AM’s volunteer program took Ronni and Sharon from client to independence!

By Jenny Printz

During 2021, AM deployed volunteers and interns who contributed 5,477 hours of service to Associated Ministries and to our community. Every one of them had the opportunity to encourage, inspire and make an impact through the life-changing programs in which they participated. And AM receives the blessing and benefit of their compassion, experience and hard work.

Mary Herman, Community Programs Manager for AM, shared from her experience leading and working with volunteers, how volunteering to paint houses through Paint Tacoma Beautiful, preparing income taxes through VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) or as a volunteer/intern in the office assisting other programs, has impacted the lives of hundreds of people who just want to help.

This is where Ronni and Sharon have excelled! They both entered AM’s programs as clients, then became volunteer interns and went on to do great things!

Ronni left San Diego with her two young children to flee from domestic violence. After making her way to the Northwest and being referred to AM to locate housing, she became an intern in our CRCC (Community Resource Connections Center). Ronni absolutely loves her work with clients and feels very supported by AM staff, saying, “The person who trained me was considerate of my situation and availability.” Beginning her internship in June of 2021, Ronni said it immersed her into the community, allowing her to find resources for her clients and for herself. Ronni was inspired to get a degree in Social Work and is currently attending college. “Life is going great and I am looking forward to getting a job.”

Sharon lost her husband, after which she ended up on the streets with a drug addiction. She soon meets others like her, and eventually started to notice there were many vets with drug issues and others with mental health issues. She sincerely wanted to get help for all of them. Sharon began to navigate the “system” to learn of resources she could connect to her newfound community.

It was recommended she learn more about Associated Ministries and that’s where she met Nina, AM’s receptionist. She connected her with wonderful people and resources. It was such a positive experience that Sharon became an AM intern, starting out volunteering for our Mail and Payee program.

“Mama,” as Sharon was called by her friends on the street, started making referrals to those who needed help and was able to get off drugs herself. She started going to college and now has an AA degree in Social
Meet Dr. Lynn Ostenson

In the late 1980s Pacific Lutheran University and Seattle Pacific University hosted an educational program called “CommuniUniversity.” In partnership with Associated Ministries, this program offered a variety of classes to educate the community-at-large on a variety of topics, including community service. Lynn Ostenson took part in one of those four-week sessions, and thus began her journey with Associated Ministries.

We are grateful to be at the center of many community serving opportunities that bring supporters like Lynn to our doorstep, and connect many of them to wider needs and opportunities. But Lynn has always been committed to serving others.

Born and raised in Portland, OR, Lynn was the first in her family to go to college. While attending PLU, she was encouraged to apply to medical school. Lynn and fellow student Dick married six days after graduation and went together to the University of Washington for their medical degrees. After Dick’s death in 2005, Lynn started a Palliative Care program at multicare Good Samaritan, before retiring in 2012.

Lynn’s lifetime of community involvement at one point led her to a free seminar about the power of legacy giving (estate planning through wills and trusts, etc.). Always involved with taxes and later estate-planning upon the death of her husband, as well as her years in palliative care, the importance of legacy giving made sense to Lynn.

When Lynn retired, legacy giving appealed to her because she didn’t know if she would need to plan to have enough retirement funds to last for 10 years… or 30 years! Giving through an IRA and a will assures that her kids and grandkids will be taken care of, in addition to being able to honor her desire to give to her favorite charities.

Lynn is an advocate for legacy giving because she says it’s rewarding to feel like you can contribute something – financial or otherwise – even if you’re not in a place to volunteer your time. In addition, speaking to your family and children about your plans, consulting a financial planner, and looking at the tax benefits are all good starting points for those uncomfortable with the conversations surrounding estate planning.

Lynn is one of AM’s most faithful supporters. We appreciate her time, talents, and her insights as she has continued to grow in her involvement with us and our entire community.

We’re so grateful for the long-term relationship Lynn has with AM and with us. Her support has allowed us to make an impact that outlives you. Thank you for your generosity!”

SPOTLIGHT: Thanks to our Sponsors!

AM offers many opportunities for community partners to support our work. Their support is offered through cash gifts, by providing donated goods or services, or in volunteer serving opportunities. Our dozens of sponsors help ensure that AM can continue to provide our vital services. Sponsorship allows businesses, clubs, organizations and congregations to demonstrate their “culture of caring” by aligning with AM at special events, or by underwriting programs that change the lives of our clients. We extend special thanks to the following sponsors.

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From client to independence, Continued

Services and Mental Health. Her dream and goal is to start her own non-profit to better prepare those with addictions for the services available at organizations like AM.

AM’s sincere belief in Sharon provided the impetus she needed to make a difference in her life and in return, Sharon is now more equipped and trained to make a difference in the lives of her friends who are still on the street.

THANK YOU for the life-changing impact that your partnership allows us to make in so many lives. Truly, we couldn’t do it without you!

Mary Herman is hoping to grow the volunteer program at AM, incorporating education and training for the volunteers in order to increase their knowledge of the issues faced by those experiencing homelessness. This will build the confidence of the volunteers as we continue looking at new approaches to assist in serving our community.

There are several ways to volunteer for AM and if you are interested in learning more, visit our website at www.associatedministries.org/volunteers.

That’s why in 2021 we were proud to serve 3,968 individuals through our work with Pierce County’s Coordinated Entry System, the “front door” to our community’s homeless response efforts. The lives of 3,054 individuals were stabilized through our Rental Assistance program; 552 individuals had unique and critical situations resolved through our Community Connections Resource Center; and 248 individuals were welcomed home for good through the work of our Family Permanent Housing team.

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