

"The Lord is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made."

Psalm 145:9



The Outreach

Fall 2021 Vol. 16 Issue 1

Celebrating 25 Years!

Mission Community Outreach Center has been serving the Spokane community for 25 years. To give you some perspective, I was 5 years old when MCOC began "reaching out with care". For almost my entire life this non-profit has loved, served, cared and supported families and individuals in need. I am so thankful to be a small part of the MCOC story and so blessed to be able to help carry on the mission.

This newsletter is all about celebrating our 25th anniversary, learning about MCOC's history and hearing from volunteers and board members. We want to take this time and really reflect on what MCOC means to each of us and the greater community. We couldn't do any of this without the continued support of our donors and volunteers. If you feel called to do so please join us in our \$25 for 25 campaign. You will find a donation envelope in this newsletter or you can donate online via our website www.4mission.org.

Ali Norris, Executive Director



CELEBRATING

25

YEARS
OF SERVICE

Birthdays and anniversaries are always a joy for families and friends to celebrate. Our 25th anniversary at Mission Community Outreach Center is exactly the same. All year long we have talked about how amazing this journey has been because each of you have been so generous and so willing to give of your time, your efforts, your finances and your possessions. Those we serve may not each be able to express their gratitude to you personally but let me assure you that we hear their appreciation every day. On behalf of our Board of Directors I want to thank our founders and every supporter since that time for helping those less fortunate members of our community.

Let's celebrate!

Bob Fisher, Board President

After church meetings or youth group night at Mission Community Presbyterian Church, as I headed for home, I drove past MCOC. Often the lights would still be on, which meant Walt Shields was putting in yet another long day. I'd turn into the parking lot and let myself into the Center. Walt would laugh knowing that I would be staying until he relented and would stop working after a long day. (Yes, Barbara Shields was grateful for the interventions!).

Everyone who has worked at MCOC over these 25 years, has stories to tell of seeing God's faithfulness to the mission and in the lives of volunteers and our guests. Here is one of a zillion memories.

It was a few minutes before the center was due to close for the day. A man came in needing a pair of size 8 shoes. The shoes he was wearing were beyond "worn out". There wasn't a single pair of 8's on the shelf. I went to the back room and rummaged through a box of men's shoes without success. I went out to tell him the sad news and the thought came to mind, "Go look again, until you find this man a pair of shoes." You know the end of the story. Sure enough, I found a pair



One of MCOC's founders
Walt Shields in 2005

of almost new comfortable size 8 shoes. He was thrilled. As he handed me the shoes that had cardboard covering the holes, I felt the presence of God. Once again Praise and Thanksgiving was my joyous heart's response to Our Ever Present Faithful God.

*Carol Williams,
Retired MCPC Pastor and MCOC volunteer*



Volunteers organizing our
houseware storage room in 2012

Volunteering at MCOC has been a very rewarding experience and has given me a sense of appreciation for those in our community who generously share with others. Each week we hear of the struggles or hardships that are present with those we serve. Whether the individual has lived in our country their entire life or those who have just arrived from difficult conditions in their home country, MCOC is a welcoming spot for everyone. They select clothes for their family, a warm coat for the winter, appropriate clothing for a job interview as well as items for the new baby.

We see the faces and hear the voices of our community: Russian, Marshallese, Syrian, Sudan, Afghanistan, Vietnamese and so many more.

We have been richly blessed in many ways. MCOC offers an opportunity to share our blessings with others.

Charles Brondos, volunteer since 2012

I'd told "the story" many times during my tenure as executive director, but I knew if I wanted to tell you the true story of how Mission Community Outreach Center was established, I should go to the source. So, I spent a very enjoyable hour with Walt and Barbara Shields last week to get, "the facts."

I have permission to share that Walt has been dealing with the effects of dementia, but the chance to share the story of how MCOC came to be delighted Walt and he was eager to tell the story with help from Barbara. It's a simple story, really, and it turns out the story I have been telling for years wasn't far off, but I was missing some important details which Walt and Barbara filled in. I'll give you the short version.

