

OR: Please send me an invoice once per month for \$_____ each month for a period of one year, as my response to the reduction in state funds for the disabled.

Yes, here is my contribution: \$25 \$50 \$100 or even more \$_____

Your partnership is needed

**** Inspiring Hope While Supporting Participation in the Community ****

476-2373

For details, call



Options' spacious meeting room is available
to rent for community events, staff retreats or other gatherings.

Options for Southern Oregon

1215 SW G Street

Grants Pass, OR 97526

Return Service Requested

Friday, December 3rd through Sunday, December 5th



Soon after Thanksgiving, the Josephine County Fairgrounds Pavilion will again be filled with the sights and sounds of Christmas. The 2nd Annual Festival of Trees will be open for the community to enjoy. After a successful first year Options staff have been busy preparing for an encore celebration. This year we are joined by a new Event Coordinator, Nancy Driskell. Nancy was a major volunteer with the first Festival and became our new coordinator in February. She is being assisted by graphic designer Jennifer Delaney. Options Staff members Joe Serres, Zoanne Northcutt and our director, Kim Miller have also been helping with the preparation.

After reflecting on the first Festival of Trees there have been some changes in the schedule and presentation of the event. The Gala last year, which featured a buffet dinner and fancy deserts, has been replaced by a full course dinner amongst the lighted trees provided and served by Star Catering on Saturday night. There will also be live entertainment, dancing and Wayne Liska will auction some of the beautifully decorated trees. The Teddy Bear Picnic on Sunday afternoon, sponsored by Evergreen Bank will be a special opportunity for small children to bring their own Teddy Bear to join others in a themed picnic with storytelling, songs, crafts, a Teddy Bear Parade and other fun activities for little people in the Christmas Forest. Each child will take home a new Teddy bear and have a chance to have their picture taken with Santa or one of the giant Teddy Bears.

Email

If you would prefer to receive our newsletter by email, please give us a call, drop us a letter or email us. This will save Options money on paper and postage.



Phone: 541-476-2373 Ext.103, leave a message for Charlotte or email her at cthompson@optionsonline.org

FESTIVAL OF TREES 2004

EVENT SCHEDULE

ONGOING EVENTS

Themed Trees on Display
Candy Cane Cafe

Live Entertainment Presented by Local Talent
Santa's Workshop - Children's Crafts and Activities
Pictures with Santa at the North Pole
Silent Auction

SPECIAL EVENTS & FESTIVAL HOURS

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2004
5:00 PM Designer/Decorators Preview Party

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2004
11:00 AM - 9:00 PM FESTIVAL HOURS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2004
12:00 NOON - 5:00 PM FESTIVAL HOURS
10:00 AM - 12:00 NOON
Fashion Show & Champagne Brunch
7:00 PM - 10:00 PM
Premier Gala Dinner & Live Auction
Live Entertainment and Dancing

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2004
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM FESTIVAL HOURS
12:00 NOON - 1:30 PM Teddy Bear Picnic
Festival Concludes at 5:00 PM

Throughout the weekend there will be continuous live entertainment on the Main Stage, sponsored by Ausland Builders, LLC. And this year the Coalition for Kids is sponsoring the Candy Cane Café which will provide refreshments throughout the week end. Senior citizens who bring a canned food donation for the Food Bank will be admitted for free on Friday, December 3rd.

The Festival of Trees is an annual fundraiser for the programs of Options for Southern Oregon, Inc., a private non-profit organization. The Festival is a public display of decorated holiday trees, wreaths and specialty items. Profits from the Festival will directly support adults with severe and persistent mental illness.

Please join us in continuing this wonderful holiday event for the whole community to enjoy. We welcome your tax-deductible donations of gift certificates, shopping sprees, vacations, floral arrangements, toys, gift baskets, etc. Items will be either auctioned or raffled during the Festival. Participating individuals, organizations and businesses will receive special recognition for their gifts in the Festival Program.

To get involved, call Nancy Driskell, Event Coordinator at 541-95f5-9793

Community Garden in the works at Options

GARDEN WISH LIST

- §Volunteers
- §Cash Donations
- §Soil Amendments
- §Wheelbarrow
- §Shovels
- §Rakes
- §Tool shed
- §Fencing materials/labor
- §Hoses/Sprinklers
- §Picnic Tables
- §Benches

Options recently received a grant from the Four Way Community Foundation that provided the initial funding to build a community garden for the Grants Pass area. The Options Community Garden was proposed for Options property by several of our staff who recognized that with a minimal investment, some of the land bordering our parking lot could be better utilized for the community.

