

Valentine Sweetheart

By Phyllis Badgley

Excitement accelerated in grade school in the 1930s, as Valentine's Day approached. After finishing assignment in the Weekly Reader, we were allowed to make Valentines. Teacher supplied red and white construction paper, lacy doilies and solid white paste. We discovered a pleasant taste when using our tongue to remove paste from our fingers.

Commercial valentines during Great Depression days were considered special. If we were fortunate enough to have fifteen cents, we could buy Valentine's Day cards at F.W.Woolworth store on Main Street. Priced at two for a penny, we could buy a Valentine for each of our thirty classmates. Teacher would receive our special hand made creation.

By the time we reached Jr. High (now called Middle school.) entering teen years, we dreamed of being noticed by a young classmate of our same age. We secretly hoped for a Valentine from him, although he didn't seem to recognize our existence, as we passed in the hallway.

Valentine's Day in High School was accented by group gatherings at Harrison's Confectionery on Main Street. Many affectionate glances were exchanged there over servings of soft drinks, and special chocolate candy that was created right there on the premises.

Adult years rolled by. Cupid shot darts at me when I met, through friends, a shy gentleman from Huntington, Ore. When Valentine's Day approached, we had been friends for two months. I thought a Valentine's Card only would be forthcoming, however, Mr. B. surprised me with a gift of a lovely pink jewel necklace! Our courtship continued and two months later, Valentine excitement still prevailing, we became engaged. Additionally, after another two months ensued, we were happily married.

I received Valentines from my husband for forty two years, until his passing. The Valentine necklace of 1951 remains in my treasure chest, to be worn each Feb. 14.



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Because You Care

By Emily Braswell

"Over a period of 25 years I spent 13 of them on lock down. But I noticed something different when I got sent to Powder River Correctional Facility, that the staff and volunteers cared deeply," testified Ted Woodruff. After an emotional pause as he stood, holding back tears, he professed, "Cliff Cole saved my life."

"I'm 31 years old. I started my life of crime at age 11... started doing drugs at age 14...and I have been to prison 10 times," Lucas Evans confessed. "I wanted help, so I robbed a store and waited there for the police to come and get me... and I requested to go to the Powder River Correctional Facility because they have the best AIP (Alternative Incarceration Addiction Program) in the world."

Woodruff and Evans are former inmates who made Powder River the final resting place of their old lives. Woodruff was released in 2007 and Evans was released just four months ago. The main attribute these two men have in common is how they were able to be freed from their pasts with the selfless and patient help of Cole and the other members of the Prison Ministry team. Their stories are only two out of the hundreds of individuals who have received help from the Northeast Oregon Compassion Center (NEOCC).

The men told their stories in front of almost 200 people last Saturday evening during the Celebrate Compassion Banquet, a yearly fundraiser for the NEOCC. Their moving testimonies were preceded by a revealing dialogue from former Baker City Church of the Nazarene pastor, Allan Franks. It was under his administration in 1999 that the NEOCC was founded.

Franks created the center after his own spiritual, emotional and physical breakdown, which eventually became his 'break-open.'

"It was the worst and best thing that had ever happened to me," he explained. Because of the brokenness he experienced, Franks developed an overwhelming compassion for 'broken' people, which, in turn led him in developing the NEOCC.

Over the past 15 years the NEOCC has served Baker County, giving counselling, guidance and support, and also through their 15 free public programs; each one offered with love and respect. These programs are: Baker County Jail Visitation, Celebrate Recovery, Christian Care Giving, Clothing Boutique, Communication Skills Classes, Domestic Violence Intervention Group, Financial Peace University, Firewood Ministry, Food Bank, Home Service Projects, Learning to Change, Parenting Classes, Prison Ministry in the Powder River and Snake River Facilities, Restoration Ministries Classes and, the most recently created Safe Zone, a support group for veterans.

The programs are coordinated by the four NEOCC staff members and the many community volunteers who freely give their assistance because they believe in the center's mission: "We exist to open doors so Christ can change lives. Our desire is to serve the people in our community who have a need, regardless of their race, religion or ability to pay."

