

Ministry feeds spiritual, physical needs

House of Hope reaches out to homeless

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

A couple of years ago Mark Leslie found himself homeless and hungry.

Hearing about Tacos and Testimonies, Leslie headed to Desert Rose Ministries where he was met by people that fed him — both physically and spiritually.

Grateful for people reaching out to him and knowing he has a unique ability to touch others that are homeless, Leslie now gives back through House of Hope. The organization, which is in the process of getting its nonprofit status, is separate from the ministry at Desert Rose.

Recently, House of Hope received a boost from The Shift Church in Albany. With a mission of “We exist to live with one hand to the gutter and one hand to the sky,” the idea of helping House of Hope came about when parishioner Eric Jefferson heard the Hermiston ministry was serving the homeless.

The Shift, Jefferson said, chooses charities and tries to help them out. Erecting a tent in the church’s gymnasium, he said people filled it with sleeping bags, hoodies, gloves, personal hygiene supplies and other miscellaneous items.



Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

Linda Durant, vice chairwoman of House of Hope, helps Eric Jefferson of The Shift Church of Albany unload donations for the group’s ministry to the homeless in Hermiston.

Jefferson was thrilled to be a part of the project — especially getting to make the five-hour drive to deliver the supplies.

“I have a love for Jesus and a truck,” he said with a laugh.

Linda Durant, vice chairmen of the House of Hope board of directors, was ecstatic with the donation.

“They rounded up a lot of things we can use,” she said. “They were very generous to help meet the needs of people in this area.”

The ministry, Durant said, has gained steam in the past year. In addition to the all-volunteer executive board, there are about a dozen liaisons — who are affiliated with local churches or nonprofit organizations.

House of Hope has been operating in the space with Desert Rose at 512 E. Main St., Hermiston — providing outreach to the hungry and homeless. Monday through Saturday mornings, people can drop in from 7-11 a.m. for coffee, tea and cereal. In the afternoons, they can return between 3-6 p.m. for soup and bread or sandwiches.

Durant said there is a tremendous need in the area to serve the homeless. And, even though they don’t have their own ministry space, the group has been doing what they can to reach out to those in need.

“If you wait until you have all your ducks in the row, you may never get into the water,” Durant said.

Leslie is excited about the possibilities. Providing

support and an opportunity for people to get back on their feet, Leslie said, helps them in becoming productive members of the community. Leslie knows this from personal experience.

“They showed me I was worth more than I thought of myself,” he said.

For more information, call Leslie at 541-391-6435 or Durant at 541-449-5038. In addition, the public is invited to board meetings the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Hermiston Assembly of God Church, 730 E. Hurlburt Ave.

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4539

BOARDMAN'S LIMEY PASTOR

The coming of the Light

It is the season of Advent, the coming of the Christ Child. The church breathes in the air of this new sacred time. The advent wreath honors the light of its candles, four of them, one candle lit each week for the season.

Four families of our church, each family chosen to light each candle, one per Sunday prior to Christmas Day. Light entering the world increment by increment, a light that comes from beyond the firmament. After this Sunday there will be one more candle to light, one more week of waiting before heaven meets earth.

There was a time when the world had no Christ, when the world was dark. The world of Joseph and Mary was a world immersed in the shadow of Rome, the great foreign occupier and oppressor. To be small, poor people in that world was terrifying.

Mary was very young, the scholars think. Maybe she was fourteen or so, or round about that age. Joseph, the young man, was probably quite a bit older. The star above them, a new star, very bright and slowly wandering. In the mind’s eye you can see it — on the other side of the hills and mountains, wise men have seen it and are hastening to meet its arrival. The coming of the light into the world is being met by those guided by wisdom and prophecy; they are carrying portable gifts, myrrh, frankincense and gold — gifts of great honor. I don’t think that knew where they were heading. They knew that they were going to meet a very important somebody who was about to be born.

Perhaps the wise men are hoping

to find a palace, a wondrous construction, of jewels and marble. Instead, they find a stable, a place where beasts of burden are housed, in the straw nest of a manger. They trust the wisdom.

In the place where the animals feed will be laid a small, scrawny baby. The baby Jesus will lie peacefully looking at the animals and the

animals will look back. Jesus will look up in the gaps of the stable and will see the Star above. The animals’ cries soften as they gaze on this little human and feel a marvelous peace. The baby’s mother is equally scrawny, having

traveled a long way. Joseph’s eyes are dark with fear and wonder. Does this child look like him? His heart flickers with doubt. Why are these strange men here with them? Why do they bear precious things with them? What does this mean?

This moment in the life of a poor family is a lever of history. Without it our world would be sloth-eyed and mired in selfishness. The exemplar of love has changed every moment thereafter. This baby has rocked the cradle of the world.

