



Spring 2005
P.O. Box 812,
Langley, WA 98260

IN THIS ISSUE

Where the money goes

Letter from the Pres

Financial Report 2004

Who's on the Board?

Upcoming Events

Organizational Donors

SPECIAL THANKS

Friends of Friends would like to extend our sincere thanks to the **Whidbey Island Hospital Foundation**. Over the years Alexandria Loudon and members of the Hospital Foundation Board have allowed us to continue serving those in medical need through their very generous financial support. Their organization, along with **Whidbey Telecom**, grants from the **Rotary Club of South Whidbey**, and the **Soroptimists** have given Friends of Friends the financial and moral support necessary to keep our mission alive.

FRIENDS OF FRIENDS

Medical Support Fund

2004 SERVICE REPORT:

WHAT WE'VE DONE WITH YOUR MONEY

Every week we meet real examples of that often-quoted statistic that nearly 50% of bankruptcies in the U.S. are caused by medical bills. We hear from people who have had to cut back on necessary medications or put off needed medical tests. We hear from parents who are ignoring their own symptoms of ill health in order to pay the rent or keep their kids in shoes. We talk with people with low and even moderate incomes who are struggling to keep their heads above water while chronic illness or a medical emergency takes a toll on the family. It's a real pleasure to be able to answer the letters and phone calls by saying, "Let us take that burden off so you can heal."

In the year 2004, we helped 223 South Whidbey residents with more than \$56,000 in bills for prescriptions, visits to health professionals, hospital stays, lab work, medical supplies, and ferry fares to treatment. We helped about 60% of these people just once during the year, and 24% two or three times. We helped a few with payments or co-pays for essential drugs for complex medical problems all year long.

In 2004 we helped a total of 223 people with more than \$56,000 in medical expenses.

Nearly everyone we helped had an annual household income of \$24,000 or less. 60% of them had no health insurance at all. We had more calls from people "couch-surfing" with friends and family or living in cars. Our calls from seniors quadrupled, a warning for the future given our aging island population.

In the first quarter of 2005 we helped 70 South Whidbey people and took 155 calls, each requiring follow-up to make financial arrangements. These calls were answered by me or trained board members in our own homes, keeping our annual administrative costs for service down to what you might spend on a week's groceries.

We are careful stewards of the funds you entrust to us, and we make it clear to those who write or call that our medical safety net is a gift from the whole community. People tell us they find strength in knowing that others care. Thank-you letters say things like, "Wow, what a wonderful community we live in. Thanks for being so helpful and encouraging." Or, "Your group of neighbors is a godsend to those in need." So on their behalf, let me say thanks to you all.

--Lynn Willeford, Service Director

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Some weeks ago, I was standing at my kitchen sink listening to the news, when I heard Kathi Goertzen (KOMO-TV) report that a survey had just been released by Harvard University about bankruptcy in the United States. The statistic that stopped me with dish in hand, was that bankruptcies were on the increase, and that half of all bankruptcies were caused by medical crises.

I knew there were lots of people out there who were having trouble paying for medical care, and I knew it was on the rise. I had seen it in the years I did medical billing, and I had seen it as a board member for Friends of Friends Medical Support Fund.

But standing there in my kitchen, I was struck by the enormity of the problem and by how it was not going away. I was overwhelmed with sadness, that families with or without insurance (700,000 per year in the U.S.) had to resort to bankruptcy, because someone in their family had a medical situation that was beyond their financial ability to pay.

Each year, we see an increase in requests for help, and each year we see families who are faced with the same financial decisions as the families in the survey. I know that the solution to the national health-care problem is huge and complex. I don't have the answer. But I do know that in our corner of the country, we have a community of caring, loving and generous people who are willing each year to give their donations to help so many of our friends and neighbors. On behalf of our recipients and our board members, I want to thank you for rising to the occasion and making an important difference for so many in our community.

—Patty Willson, President, Friends of Friends Medical Support Fund

FRIENDS OF FRIENDS

2004 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

INCOME:			
Donations			\$40,810.92
Grants			\$17,000.00
Fundraising events	\$13,863.50		
Less: Cost of events	-\$71.79		
Net events			\$13,791.71
Interest			\$154.24
NET INCOME			\$71,756.87
EXPENSE:			
Indirect costs:			
Outreach			\$237.79
Fees and License			\$491.64
Newsletter	\$630.34		
Less: Sponsorships	-\$150.00		
Net newsletter cost			\$480.34
Postage			\$752.24
Total indirect			\$1962.01
Direct services			\$56,871.66
NET EXPENSE			\$58,833.67
BALANCE, December 31, 2004			\$12,923.20

Excerpts from cards and letters to Friends of Friends:

I am enclosing a check to repay you for your unconditional support... You helped me through a very rough time. Thank you so much!

Thanks a million. You guys restore my faith in humanity.

Wow, what a wonderful community we live in. Thanks for being so helpful and encouraging.

Thank you FOF for the new outdoor walker. I am getting around now. Thank you for the opportunity.

Thank you surely isn't close to how I feel in regards to the gift of help with my medications. With our continued decrease in monies for people with low incomes and poor or no health insurance, your group of neighbors is a godsend to those in need.

97% of expenses went to direct services in 2004.

Who's On The Friends of Friends Medical Support Fund Board?

Becky Foote became a board member in 2003 bringing with her experience in finance and community support. She has worked with numerous community groups and is currently the treasurer for Friends of Friends. She teaches math at the South Whidbey branch of Skagit Valley College.