NEOCC operates strictly on grants and donations, making their fundraising activities an essential requirement. Last year's banquet request was met, and then some. They needed a pickup truck for use with their firewood program. They received one pickup truck, one larger truck, plus cash to operate the program. Those generous donations helped the program's volunteers to chop, stack and deliver 240 cord of firewood to meet this winter's heating needs.

The goal for this year's fundraiser is \$15,000 in 90 days to fulfill three requests. They would like to acquire a front-end loader or tractor for the firewood program, accumulate funding for temporary emergency housing and gain a place, or funding, for a permanent facility for long-term emergency, or transitional housing.

NEOCC accepts food, clothing, volunteer time and financial donations. To donate to this faith-based organization, call their office at 541-523-9845, visit their website at neoregoncompassioncenter.org, or mail to PO Box 665, Baker City, OR 97814. Your support is truly appreciated.



LEADERSHIP

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The BMS leadership class partners with Kiwanis International, which has helped by purchasing t-shirts and partial fundraising. Outside of Kiwanis, BMS leadership kids - about 120 seventh and eighth graders - are responsible for their own fundraising. They develop their own ideas for community service projects and ways to raise money, vote on which to focus on, and organize.

"It's different every year," says Sullivan of the class's projects. "And it has to be the students."

During its yearly carnival fundraiser last year (now coming up in March), Sullivan says the group raised about \$12,000.

"Our money goes right back into student programs," says Sullivan.

Leadership recently purchased 18 Apple Chromebook laptop computers for the BMS Language Arts department, and hopes to be able to fund more; it helped the Art department bring in a notable artist to paint murals inside the school; it puts on dances and recognizes its staff; it regularly helps kids attend sporting events when in need of funds, and provides scholarships for those in need of supplies. The class is also helping to refurbish a property purchased by Principal Mindy Vaughan which will then ideally be sold to help fund a new wood shop.

Sullivan and her students average 75 service projects per year. Once a week, the kids help at the Baker City Salvation Army, vacuuming and washing windows; they help the local Baker City Baptist Church with its free meal each Wednesday by decorating, cleaning, and setting-up; and they recently donated \$1,000 to the nearby Presbyterian Church which supplies breakfast to students every morning. Other projects include sending food to U.S. troops, supply boxes to African orphans, water purification straws to the Philippines, and still more.

As Sullivan puts it, "We do it all."

Each minute of service is documented by students and must be signed-off by a staff member. Those who reach 1,000 unpaid minutes of service are invited to attend a special event the class has been organizing for awhile, inspired by BHS graduate Michelle Freese.

These students travel to Portland to assist the homeless. But not

only do they offer Portland homeless food and socks, they also become immersed in what it is like to be homeless. The students are only allowed an old red sweater, PE uniform, sleeping bags, and basic food - no backpacks allowed. Kids are arranged to sleep in a safe, but cement-floored coffee shop in sleeping bags. Some use their sweaters as pillows.

The experience, says Sullivan, is not only incredibly educational, but also emotional. It is an experiment in the difference between sympathy and empathy. The class is equipped with brooms also, which they use to help sweep the areas where homeless sleep. They

are escorted for safety by Adsideo, a service group of individuals who used to be homeless themselves. Not only do they understand the safer areas of the city, but Adsideo also shares stories with students. Kids learn important lessons about drugs, family, and education. It is a powerful experience.

The BMS leadership class's officers are as follows: Dylan Masttrude, President; Zach Schwin, Vice President; and Reno Hammond, Treasurer/Secretary. Sullivan credits these students with doing an outstanding job of presenting to students and staff as well as overseeing each service project.

In a similar program modeled after the BMS Leadership Class, by strong supporter, Baker City Kiwanis, Kate Wilde and Jacob Sergeant are proud winners of Kiwanis's "K Kids" Service Award. Both fifth graders completed 1,000 minutes of documented unpaid service to their communities.

Congratulations to the students and staff involved in such outstanding leadership at Baker Middle School.

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