

Polk County

Cry of Love echoes through free health clinic

Two interns found agency during summer of 1970

By SEBASTIAN DE ASSIS
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Sometimes thousands of people set out on marches and rallies to change society. Sometimes it takes only two with idealism and vision to do it.

When Oregon's legendary Gov. Tom McCall found out that tens of thousands of young people were on the move for a massive demonstration against the Vietnam War in Portland, he decided to avert the protest with a simple solution: He sponsored a rock concert.

Vortex I: A Biodegradable Festival of Life was held at Milo McIvor State Park in Estacada.

The emulation of Woodstock in Oregon was a high-stakes gamble for the governor who reportedly admitted that he might be committing political suicide.

But considering the socio-political climate at the time, McCall didn't have many options to prevent a potentially threatening social turmoil.

In fact, a far cry from the political suicide he predicted, the event was a great success: It lured nearly 100,000 young people to the six-day Vortex Festival; averted chaos in the streets of Portland; and in November of that year, McCall was re-elected for a second term in office.

In summer 1971, a year after the Vortex I Festival, two UCLA medical students arrived in Salem for an internship with Marion County Health Department. They had no idea that they were about to found one of the most prominent human services agencies in the



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Gloria Ibarra, medical assistant with Northwest Human Services, gives a shot to 1-year-old Fatima Diaz Ojeda while mom Maria Diaz and 9-year-old sister Guadalupe, 9, at the West Salem Clinic.

region.

When Phil Yule and Paul Kaplan arrived for their internship, they were appalled with the situation of alienated street youth and low-income population in the Salem area, many of whom were remnants of activists from the summer before.

Imbued with idealism and motivated by a pragmatic vision for social change, they decided to incorporate the Crisis and Information Hotline created by Gov. McCall during the tempestuous summer of 1970 into the establishment of a free clinic to serve those in need.

Thus, with the blessings of Marion County Health Department, they opened the Cry of Love Free Clinic, named after a popular album by the celebrated guitar player Jimi Hendrix.

Thirty-six years later, the Cry of Love Free Clinic is the foundation upon which Northwest Human Services stands. Providing comprehensive health care and

social services to thousands of underprivileged clients each year, the agency is, indeed, a living example of the effect a single individual — or two — can have in the community.

While thousands of youngsters were roaming about to protest what they deemed unfair social practices, two decided to focus their energy in the development of an organization that would make a direct contribution to the social changes they envisioned to create. The former became a faint memory in the history of Oregon, but the latter left a legacy behind.

Although the sounds of the electric guitars of the Vortex I rock concert long have faded away into oblivion, the echoes of the Cry of Love still can be heard loud and clear in our community.

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