After years of mounting pressure from Lynn and Patty, **Bob French** recently succumbed and joined the Board. He looks forward to assisting Friends of Friends program help members of our community in need. Bob and his wife Bernita Sanstad have lived on South Whidbey since 1977 and been employed locally for most of this time.

Claudia Fuller, our Secretary, has worked with seniors and disabled individuals for 20 of the 24 years she's lived on Whidbey. She's been Whidbey General Hospital's Lifeline manager for 12 years – her office is in the Bayview Senior Center.

Cynthia Jaffe and her husband, Rob Hetler, have been island residents for 18 years. Her midwifery service, opened in 1990, has delivered more than 700 new island residents! She brings a desire to right the wrongs in our health care system and a deep love and respect for Whidbey Island folks.

Dana Kelly, our President-elect, has lived and worked on South Whidbey for 27 years. For ten she has been a Public Health Nurse, frequently referring individuals to Friends of Friends who otherwise would have gone without services.

Peggy Kimbell, a 30+ year resident of South Whidbey and a histologist, brings activism, compassion, integrity, and medical understanding to the board. And in just 9 more years, Verlaine will consider her a "local" at long last!

Paul Mathews joined the S Whidbey community in 1988. He is a father of 3, an electronics designer, and the original "token male" of the FoF Board.

Christi Ruscigno has been part of the South

Whidbey community for over 30 years--dabbling in grass root efforts such as home building and raising three daughters, and most recently, joining the FOF board.

Suzanne Schlicke served on the board of Hearts and Hammers for many years and there gained an appreciation for the spirit of community and an unwavering respect for the commitment and capability of Lynn Willeford. When the opportunity arose to join the board of another of Lynn's creations, she jumped on it!

During her 25 years in the South Whidbey community, **Diana Shirley** has been involved in the peace movement, worked on building bridges between school and community, and has been involved in celebration through the arts. Being on the board of FoF has provided her with one more opportunity to contribute to an important and basic issue.

Mary Stewart has been a health care provider for 30 years. In her present work as a psychiatric nurse practitioner, she sees her own clients struggle to meet their health care needs, especially the cost of very expensive medications. She is glad to participate in FoF efforts to improve the lives of people in our community.

Health writer and Clyde Theatre owner **Lynn Willeford** is the founder and past president of Friends of Friends. She has been answering most of the calls for help for over eight years.

Patty Willson has served Friends of Friends in a variety of roles, from an original board member in 1998 to her current position as President. She has worked in the health-care field on South Whidbey for over 25 years, currently as medical bookkeeper for South Whidbey Physical Therapy.

Melissa Young joined Friends of Friends board in 2004 because she wanted to be a part of an organization with direct and local community service. In her other work, she produces documentary films on the environment and social justice.



Friends of Friends Medical Support Fund
 P.O. Box 812
 Langley, WA 98260 USA

NONPROFIT ORG.
 US POSTAGE
 PAID
 LANGLEY, WA
 PERMIT NO. 20

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Soroptimists Auction Benefits Friends of Friends

This year, we are very pleased to report that the **Soroptimists International of South Whidbey** have decided to contribute a major portion of their annual auction proceeds to Friends of Friends Medical Support Fund. On **October 22**, you can **join Evening Magazine's John Curley at the Useless Bay Country Club** for this year's event. The Soroptimist will be sending out invitations to purchase tickets. They may also be purchased by contacting Pat Ross (360) 321-5659. Watch for notices in the *Marketplace* and the *South Whidbey Record* during August.

Who Gives to Friends of Friends?

Individual donations--too many to list here--are the backbone of our fundraising efforts. This organization is not called Friends of Friends for nothing! All these gifts are valuable signs of support to us, whether the checks are written for \$5 or \$5,000, and we send our heartfelt thanks. Since our last newsletter we have also received grants and donations from the following organizational and business donors:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| Building Source | Nichols Brothers Boat Builders, Inc. | Langley United Methodist Church |
| Langley United Methodist Church Women | South Whidbey Lions | Oak Harbor Emblem Foundation |
| Trinity Lutheran Church Women | South Whidbey Kiwanis | Useless Bay Animal Clinic |
| POE Sisterhood Chapter #39 | Skagit-Island County Builders Association | Unity of Whidbey |
| Daughters of the Eastern Star Langley Chapter | Daughters of Norway Esther Moe Lodge, Chapter 39 | Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Whidbey Island |
| St. Augustine's in the Woods | | |

To learn more about our organization and how to donate, ask any board member or contact us at **Friends of Friends Medical Support Fund, P. O. Box 812, Langley, WA 98260**. Thanks to **Greenbank Birthing Center** and to **The Clyde Theatre** for their generous sponsorship of this newsletter.

Please accept our apologies if your organization or group was omitted in this listing

Friends in the community often find their own ways to raise money for us. We

benefited from the sale of **Georgia Gerber's** collectible Christmas ornaments and from the **Giving Tree** at Bayview Corner decorated by **Eventually**. Friends of our attorney **Doug Kelly** raised money for Friends of Friends through a "roast" of Doug. **Linda Glassmoyer of Stampin' Up** and **Tina Beard of The Pampered Chef** dedicated proceeds of their sales to us, as did

Creative Fund Raising

some subscribers of the long-distance phone service **Island Assets**. Thanks also to all the wonderful musicians, artists and other creative people who donated their skills to our own fundraisers, which this past year included a **Mother's Day plant sale**, the raffle of a bronze bunny donated by **Lynn Swanson**, a fabulous concert by the **Saratoga Chamber Orchestra**, and the sale of **Island Fantasies** at Choochokam.