



Connections

The Newsletter of Bridge Disability Ministries

Spring, 2013

The Bitter with the Sweet, by Jack Staudt, Executive Director

Bridge has been dealing with the economic crisis over the past 4 years. We continued trusting in our generous God, who had provided financial reserves, we knew there could come a time when hard choices would be made – and it did. 2011 was a particularly bad year for Foundation support, the lowest in my 7 years here. We made some bitter choices, cutting staff positions and hours, in preparing the 2012 budget, and again as we crafted the plan for 2013. Moreover, the cautiousness we encountered in churches during this time led us to believe 2013 would be a very difficult year for all of our programs.

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Now for the sweet: Our 2012 year end fundraising efforts, lead by Marcia Barker, had the best outcome in 5 years. Foundations returned with more support in the last week of December than all of 2011. Increased personal giving, good Auction returns, higher support for mobility, and continued growth in Guardianship, netted a surprising year end. The savings that resulted from renegotiating our lease in a smaller space allowed us the lowest deficit year since the recession. Looking back we see that we did more of everything with less staff hours, resulting in reduced cost. The success of the individual ministry Visioning Teams, was essential for us to accomplish and realize our goals. Much of our sweet success is due to the growing experience level of our staff and their positive attitude, which resulted in an exceptional year of service to those we are blessed to serve.

In Spiritual Care much of this success, along with our increasing Social Networking effort, is due to Linda Martin, our Programs Administrator. We continued to come alongside people in need of comfort and reassurance of God's love and presence in their lives. The Sunday Celebration program started the year with challenges as supporting churches faced difficult times. Despite this, churches are still our best source of committed volunteers, hosting dinners, a picnic, the Wacky Wheelay's field day, a Rock n' Roll dance and a Christmas Celebration. Our Roots & Wings monthly support group meetings continue to fill a very important need for people living with physical disabilities – the need to be heard.

In Guardianship, under the direction of Patty Croteau, our CPG Agency Supervisor, and Gordon Ellison-Oslin CPG, we complied with all new regulations and standards of the Washington State Guardianship Board. We could not have done this without Lynn Shomber's effective Payee Management and Administrative support for the successful implementation of our new Case Management Internship program. We continued to research and collect previously unknown income from lost parents' SSA benefits, creating several more Special Needs Trust accounts. Our Guardian team filed timely reports to the Superior Court, thanks to the pro-bono support of several generous attorneys. All of the above and more made it possible to grow our Private Pay Case Management Services, which netted real income, and a list of potential new clients.

Our Meyer Mobility Center team, under the leadership of Gerry Barney, grew over 30% in distribution of free mobility items. Since Bob Meyer established the new Center location after our 2007 relocation, this team has produced an amazing 300% increase in the number of durable medical goods offered. The total volume of equipment that moved through their hands would equate to nearly \$1.5 million in retail value. Bridge shared the donated equipment with several other charities that take equipment to disadvantaged communities around the world. Beyond these accomplishments, a new partnership with the Washington Assistive Technology Program provided a "Hub Scrub" device that automates the equipment wash and sanitize process.

2012 was a year of both bitter and sweet. The sweet successes at year end give us a new feeling of hope as we aggressively work toward a balanced budget, which now appears truly possible in this New Year. We could not consider this without the blessings of Prayers, and gifts of Time, Talent, and Treasure offered by our generous supporters. **Thank you.**

*"Rejoice in hope, be patient
in tribulation, be constant
in prayer."*

Romans 12:12

Elvis, the Cowboy Boots and the Opera

by Linda Martin, Spiritual Care Programs & Volunteer Administrator

Entering Sandee Kerr's home, the first thing I noticed was a large stuffed horse - a clue to her plans for the next Sunday Evening Celebration at her church. Surrounded by western knickknacks gathered for inspiration, she sports a western shirt with a cowgirl hat perched on her head. Despite the fact that she is 'of a certain age', using walkers and wheelchairs to get around nowadays, Sandee has an energy level that belies her years and her cancer diagnosis. It's hard to believe she's been on chemo for 4 years, but she's been confounding the doctors and intends to keep doing so.

