



# BLANCHET HOUSE

APRIL 2020

NEWSLETTER

## MEAL PROGRAM



Meal Services Manager, Curtiss Goodwin, stands next to food we picked up from the Oregon Convention Center on March 12.

## Coronavirus Closures Bring Needed Food

The first week of canceled events and closures due to COVID-19 brought us an unexpected gift of 50,000 pounds of food! As one of the few organizations in Portland that can pick up, store, prepare and serve donated food we received hundreds of calls from desperate businesses asking us to rescue their food.

Now that the wave of closures has subsided food donations are slowing and we will need to begin purchasing food. Your support is needed now more than ever. As our expenses increase so does the need for our services. **On March 31, we served 2,052 to-go meals, which is 50% more meals served than at this time last year.**

Read more about our new and essential services at [www.BlanchetHouse.org/Press](http://www.BlanchetHouse.org/Press).

## Brave Volunteers Continue to Serve

From 6 am to 6 pm, Mon. through Sat., volunteers and residents show up to cook, scoop, bag, pour, clean and serve so people can get a simple meal. We're able to continue our meal service to hundreds of hungry and homeless people during this time of crisis because of their commitment to serve and your support. Thank you to all!



## HOW TO HELP FROM YOUR HOME

We're seeing many more women and new faces in line for to-go meals. Our guests desperately need clothing, tarps, and toiletries.

Can you host a clothing or toiletries drive? Or make care kits from the safety of your home? All can be dropped off at 310 NW Glisan, M-Sat., 8-11 or 1-4:30.

Learn more at [BlanchetHouse.org/Get-Involved](http://BlanchetHouse.org/Get-Involved)



Left to right, Brian Buckner hugs MC Rich Ulring; Patty Stember, Sue Healy, Barbara Niedermeyer and Sally Follen receive awards for their service; Emily and Joey Harrington unveil details of the Harrington Health Clinic.

## Record Crowd Attends Annual Brunch

By a miracle, more than 360 people gathered to support and celebrate the work of Blanchet House on March 1 just before the COVID19 outbreak. The annual brunch was held at the Multnomah Athletic Club where Jesuit Father Gary Smith delivered a blessing of hope and compassion.

More than \$150,000 was raised to fund our meal and housing programs.

Executive director, Scott Kerman, spoke about how meaningful serving others in the café is to him.

"Our aprons signal to our meal guests that we are here to serve them," said Kerman. "We are happy for our guests to simply enjoy their meal. We will do the work."

Brian Buckner, who lived at Blanchet Farm last year, moved many to tears with his story of going from homeless-

ness and addiction to hope. He told the crowd he was able to reunite with his daughters thanks to the support he received at the farm.

Board president, Emily Harrington, and her husband, Joey Harrington, announced the Harrington Health Clinic, which will be located at Blanchet House. The Harringtons are partnering with the University of Portland School of Nursing and Volunteers of America to create the first nurse-led clinic in Oregon.

Board Vice President, Dan Petrusich, presented the Founders Award posthumously to City Commissioner Nick Fish. Fish was instrumental in securing the current location for our building and championed the mission through construction.

"Our old building was falling apart

around us," Petrusich said. "Nick worked to secure the last \$2 million needed and the building site. We were able to realize our dream for a new building because of his efforts."

The "Golden Girls" from St. Thomas More Parish in southwest Portland brought the crowd to its feet as they were presented with awards for their monthly volunteerism. For nine years, Barbara Niedermeyer, Sue Healy, Sally Follen, and Patty Stember have served up hundreds of plates of spaghetti two nights of every month.

**Presenting Sponsor Fortis Construction, Inc. and the Ed Caudruo Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation generously contributed matching funds to inspire others to give during the special appeal portion of the brunch.**

## THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS!



Pat & Tricia  
Heffernan

Colleen & Werner  
Nistler

Malin & Dan  
Petrusich



Wieden  
Kennedy<sup>+</sup>





**FREQUENT FLYERS:** The regular breakfast crew of volunteers and staff.

nearly 10,000 to-go meals, countless cups of coffee and milk, and needed clothing by the carloads. And we continue to serve with the same commitment to compassion and dignity that Blanchet House is known for.

Yes, there has been sorrow. But these also are days we will remember for the inspiration and unbounded charity of so many in our community. By the hundreds, people are stepping forward to purchase or donate essential supplies, bake treats to lift the spirits of our shelter residents, collect clothing and toiletries, host fundraisers, and donate funds to help us with the enormous expense of the unprecedented services we are providing.

And then there are the volunteers. In one week, 86 volunteers came to Blanchet House to prep and box meals, wrap forks in napkins, serve food and drinks out the doors, and hand out clothing and other supplies to our grateful guests.

So many of these volunteers have come to serve at Blanchet House for the very first time after responding to our call for help during this crisis. There also are volunteers who come every day. Sometimes twice a day! They are heroes to me. They stand shoulder to shoulder with so many courageous, dedicated professionals and first responders who are selflessly serving to help others during this pandemic. My gratitude to them and to everyone who has committed to helping Blanchet House is boundless.

These are the days I will remember. We all will.

## Days We Will Remember

BY SCOTT KERMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dorothy Day, a co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, calls upon us to “affirm the essential humanity of each person without exception.” I speak this affirmation to myself every morning when I arrive at Blanchet House to prepare for breakfast service. The people we serve are living truly desperate lives, exposed to the elements without refuge or respite. They do not deserve to be cast aside and discarded as mere casualties during this COVID-19 pandemic. Blanchet House will not abandon the people who depend on us for essential services.

We are committed to our mission more than ever. But I admit that these are days of sorrow and despair. Our hearts break daily for the community we are feeding and clothing. We see the heavy,

heavy toll this is taking on them. So many new faces are showing up at our to-go meal door, including more women.

I worry that the economic crisis caused by the pandemic will lead people who were holding on to their housing

***We gave out  
nearly 10,000  
to-go meals.***

by a thread to lose it. I also fear that for many, especially women, homelessness might be preferable to remaining in unsafe living conditions.

Our love and respect for these individuals compel us to serve. During week two of this crisis, we gave out



## Sober and Social Distancing Together at Blanchet Farm

“For 16 lucky men, social isolation is happening as a group,” wrote *The Oregonian* after speaking to residents of Blanchet Farm.

Now that recovery meetings are shut down it can be difficult to maintain sobriety but living at the farm makes it easier.

“It’s very serene,” said Bill Gilmer, 59, “which is very important for anyone recovering.”

The farm opted to shut off contact from the outside world to prevent the spread of COVID-19 early on. They are finding a lot of ways to have fun and stay busy. Farm manager Ross Sears even broke out his ice cream maker for the guys to try.

Read the full story at [www.BlanchetHouse.org/Press](http://www.BlanchetHouse.org/Press).

## If not us, then who?

***WE'RE STILL OPEN!***

### Free To-Go Meals Served During COVID-19 Outbreak

We will not abandon the people who depend on us for food so we're now serving to-go meals out our doors. We ask ourselves, "If not us, then who?"

Please help Blanchet House continue to alleviate suffering by donating today.



**“Y'all helped me when I  
needed it back in the day.  
I'm doing much better  
now. I'm happy to pay  
back.”**

**-Julie R.,  
donor and former meal guest**

I'm giving a one-time gift of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ Contact me about making a legacy gift to Blanchet House.

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[www.BlanchetHouse.org/Donate](http://www.BlanchetHouse.org/Donate)

Donate by phone M-F. Call 503-241-4340