

**OPERATION NIGHTWATCH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S
ANNUAL REPORT
2015**

Breathe in. Breathe out.
Expansion. Contraction.
It's the mark of a living thing.

In 2015 Operation Nightwatch experienced both expansion and contraction. It's the sign that we are living thing.

I. The Hospitality Centers

Our “mothership,” the Downtown Hospitality Center, continued to be a haven for folks on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings. It itself follows its own “respiration” patterns, expanding and contracting in terms of numbers, depending on any number of factors, including time of month, season of year, weather, etc. While the census might drop to the mid-60s on some nights, our record-high was 132.

Where we have experienced real growth is in SE. Whereas we have gotten into the habit of considering the Mobile Hospitality Center and the SE Hospitality Center as “satellites,” there have been occasions when the “satellites” have eclipsed Downtown in the numbers they serve. Our Mobile Center goes out every Friday night, no matter the weather. The typical census on a summer evening is in the 90s; even in the winter it goes no lower than 45 or so. The SE Center is often standing-room-only. Needless to say, greater numbers mean greater demand on our resources.

In short, there has been expansion.

But there was also contraction:

When we began 2015, we had two other Hospitality Centers in operation. One was in Vancouver, the other was in North Portland. In January we withdrew from Vancouver. By that time our program on the Washington side of the river had been going on for a year, and what was evident was that the folks who had invited us to get something started were not willing to take ownership of the program themselves. Because of the lack of local ownership, that program shut down.

In August we withdrew from North Portland. In that case, the reason was different. The two churches that we hosting us had not broadened their base beyond themselves, yet nonetheless had developed a pretty self-sufficient program between the two of them. Coming to the conclusion that the program Nightwatch had tutored them in was not “spiritual enough,” they decided to inject a Bible study/prayer time in the midst of the meal that was served there. Among the many issues this raised for us was that we were providing a staff member for them who was partially funded by grants whose foundations required they not fund anything with any specific religious content.

From these two experiences, lessons were learned. Foremost was that when we seek to establish an operation in any new site, before opening doors to guests we need to develop a diverse support base. A broader base in Vancouver would have created a wider source of



volunteers and those willing to invest in the program; in North Portland, it would have prevented those who were involved from becoming too insular.

II. Staffing Adjustments

In February, our Jesuit Volunteer, Katherine Gordon, who served as our Downtown Program Coordinator, left Operation Nightwatch, five months before her contract was up. It was at her behest. While she devoted herself to her job and acquitted herself well, it was taking a great emotional toll on her. Needless to say, working at Nightwatch is not a job meant for everybody.

Fortunately, Nightwatch's keel soon succeeded in righting itself. We hired long-time volunteer Brian Branigan to fill in supervising the Downtown Center through the interim until a new Jesuit Volunteer arrived. Brian proved a positive force in keeping everything running in a smooth and orderly fashion.

But the interim also gave us some time to assess the way we staff downtown. In debriefing Katherine it became clear how much she would have benefited from not carrying the responsibility for running the Center solely on her shoulders. Indeed, if she had had consistent assistance during the time she spent with us, she might not have flamed out but remained her entire year. This discussion led us to think what a challenge it must be for any new Jesuit Volunteer, launched fresh from college with little worldly experience, to take on the



responsibilities we thrust upon him/her. We have been graced to have been blessed with as many capable JVs as we have!

Therefore, with the arrival of our new Jesuit Volunteer, Steve Hutchinson, our Board decided to retain Brian Branigan on staff to serve to assist Steve on two of the three nights the Downtown Center is open. The third night, either our Assistant Director, Mikaila Smith, or myself would step into the assistant's role.

The arrangement has worked marvelously. By having a second staff person always present during

Downtown operating hours, things have run much more smoothly. When a specific problem monopolizes one staffer's attention, there is always the other to manage whatever else needs to be managed. Besides, even under ordinary circumstances supervising the Downtown Center is a gigantic exercise in multi-tasking. Having someone share the tasks relieves stress all around.

III. Woodburn and the "Franchise Model"

As the phenomenon of homelessness has grown and those in other communities have learned about Nightwatch's work, we have received inquiries from those seeking help establishing Nightwatch-like operations where they live. From our experience trying to supervise Hospitality Centers in Vancouver and North Portland in addition to our Downtown and SE sites, we realized we had the capacity to stretch ourselves only so far.

Seeking to be responsive, however, we developed a new model for potential new outreach. The model would be based on developing a training “package” along with consulting services that would utilize Nightwatch expertise to “jumpstart” a new project, but which would ultimately move that project toward independence and self-sufficiency within a 9-12 month period. In the end, the new programs would at best be Nightwatch “spin-offs” or “franchise” which would incorporate under full local control.

In November, 2014, we entered into a nine-month contract with a local group in Woodburn to serve as a pilot-project for the concept. The following month, under the name “Tuesday’s Table,” the project began service.