We consider MCOC's "birthday" to be May 4, 1996, when it received recognition as a nonprofit organization from the IRS, but its history began about a year prior to that. Walt and a group from Mission Community Presbyterian Church were talking as they repaired the roof on the home of a young single mother in the Chief Garry neighborhood, and the discussion turned to how they and their church could best serve their neighborhood. Many ideas were exchanged, but the group, which eventually included other church members, settled on establishing a neighborhood center to help those in need.

Mission Community Outreach Center has stood at its current location for more than 25 years and has not always been strictly a clothing bank. Over the years it has offered tutoring services for children, limited medical services, bicycles for children, among other services, always without charge.

For the last 10 years or so, we have focused mainly on providing some of the essentials of living, including good quality clothing, basic household goods, hygiene supplies, and diapers for children. Over the years we estimate we have served over 250,000 people; an incredible number—almost as incredible as the way our community members have sustained MCOC these many years.

We have been able to continue the mission of serving others in need without charge because of a long line of volunteers, at least one who has been with us from the beginning, share their time and talents to keep the mission running. It's a big job! During our normal operations, we rely on over 30 weekly volunteers to sort and distribute our donations to low-income folks who gratefully accept them. Our Center would come to a standstill without them! If you've ever volunteered at MCOC, even once, please accept our thanks, and know you made a difference in the lives of those in great need.

As its former director, I can attest that MCOC operates on one of the tightest nonprofit budgets in town. We know how to stretch a dollar and we are very grateful to our many current and former donors. Walt and Barbara shared stories of incredible generosity from donors, both in establishing the Center and in keeping it in operation over the years. There were also lean times when they covered the rent to keep the doors open. Would there be an MCOC today without their sacrifice combined with the generosity of others? Perhaps not, and what a shame that would be. Yet MCOC continues to serve the Spokane community more than 25 years after its founding, and with God's continued blessing, it will serve those in need for as long as there is a need.

Let me leave you with one final thought. I asked Walt what was MCOC's greatest strength, and without hesitation and his eyes shining brightly, he answered—its people. Walt is right, of course. MCOC's strength has always been its people, starting with that wonderful group from Mission Community Presbyterian Church he led to establish it more than 25 years ago to those serving and supporting it this very day. It has always been caring people who have kept the flame of service to mankind lit and we're so grateful to our founders for lighting that wonderful flame that still burns brightly at Mission Community Outreach Center today.

Mark Kinney,

Former MCOC Director and Current Board Vice President

What Does MCOC Mean to Me?

Belonging, Hope, Family, Inspiration, Commitment, and Service; and those descriptors are only the beginning of what Mission Community Outreach has meant to me and to so many in its 25 years of community engagement and enrichment.

I first heard about MCOC from Bob Fisher after a church service I attended and was immediately caught up in his explanation of what the Mission Community Outreach Center did for the Greater Spokane community. His passion was clear and his commitment to the Mission was palpable.

It was when Bob asked me if I would be interested in helping at the Mission that things really came into focus. I had just lost my job and was looking for ways to serve. Bob's timing on his ask was a Godsend.

Soon after, I met Ali and the other volunteers and found that common sense of purpose ran throughout each interaction. I spent some time at MCOC sprucing up the interior with a new coat of paint while assisting

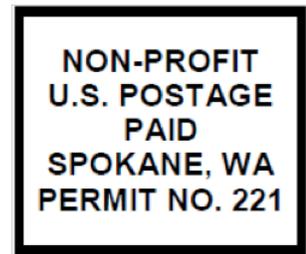
at the front desk and making deliveries. My introduction to the annual shoe event further spurred me on in the role of helping with logistics and ensuring a smooth operation. All of this to say that Mission Community Outreach became much more than a part time job; it was my new home away from home and a blessing from each opportunity that I could lend a helping hand.

The customers that came each day were an inspiration to do more. I found myself in deep conversations of faith and oftentimes asked to pray with a complete stranger who quickly became a brother or sister in the Walk of Faith. This exchange only gave me more in return and showed me the presence of God at work.

I will always be grateful for the opportunity to serve at the Mission Community Outreach Center and pray for its EVERY success in the years to come!

With thanks and warmest regards,

Ken Fay, Volunteer and Former Employee



ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



MCOC Volunteers at our 25th Anniversary Party in 2021

Millwood Community Presbyterian Church "Roll Call" toilet paper collection in 2013

