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Questions? Contact Sandy Windley at sandyw@associatedministries.org

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SNL23

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Upcoming Special Events

Community Quarterly Meeting

Thursday, May 18

5:00PM-6:30PM

Bryant Neighborhood Center, Tacoma

Project Homeless Connect

Friday, June 16

11:00AM-3:00PM

People's Park, Tacoma

Interfaith Women's Conference

Saturday, October 21

9:00AM-4:00PM

Curtis High School, University Place



am ASSOCIATED
MINISTRIES



901 S 13th Street
Tacoma, WA 98405
253-383-3056

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Together

Working together toward lasting solutions to homelessness

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Making Meaningful Client Connections

Cricket Wireless and AM's Benefit Access Department: Rising to the Challenge of Isolation

For many of our neighbors experiencing homelessness, discrimination, exclusion, and isolation are common realities. Many of our clients face significant barriers of access to ecosystems of support and life-changing and life-saving services.

As we navigate a post-pandemic world, it has become clear to us that we must return to an interconnected and interdependent way of living in order to overcome our community's greatest challenges.

That's where Associated Ministries (AM) and Cricket Wireless identified a felt need in their community and collaborated together to meet it. We started with our shared belief in the power of partnership, tangible resources, and compassionate care. We worked with Cricket to reconnect our clients to crucial resources by offering free and/or discounted phones at AM pop-up events and our Project Homeless Connect resource fairs. Cricket Wireless focuses on becoming a part of the neighborhood's fabric and works hard to develop a kinship within the areas they serve.

Chris Bevan with Cricket Wireless spoke to the necessity of this critical service, stating, "We're

getting customers set up with the best connection. Most can't afford the cost of getting a line set up and keeping (it) up. Many go without a device for months and years. We're connecting them with a cell phone to apply for jobs, get connected to other social

services, and call family across the country. It's a much-needed resource."

For individuals and families experiencing homelessness, one connection or touch point has the capacity to transform the trajectory of their lives. Having a cell phone opens the door of possibility for housing, employment, health care, social services, public transportation, and communication.

The same can be said for a safe place to receive mail. Associated Ministries' Benefit Access Department (BAD) proudly houses our Homeless Mail services. This service provides over 500 clients with a fixed mailing address as an important first step in securing stability. Our mail service program ensures individuals and families are able to receive needed assistance or gainful employment.

Clients must have a referral from the Department

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Cricket Wireless staff at a pop-up event offering free and/or discounted phones

Elder Nelson and TACS: Rising to the Challenge of Food Insecurity

Just prior to last Thanksgiving, Associated Ministries connected with Elder Nelson Miles of the Tacoma Central Church, who was in partnership with Tacoma Adventist Community Services (TACS). We learned that TACS had hundreds of pounds of extra food available with no one to distribute it to.

Staff at AM and Elder Miles quickly made a plan to deliver 30 Thanksgiving food boxes to households participating in AM's Rapid Rehousing Program in Pierce County. What a great partnership it was! Many of the families in our Rapid Rehousing program have little to no fixed income and must rely on the generosity of others during the holiday season.

This partnership allowed us to touch over 75 individuals' lives in a short amount of time. TACS was able to provide the food for these families with an abundance of healthy options. The families affirmed how helpful it was, with many reports of gratitude and praise from the clients that received boxes.

Elder Miles was so enthusiastic about our partnership that he wanted to offer this same service again for Christmas. Another 29 families received food boxes for the holiday season, allowing many home-bound families and individuals to enjoy a hot meal around the table. The family feasts were definitely a hit!

After the early success of the holiday deliveries, Elder Miles had a powerful idea. He proposed an ongoing food delivery service between our clients and the storehouse. We knew this would be an incredible resource to our clients, especially those that are disabled and that struggle to grocery shop or make it to a food bank on a regular basis.



Elder Nelson's team getting ready to deliver food boxes



Volunteers unloading Easter food baskets for AM clients

Many of our clients also have restricted and/or limited income for a period of time after moving into housing, so receiving fresh food in this time of transition provides additional stability. These regular deliveries have been completed several times now, and have been well-received by clients.

In the broader scheme of things, these deliveries come at a time where people who receive benefits from the state and services from food banks are struggling to make ends meet. According to local food banks, food donations are down at the same time that inflation continues to increase the cost of food, creating extra hardships for families in need. And as if that wasn't already difficult enough, some clients have reported that their food stamp accounts have been "hacked" -- they've discovered all their food money was taken away by an unknown third party.

Between all these factors, we have seen newly-housed families and individuals struggle immensely to fight off hunger. Many of our clients have had to ask themselves, "Can I even afford the gas it takes to go to the food bank?" or "How will I be able to feed the kids when my food stamps are gone for the month?"

These questions are tragically common, and many in our community are in silent pain as they face these challenges. That's why this new partnership that reconnects clients to local, healthy, and affordable food options is so important!

We are truly grateful for Elder Miles and his volunteers for rising to the challenge of food insecurity and providing an invaluable service that has the potential to save client time, money, and lives.

Director's Corner

Rising to the Challenge

By Michael Yoder, Executive Director

The theme of this newsletter is "rising to the challenge." Three years of navigating a global pandemic has certainly given most of us opportunities to do just that... and AM is no exception!

While COVID-19 unleashed extraordinary challenges and needs worldwide, it also brought unprecedented resources into our community to help meet some of those needs. Federal ARPA funding (the American Rescue Plan) brought about \$175 million in one-time emergency COVID assistance dollars into Pierce County. Much of that funding was used for rental assistance, enabling families facing financial hardships due to the pandemic to be able to remain in their homes.

AM was proud to be one of a handful of non-profit agencies that Pierce County Human Services tapped to administer these life-changing funds. During 2021 and 2022, AM enabled more than

4,300 individuals to avoid homelessness through the administration of \$17 million in rental assistance funding. We launched this program on a moment's notice, efficiently disbursed all the funds we were allocated to qualified households, and appropriately wound down this herculean effort a few months ago as the last of the funds was exhausted.

This is truly an example of rising to the challenge!

Since 1969, AM has consistently stepped up to meet the challenges faced by those in need in our community. This unquenchable spirit is literally part of the DNA of Associated Ministries!

Our commitment to help build a community that is more humane, compassionate, and just has never been more challenging to carry out than it is right now, which is why we're more committed than ever to do everything we can to respond.

You, our supporters and volunteers, are a key factor that enables us to always be ready to touch lives. Thank YOU for helping us to rise to the challenge!

Client Connections. *Continued from page 1*

of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to qualify. Mail such as food stamp recertification, social security benefit updates, licenses, identification documents, and medicine can be picked up during AM Mail Service office hours on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 1:00-3:00pm.

Luke Storaasli, Program Assistant for BAD, shared the immediate impact of this service, saying, "Once people (clients) have that address, it allows them to take self-sufficient steps forward. With that confidence, they can apply for a job, loan, or service, and have somewhere where that result is going to show up. There is stability and restored connection with the local community and its resources, such as food drives or job fairs."



Luke Storaasli during AM Mail Service office hours

Having a phone and a mailbox may be a given for many of us, but for those experiencing homelessness, it can be a lifeline to stability and an anchor to resilience. Our Homeless Mail service provides an address for civic engagement and employment.

Offering phones and mail services are just two ways that Associated Ministries and Cricket Wireless are rising to the challenge of our community's greatest needs. We are honored to collaborate with many community partners as we continue to work together toward lasting solutions to homelessness.

Isolation is no longer the story of the neighborhoods we call home. AM is writing a new narrative, and it is one of strategic partnerships and meaningful connection.