



Northwest Human Services Contributes to Promoting Peace in Our Community

by Sebastian de Assisi

If a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, as the Chinese sage Lao-Tzu proclaimed, the same could be said of the long road to international peace: it begins in the heart of our communities. When nonprofit organizations set the wheel in motion, they can cover extraordinary distance. Northwest Human Services is a typical example of a successful journey.

Instead of accepting the traditional notion of peace as the absence of conflict, let's take the more comprehensive concept adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in its Second Medium-Term Plan, 1984-1989: "There can be no genuine peace when the most elementary human rights are violated, or while situations of injustice continue to exist...Peace is incompatible with malnutrition and extreme poverty...The only lasting peace is a just peace based

on respect for human rights..." It is within this context that Northwest Human Services contribution to peace in our community extends far beyond our regional borders.

Providing comprehensive health-care and social services to underprivileged citizens in Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Linn, and Tillamook counties, Northwest Human Services has been having an enormous impact on the welfare of our community since 1970 when Governor Tom McCall created an anti-war rumor control hotline in Salem, which has evolved into what is now the agency's Crisis and Information Hotline. The following year, two medical students from UCLA Medical School arrived for a summer internship with Marion County Health Department and opened a free clinic to serve alienated street youth and low-income people. The clinic was christened Cry of Love Free Clinic, after a Jimi Hendrix song. Since then, Northwest Human Services has become the most prevalent nonprofit human services agency in the Mid-Willamette Valley serving thousands of clients each year.

Let there be no doubt that Northwest Human Services reflects through its

programs the version of peace established by UNESCO; i.e. caring for essential human needs. In addition to continuing the expanded and improved version of the Cry of Love Free Clinic through its medical, dental, and mental health clinics, the agency provides a vast array of invaluable human services that range from youth and adult homeless shelters to offering counseling and advocacy for deaf and hearing impaired individuals.

Indeed, in a world overshadowed by the darkness of poverty and despair, Northwest Human Services is a beacon of light in our community. ☺

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