those who have to sleep in the cold and wet weather will each have a hat hand-knitted by members of the United Methodist Church, wool socks, 7' x 9' tarp, a 72 x 80" moving blanket and a good, weather-resistant duffel bag to hold them. The care kits cost roughly \$50 each. Thank you to the Community Service department of the Mt. Vernon SDA church for funding the first 50 care kits. Thank you to the many other people and organizations who contributed their time and money as well. Thanks also to both the Burlington & Marysville Eddie Bauer Outlet stores for a great price on the duffel bags.

Donations to Welcome Home Skagit: If you are interested in donating to Welcome Home Skagit, please make all checks payable to **Angels for Angels** if you want a tax credit.

Project Dignity Banquet: A workgroup will be formed. We are planning to apply for a grant through Group Health to help fund the Dignity Dinner Banquet.

Save the Date of February 15, 2020: Please reserve Feb. 15, 2020, on your calendar. Stella Ireland will be producing a play based on stories of people who have experienced homelessness. Theater Arts for Social Action is her 501c3 organization. In addition to numerous other accomplishments in the Theater Arts, Stella has a lengthy background in Theater Arts & has agreed to put this play together to provide the community with a better understanding of the causes and challenges related to homelessness. Anyone interested in helping out with the funding of this play at the Lincoln Theater can contact Nancy Brown or Wende Sanderson.

February Free Medical/Dental/Visual Services Event: North Cascade SDA Church will be hosting a clinic on Feb. 15 & 16th, 2020, to provide free medical, dental & vision services. Please get the word out to people in need & inform people who might want to volunteer to help out with this clinic on those two days. Volunteers can register online at lovehealsfreeclinic.org

Resident Action Projects Housing (RAP) and Homelessness Advocacy Day: This is scheduled for Feb. 3. People will go to Olympia to advocate for RAP started by Washington Housing Alliance to advocate with the Washington Legislators. They advocate for legislative priorities. There have been many good outcomes as a result of this advocacy. In the past two years, the three-day notice to pay or vacate was changed to 14 days. Sixty-day notice is now required instead of thirty if the rent will be raised. House Bill 1406 was passed. A small portion of the property tax will given back to the county to pay for affordable housing. Curtis Steinhauer is the contact person if you are interested in getting involved in RAP or need questions answered.

Skagit County Report: Tina Tate turned in the application permit for the Temporary Overnight Winter Shelter yesterday. Draft of Homeless Housing Plan was sent out for public comment yesterday. Eleven tiny homes will be donated to Anacortes for shelter housing. There is a Presbyterian Church in Concrete that is willing to open their doors for an emergency shelter. The county is looking for an organization to apply for the opportunity to manage that shelter. WHS will also be talking with people in Anacortes about management of tiny home village there.

Pastor John McGhee: Our community is grateful for the many contributions of Pastor John McGhee, who is retiring. His departure event will be on November 2 at the Mt. Vernon SDA church. All are invited to join the celebration by bringing two pies for a pie contest or \$5.00 for a great pie tasting event & auction. Pastor John shared that he has many plans, such as planning to start a community conversation group at the Federal Way church he now attends based upon the Welcome Home model. Many people gave praise for the dedication and passion that John has shown steadily to find ways to provide care and assistance to homeless people in Skagit County. Many feel that there would not have been a four-month Winter Shelter provided in Skagit County for the last three years without his perseverance, encouragement & collaborative efforts. He hopes to come to Mount Vernon one day & see that the sign that now says "Skagit County Fairgrounds" will say "Welcome Home Skagit."