We completed our contract, but the Woodburn project suffered locally from contention and other internal problems that do not bode well for success. A lesson here is that while we can teach a group the how-to’s of putting an organization together to help the homeless, it is beyond our ability to manage the psychodynamics to make that organization work. In a nine-month contract we can offer skills training, but not sensitivity training.

Because it was a pilot project, however, the Woodburn experience has allowed us to work towards developing resources that may be employed when another local group seeks our assistance.



IV. Physical and Mental Health

The health care services we provide at our Downtown Hospitality Center have grown into an indispensable element of our work there. Our able Health Care Coordinator has developed a capable team of volunteer RNs who are available every night our Downtown Center is open. While limited to the degree of health care they themselves can provide, the nurses’ expertise comes especially to the fore when assessing the seriousness of a medical complaint a guest



brings to them. If an individual needs the attention of an emergency room team, we will get him/her there. We established an account with Radio Cab just for that purpose.

About halfway through the year, Katie Ouzounian, our RN who had faithfully been providing Saturday foot care for the past several years, moved from Portland and we were unable to replace her. Thus, a tradition that went back to 1989 ended. However, foot care is offered at least on two of the three evenings our Downtown Hospitality Center is open. The arrangement works well. We have not heard any complaints about the lack of Saturday morning foot care.

It has been the success of the Nightwatch Health Initiative over the past couple of years that has motivated us to think a further direction. The fact that many of our guests suffer from mental health problems is apparent. The reason our nurses have become so popular is that,

though guests might have significant medical problems, they don't ordinarily seek treatment because: 1) they are suspicious of the medical establishment (who don't treat them very well), and 2) seeking out treatment can require real effort to get there. In contrast to that, our nurses: 1) are engaged in an ongoing relationship with them, thereby nurturing trust, and 2) are easily accessed because they are right on site.

Our guests who struggle with mental illness face the same challenges with seeking care. Indeed, when it comes to seeking out treatment for mental illness, guests are probably even *more* suspicious of the Establishment, and are even less capable of independently seeking out help. Thus, our notion is to respond to our guests' mental health needs similarly to the way we respond to their physical health needs: to have a mental health professional regularly on site to address them.

We are currently in the process of seeking funding so that we might be able to bring such an individual on board in 2016.

V. Special Projects

Thanks to the largesse of Vetter Solutions which donated its expertise and time, volunteer orientation can now be accessed online. By looking at the online presentation, a prospective volunteer can see what would be expected of him/her and if still wanting to volunteer, download the necessary paperwork to fill out before coming in. This has worked especially well with volunteers who come to us from some distance, such as our student group from Ecola Bible School in Cannon Beach. (You can access the online presentation by going to:

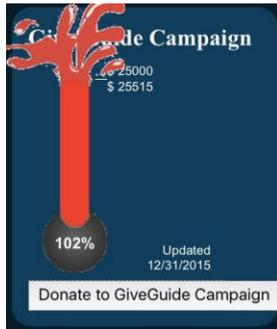
http://www.operationnightwatch.org/volunteer-orientation/presentation_html5.html.

Volunteering often has a salutary effect on those who serve at Nightwatch. Two of those were Lewis & Clark freshmen Ashley Garber and Paige Sanders, who through their experience at Nightwatch last year learned that the most under-served among the homeless population were single adult women. Ashley and Paige therefore committed themselves to founding the Portland Panty Project, to solicit donations of new undergarments for women on the streets. Ashley and Paige provided the idea and the energy, we provided some guidance (and our tax-exempt number)—and the PPP took off to great success. Nightwatch remains the prime venue for PPP's distribution. With Ashley having become our intern for the 2015-16 school year, she and Paige run monthly hand-outs at both the Downtown and SE Hospitality Centers.



As Nightwatch has moved more towards focusing on issues related to mental health, we have developed a significant partnership with NAMI Oregon (National Alliance on Mental Illness). Not only has NAMI consulted with us as we have developed an approach to better serving our guests with mental health challenges, but NAMI folks have become regular Nightwatch volunteers and took upon themselves the project of putting together the gift bags we handed out to our guests at our annual Christmas party.

VI. Finances



We had good financial news in 2015. We ended FY 2014-15 at the end of June with a surplus. Moreover, though we challenged ourselves with a \$25,000 goal in the *GiveGuide* campaign at the end of the year (about \$4000 more than we raised last year), we met 102% of that goal.

But we have had some financial woes, too—not so much because of the numbers on our ledger, but because of the way those numbers are processed. In short, bookkeeping problems.

Over the course of the year, our books were overseen by four different bookkeepers. The result? Confused and confusing reporting. At the end of 2015, all we can say with confidence is that we are solvent, but we don't know exactly by how much.

In the waning days of the year, the Board of Directors decided to hire a professional bookkeeper to take charge of our books and get them in order. The hope is that within a month of the publication of this report, an year-to-date financial report will be able to be appended to it as an addendum.

So we contract.

And expand.

And the organism that is Operation Nightwatch , in living on, continues its work to bring life to others itself.

Gary L. Davis
Executive Director