As we sat in her home, chock full of memories, I learned that Sandee got straight A's in school. It doesn't surprise me. She's still sharp as a tack. Her bright eyes shine with intelligence, and her words tumble out rapidly when she speaks as though it's hard to keep up with her thoughts. Her sentences were frequently punctuated by a hearty laugh while we sat together and pored over old photos and drawings. Her lifelong love is design, and from the age of 14 she knew that's what she wanted to do. There weren't a lot of opportunities for a Swedish-American girl growing up in Spokane, but she managed to find one touring with a high school dance troupe called The Silver Spurs. Riding around the countryside on a bus with no bathroom or air conditioning couldn't even take the stars out of her eyes.

When Sandee went to college she majored in Home Economics Education. There wasn't a lot of opportunity for a woman in the working world in the 1950's, and she wanted to make sure she could get a job after graduation. In her day, girls became nurses, airline stewardesses or teachers. She couldn't stand the sight of blood and hated to fly, so she chose teaching as her backup plan. But she never forgot her first love, continuing to look for opportunities in the design field in the hope that her dream would come true. And just as she had nearly resigned herself to accept a position as a department store buyer, the University of Washington accepted her. Then, more manna from heaven, she got a \$1000 scholarship to research and design costumes for the famous Russian opera "Boris Godunov". She knew nothing about opera, and even less about Russian opera, but she took the challenge and completely immersed herself in 16th century Russia. While she worked on her Master's degree at UW, she did other things besides designing costumes. She taught movement classes in the Theatre Department, and remembers teaching aspiring actresses how to sit in a hoop skirt. She also took a one year hiatus to teach and design costumes at a women's college in Missouri. Eventually she got back to school to finish her degree with a thesis titled "The Psychology of Dress and its Effects as Interpreted in the 19th Century Costume of Women".

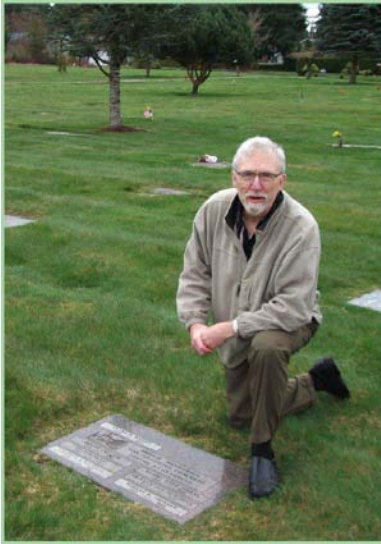
As Sandee bubbled on describing her experiences she shared the time in 1956 that she got to interview Elvis for the Spokane press corps. She remembers his skin seemed so perfect to her that she asked him if he wore makeup. (His answer was, "No.") Then there was the time she worked at the World's Fair as a public relations agent in 1962. And the time she worked at The Old Globe Theatre in Balboa Park in San Diego, designing costumes for the likes of Jon Voight. Then when the Seattle Repertory Theatre opened, she designed costumes for them for about five years, working with actors such as Richard Chamberlain and Margaret Hamilton (who played the Wicked Witch of the West in The Wizard of Oz). Opening nights were very important to Sandee, and she always designed and sewed a new gown and coat to wear.

When Sandee reached 29½, she entered a new phase of her life: It was time to get married. She married a manager for Xerox and they did a lot of transferring around for his job before they eventually settled in the Seattle area. They had 2 girls and, of course, Sandee designed all the costumes for their school plays. She also designed and sewed their dresses, including their stunning debutante gowns. Along the way she became the consummate entertainer and event manager, a skill Bridge would one day benefit from. I asked what her first experience with disability was, and she told of her aunt who was run over by a milk wagon at 8 years of age, resulting in a traumatic brain injury and leg braces. When Sandee was a child she often helped with caregiving. Her mom also suffered from a severe form of rheumatoid arthritis that caused great challenges. And when Sandee was with The Theatre Guild in Newport Beach, California, they cast the first 40 kids who signed up for a play, some of whom were living with disabilities. So she was already very aware that disability is a part of life when the cancer struck.