The concept for a community garden has received incredible support from all of the individuals and organizations that we have approached. We have received support from community partners as varied as the Master Gardeners, Josephine County Juvenile Center, Retired & Senior Volunteer Program and the Grower's Market. In addition, Chandler Pipeline Construction donated the installation of an irrigation system.

The garden will provide 35-40 plots, available to individuals and nonprofit organizations at a nominal annual fee of \$25. This fee would cover ongoing expenses such as water and routine maintenance, making the project virtually self-supporting after the initial work is completed. Ten percent of plots would be held as "scholarship" plots. These plots would be available at no charge to individuals who agreed to donate a percentage of their produce to agencies who work with hunger. For more information regarding the community garden please contact Joe Serres, Programs Assistant at jserres@optionsonline.org or 541-476-2373 ext. 125.

Life at StarThistle

I live in a small apartment building for people "with severe and persistent mental illness." Are we a ghetto? In most ways, no! We live in Ashland, Oregon, a beautiful college/theatre town of 20,000. Ashland is a rapidly gentrifying town with an affordable housing problem. It's fair to say that few of us could afford to live here without our HUD subsidized housing. There are 11 one-bedroom units at Star Thistle, plus a resident manager's apartment. Star Thistle was built and is managed by Options for Southern Oregon..

I want to explain what this place is not. We are not a treatment facility. The resident manager is here to manage the building and to insure that we are as safe as possible. He is not here to do therapy. Medication is not dispensed. We do our own cooking and cleaning. I pay a friend \$20 for two hours of housekeeping per month. One of the great, and at times mixed, blessings is our community room. It is essentially a nice living room with plush and comfortable furniture, and a small kitchen in which we can cook for potlucks, informal community meals or indeed any other purpose (as long as we clean up). The community room and hallways are cleaned weekly by Options.

The subject of the community room and the halls brings me to a basic fact about Star Thistle, literally structured into the building. Community is encouraged. Apartment doors open inward to common hallways and everyone walks through and past the community room to get to or from the main entrance. There are two patios; one of which has a view of the landscaped ground (trees, bushes and a vegetable garden) and, of the beautiful mountains that surround our little valley.

The building designers were mindful of the tendency of mental patients to isolate, and have offered us the physical context in which to overcome it, if we so choose. Nobody is forced to socialize or to attend the monthly community meetings. But, the opportunity is there.

What is it like for me to live with officially diagnosed mental patients and I am one of them? On the whole it is a good place for me. During my adult life, I have moved about, was married and had a child. I also lived with my father, with friends, even in a nursing facility, usually not on my own. I have always searched for a good and safe place to live.

This is the eleventh issue of the Options Newsletter and our third year of publication. We wish to thank all the gracious donors who have utilized this avenue to support Options. We also wish to express our heartfelt appreciation to the Meyer Memorial Trust, from whom the grant originated to make this newsletter possible.

I was fortunate enough to be part of the first group of residents who moved here in 1998, and I truly plan to stay here until the end of my life

There are some residents who at times act noticeably disturbed. Only one of them has ever been threatening, and the vast majority of the time, he is not. The possibility of threat is disturbing, but I still feel safe here. The other residents are so normal appearing that we have been the subject of the classic comment "you don't seem mentally ill to me," at least a few times in our lives.

It does take a good deal of stability to live in "independent living" and several people have been evicted or moved out because they simply did not have that stability. The rest of us do. I am the oldest person here at 52 and the youngest is 23. I count several people here as personal friends. People that I would try to stay in contact with if hypothetically I were ever to move out.

Most of us here have had the experience of simply not feeling understood, of being rejected for not measuring up to society's standards. Most of us have had the experience of being told, with varying degrees of politeness, to shut up and simply do or be what someone else demands. And, by the time we come to Star Thistle, we've learned that we very simply can't do or be what is demanded. Therefore- I and my friends here have discussed this many times - it is a great relief to live among people who don't demand that we be in nearly all ways "normal." I don't mean that we sit around incessantly discussing our symptoms - we talk about all sorts of things - but that we can talk about them with a good chance for a friendly reception if we so choose. People in depression receive empathy, not bootstrap lectures.

If I am feeling tormented by my constant feeling that nothing physically exists, I can say something about it without being told that I shouldn't feel that. We give people here the gift of empathy, sympathy and hope even if other residents don't fully understand that specific symptom. No, we are not a ghetto, but we are, in fits and starts, and to an imperfect degree, a community. For me, it is my home.

Stephen Weiner is a Stanford graduate, writer, community volunteer and active member of NAMI.

This article was originally published in the journal of the Mental Health Association in Santa Barbara County

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