

MINISTRY

Baptism Joy

Recently, I had the joy of baptizing four residents. Before I invited each resident forward, I shared how baptism has always reminded me of a wedding. In fact, I think these two events share much in common. A wedding is a day for couples to declare their love and commitment to one another. Baptism is also a time to declare one's love and commitment to Christ. Just as a wedding is a key event at the beginning of a life-long relationship, so too is baptism. Likewise, both events are not done in private. They are both public announcements that take place before the gathered community of friends and family that support their decision. Thus, in this way, they serve as not only moments of communal celebration, but of heartfelt reflection for those gathered to consider their own commitments.

I spoke about the courage it required to stand in front of their peers and be baptized. It reminded me of the courage that everyone who enters Open House Ministries exhibits. It is the courage to say, "I need help." It is the courage that for many comes after many failed attempts to live life on their own terms. It is a courageous confession that mirrors the first three steps of recovery:

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addiction—that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Then, one by one each resident entered the baptismal waters and testified how following Jesus has changed their lives. They each professed their love for God



and their commitment to follow him. After which, I baptized them, and the room erupted with joyous shouts and thunderous clapping. It was beautiful. It was much the way I hope everyone's homecoming before Christ will be. If you weren't crying happy tears, you had a smile ear-to-ear.

Lowering each resident below the water and raising them up again, I thought about the goodness and greatness of the God who washes us clean and raises us to new life with him. I was overwhelmed by the grace of God who gathers the spiritually lost and homeless and gives them home in the family of God.

Afterwards, in reflection I began to think about all we do here at Open House Ministries. I thought about how in the simplest practical terms here, we provide those without housing shelter—beds to sleep, a shower to get clean, and a kitchen and a table to eat as a family. This is far from all we do. Yet, this small simplistic window into our ministry serves as beautiful illustration of what God does for all of us. *(continued)*

RESIDENT REFLECTIONS

Father's Day Blessings

“Being a father means my life has been made new. My daughter was born and I have the opportunity to love her unconditionally. Everything that went wrong in the past has made me stronger and I will use my strength to protect her. I love watching her feel joy and show great interest in her life. She helps me see life again and what it is to make decisions without being weighed down by a lifetime of collected discouragement. Being a father means to be made out of the strength of love.”

“Being a father means so many things. It makes me fall in love with so many things that I took for granted. I fell in love with the world. I saw all the wonderful parts again. The moments that were so “usual” to me, my son found “awesome” to discover like insects and trees and animals, the wind, and the rain. I thank my Savior, he allowed me to be a father and to see the world new. Fatherhood has held the hardest moments in my life and also the most rewards. Being a father, I have learned how God my Father provides and I've learned I have more than I can see.”

“Being a father means giving up old toxic behaviors. It means putting all your best traits into this little person. Being a father means I have a reason to stay strong. It means going to bed at 9:00 pm and waking up at 6:30 am. Being a father means I have to learn a lot of new things.” ●

Celebrating 35 Years of Hope

May 19th marked a day of celebration at Open House Ministries. Guests filled the campus gym and tuned in on line at 7 pm for an evening of heartfelt messages and inspiring stories from our featured speakers.

Executive Director Reneé Stevens explained the importance of each resident's experience and honored them for their courage.

Guests were given an update on housing the homeless from Jim Mains who had flown in from San Diego after attending a housing conference. "Open House Ministries is one of the best examples of what's working today," Jim explained. "There are other options out there but few are as effective in helping homeless families."



2022 Hope Fundraiser event speakers

After Chaplain Jon Nichols opened the evening with prayer, Pat Neal, one of our ministry's first office administrators and case managers shared her experience working in tandem with co-founder Joanne Kendall. "We had a lot to learn," explained Pat of their early days. "New rules needed to be established after residents were caught sneaking out to party after our first shelter wedding!"

Former residents Alexis Schoene, Autumn Smith, and Katie Fessel shared their journey stories, paying tribute to case managers and staff who patiently worked to keep them on track, never giving up on their families.



Guest speaker Jim Mains

We are grateful to everyone joining us in person and tuning in on line. Thanks go out to our generous sponsors and to all of you for supporting this year's annual Hope Fundraiser. If you missed our event you can see a recording of *35 Years of Hope* on our website at www.sheltered.org under events. ●

35 Years of Hope Sponsors:



Dick and Jeanette James | Lake Shore Community Church | Portland Hoo Hoo Club

JOB OPENINGS

Bicycle Shop Staff
Full-time position available

Children's Program Coordinator
Full-time position available

Child Care Worker
Part-time position available

Communications Assistant
Full-time position available

Facilities Staff
Full-time position available

Contact
careers@sheltered.org
to apply

SHELTER NEEDS

- Paper towels
- Backpack leaf blower
- Men's gloves
- Pull ups of all sizes



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteer Alert!

Opportunities to share your time and talent are waiting for you.
For more information or to sign up visit our website at www.sheltered.org

MINISTRY CONT.

In fact, I began to think about how these are far from incidental practices. These acts of hospitality and hope reflect the deep human and spiritual needs common to us all. They are acts that witness to the heart and work of God. God welcomes us—who were lost and weary—and gives us refuge, he cleans and forgives us, and he feeds us through his word and at his table.

As followers of Jesus, we enact his refuge every time we pray and seek him. We enact his feeding every time we read the Bible and when we partake of communion. And we enact his cleansing every time we confess our sins and in the tradition of baptism.

It's amazing how God meets us in ordinary and earthly things to teach us about his profound love. It is easy to take these practices for granted. We can allow them to become vain rituals if we are not careful. Yet, I think when we do, it's not the act that becomes empty as much as it is us. We end up missing what God wants to teach us and show us about his care and affection.

So, as I think about that day and our work here, I'm deeply proud of our residents. I am proud of those who chose to get baptized. I am proud of those who are seeking to know and be known by God. I am proud of those who (as they like to say) "suit up and show up" every day. ●

Chaplain Jon Nichols



OPEN HOUSE MINISTRIES
We're a family shelter

900 W. 12th St. | P.O. Box 242
Vancouver, WA 98666-0242
360-737-0300 www.sheltered.org