Sandee has always said of the folks we serve at Bridge, "I believe in these people!" She passionately wants to create a fun, quality event. "They need fun!" She goes to great lengths with decorations, taking pride in making every place setting perfect. She chooses a theme for every event and takes it to the limit, gathering materials and supplies all year long to decorate. Right now, she's creating a Hoedown with a western theme, and her house is cluttered with colorful gingham, cowboy boots and horses as she prepares decorations. She told me it's gonna be a rootin' tootin' good time, and she's lookin' forward to seein' y'all. So you cowpokes mosey on over to Highland Covenant Church in Bellevue on April 21st at 4pm sharp for a taste of the Old West with Sandee!



Marking a Significant Life by Gordon Ellison-Oslin



Years ago, the State decided to begin moving folks out of the Fircrest Residential Habilitation Center and move the residents out to live in the community in assisted living or group homes. Bridge Ministries decided to become guardians for people who were moving out of the institution and had no family available to help oversee their care. We also decided we would go beyond the legal duties required of guardians, and make sure they would be well taken care of and have regular community outings. We resolved to be guided by God in making critical decisions in times of crisis. We didn't want to just be their legal representatives; we also wanted them to become part of the Bridge family.

Many of these folks were, and are, aging. Because most guardianship clients in our community have little or no connection with their birth families, they are buried in anonymous graves at the time of death. We at Bridge decided that our guardianship clients deserved a dignified burial, letting the world know that they were people who had names and lived among us. Through a generous donation, we were able to buy a burial plot and headstone at Floral Hills Cemetery in Lynnwood. It provides space for cremated remains to be buried. We now have seven folks buried there, so

there is room for a few more, but we will need a new headstone soon. We trust in God for provision to ensure dignified burials for all our guardianship family members who go home to Him.

60's Love In

Our annual Rock 'n Roll Dance fundraiser was not only fun but also successful. We raised nearly \$4000 to help support Bridge programs for people living with disabilities. A great big thank you to Newport Covenant Church of Bellevue for hosting, to the people we serve who gave back by doing some fundraising of their own, and to the many volunteers and donors who gave their time and treasure to the cause. We are very grateful for the support.



"Do for other people what you would like to have them do for you."

Luke 6:31



The Seattle Foundation

give
BIG

MAY 15 2013

Make an **ONLINE** gift to Bridge during this unique one-day giving event by going to:

<http://www.seattlefoundation.org/npos/Pages/BridgeDisabilityMinistries.aspx?bv=nposearch>

**and Bridge will receive matching
"stretch pool" funds!**



Bridge Disability Ministries

12356 Northup Way, Ste. 103

Bellevue, WA 98005-1956

Honoring People Living with Disabilities



What We Do:

- Spiritual Care
- Guardianship
- Mobility Equipment
- Community Connections
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Friendship Circles

Phone (425) 885-1006, Mobility Ministry: (425) 885-1008 (hours Tues-Thurs, Noon - 4:30pm)

www.bridgemin.org

bridge@bridgemin.org

Mark Your Calendars...

Sunday Evening Celebrations (4-6pm)

- | | |
|------------|---|
| April 21st | Hosted by Highland Covenant Church
15022 Bel-Red Rd, Bellevue, 98007 |
| May 19th | Hosted by St. Andrew's Lutheran Church
2650 148th Ave SE, Bellevue, 98007 |
| June 9th | Hosted by Emmanuel Episcopal Church
4400 86th Ave SE, Mercer Island, 98040 |

Bridge Annual Benefit Dinner & Auction
Save the Date.... October 19th, 2013

Our Mission

Because Bridge Disability Ministries honors the God-given dignity of people living with disabilities, we build relationships to alleviate isolation and enrich our churches and communities.

Spectrum Respite Retreat

for families of

Tweens & Teens Living With Autism

Fun activities for kids on the autism spectrum aged 11-18 and a break for their parents.

Saturday, April 13th, 11am-2pm

hosted by

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Kirkland

For more info & registration contact Linda
(425) 885-1006 ext. 118 or lindam@bridgemin.org

Check our website for the flyer: <http://www.bridgemin.org/pdfs/SpectrumRespiteRetreatFlyer041313.pdf>

WE CAN HELP

Parents & Guardians of people with Developmental Disabilities:
Our Guardianship Agency now offers private pay case management.
For more information call: (425) 885-1006 x102

Want to receive our next newsletter via e-mail or be removed from our mailing list? E-mail your request to bridge@bridgemin.org