The Birth of our Lord is a recurring wonder. Every year we relive this coming in our seasonal stories. It is a new birth of innocence and holiness. A fountain of compassion pouring up out of the bedrock of time to re-green the world and to bring new life to a mystery beyond our understanding.

Colin Brown is the pastor of Boardman’s Good Shepherd Lutheran Church on Locust Road.

This moment in the life of a poor family is a lever of history.



COLIN BROWN
Faith

BRIEFLY

Christian center presents ‘wonderful’ concert

HERMISTON — A musical extravaganza is planned during an upcoming special service at the Hermiston Christian Center.

Christmas is Wonderful will feature a full hour of music — from holiday classics to new Christmas songs. People won’t want to miss a rap version of “Jingle Bells” performed by Helen McAfee. The septuagenarian will even don an elf costume for the performance.

The free event is Sunday, Dec. 18 at 10 a.m. at 1825 W. Highland Ave., Hermiston. There is no admission charge.

The program also includes McAfee performing a duet with her brother, Brad Rozema, who plays trombone with Brass Fire. Other highlights include an original version of “Mary, Did You Know?” by Jacob Looper, one of the church’s worship music leaders.

Looper said a variety of soloists, duets and trios will perform — along with a larger ensemble and a brass band.

For a sneak preview, stop by Hermiston’s Winter Festival Thursday, Dec. 15 at 4:30 p.m.. Part of the group will be singing carols as part of the featured entertainment in the festival area by the city Christmas tree, 180 N.E. Second St.

For more information, call 541-567-3480.

Kid’s Christmas drama set at Nazarene church

HERMISTON — The public is invited to a Christmas drama presented at the Hermiston Church of the Nazarene.

Bethlehem is crowded, but there’s room for people to enjoy seeing the story portrayed through “Sheep in Heavenly Peace.” Appropriate for all ages, the free kid’s drama is Sunday, Dec. 18 at 10:30 a.m. at 1520 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston.

For more information, call 541-567-3677 or visit www.hermistonnazarene.org.

A biblical heroine’s legend, told through ballet

By FRANCESCA FONTANA
Eugene Register-Guard

Mother-daughter duo Donna and Hannah Bontrager are bringing the biblical story of Esther to life with Ballet Fantastique’s latest production at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts in Eugene.

The Bontragers produced and choreographed the dance adaptation of “The Book of Esther,” from the third section of the Jewish Tanakh and the Christian Old Testament, for their dance company in 2014. The story follows a Hebrew girl who becomes queen of Persia and stops a genocide of her people.

“We are always looking for compelling stories, for ones that have never been told through ballet,” Hannah Bontrager said. Both women said they grew up with the story from the Old Testament

and loved the strength of the female protagonist, so they are bringing the production back this season.

Donna Bontrager said that the original choreography is a combination of classical ballet and contemporary dance, drawing inspiration from her previous work dancing at the Feast of the Tabernacles in Jerusalem.

“Dance is one of the highest art forms to use to worship God,” she said. “(The Old Testament) is filled with dances of celebration and that kind of thing.”

Hannah Bontrager said the dancers do a lot of characterization and acting in their work for the show. For instance, she said that Esther’s movement is “very strong and beautiful but restrained,” unlike other female leads in productions such as “Cinderella” and “Romeo and Juliet.”

For “Esther,” Ballet Fantastique is collaborating again with the University of Oregon Gospel Singers for this year’s production. The group sings live onstage for each performance, and the choir’s music director, Andiel Brown, also plays Mordecai, Ruth’s guardian who encourages her throughout the story.

“Just seeing the dancers work out the choreography to the song we will be singing is so inspiring,” Brown said. “People should be excited to see this marriage of gospel music, story and ballet as it has never been done before.”

Donna Bontrager said it has been interesting to find ways of putting together scenes from the story to spiritual pieces of music such as “Now Let Me Fly to Zion, Lord,” a traditional African-American slave spiritual about the Underground Railroad.

“As storytellers, there’s something so powerful about the history of the music itself,” Hannah Bontrager added. “To me, dancing onstage with this music that has so much power to tell the story of Esther.”

In addition to the live choir, there will be recorded narration to help the audience understand the plot.

“It’s a bit of a complicated story, and we wanted to bring the audience along with us,” Hannah Bontrager said.

The Bontragers said the production has a great message for the holiday season.

“(A story about) coming together and believing in a miracle and overcoming a seemingly insurmountable obstacle is one that feels very timely,” Hannah Bontrager said. “We love the power of the story of a woman whose bravery and faith saves an entire people.”

Worship Community



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