

40 down and out
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Boise Rescue Mission/Flickr

The overwhelmed Boise Rescue Mission lodged more than 2,000 men and served more than 340,000 meals in 2010. Pictured: a guest for Thanksgiving dinner.



Holes in the

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SAFETY NET

by Ashley Cross

A social service can be defined as an act of kindness to better improve the quality of life for others. This photo essay provides insight on how three local nonprofit organizations, which are not government funded, are surviving in times when money is tight and more people are in need of their help. We look at the Boise Rescue Mission, the Garden City Community Clinic and The Idaho Foodbank.



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Boise Rescue Mission

The Rev. Bill Roscoe, executive director of the Boise Rescue Mission, has watched as the recession filled up his kitchen floors with bodies searching for a warm place to sleep at night. The mission operates three shelters: City Light for Women and Children (98 beds), Lighthouse Rescue Mission in Nampa (60 beds) and the River of Life for men (145 beds). Not only do visitors receive good food and a warm place to lay their head, but they are assisted with substance abuse and mental health issues if needed.

In the summer of 2011, the recession caught up to the Boise Rescue Mission, which found itself behind its projected income by \$125,000. Over the 10 years that Roscoe has been a part of our community, he has only seen the numbers reach this alarming low one other time. An urgent plea to supporters and community members carried by local media brought the mission the needed money. Roscoe said that no matter how bad the recession



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gets, he is confident that sufficient funds will come in. The Treasure Valley is the most reliable and by far the most charitable community he has ever been a part of, he said.

The mission had its most difficult year of the recession in 2010. That year the mission logged more than 2,103 people who said that they had never stayed in a shelter before. It served the highest number of meals (340,790), had the highest number of beds occupied (126,311) and the highest amount of clothing distributed (99,685). But compared to 2010, in 2011 more women and children became homeless (1,124). Roscoe said single mothers who lose their jobs due to the economy are most at risk. Fewer paychecks mean less money for daycare services, which forces some to enter the shelter for help. The week of Sept. 12, 2011, the women's shelter was

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overflowing, forcing 11 people to sleep on the couches, which Roscoe said has not been uncommon during these hard times. Roscoe said lack of jobs is the No. 1 reason people can't get out of this funk. As long as people can't work, they will not be able to sustain a living on their own and will end up in his shelters. Lack of affordable child care services is also a problem, forcing mothers and fathers to walk through the mission's doors during this recession. Roscoe is seeing more than ever those who have lost their jobs or can't find work visit the mission because they cannot afford to care for their children.

Another factor Roscoe views as an issue for this recession is the lack of public transportation. Some people who have no cars work the graveyard



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shifts and that is a problem when the buses stop running at 5 p.m. If people who need work have no way of getting to a source of income, they will continue to be homeless, Roscoe said.



Garden City Community Clinic

Genesis World Mission

The Garden City Community Clinic began in 2002 after another free health care clinic shut down abruptly. It is a project of Genesis World Mission. A Garden City warehouse was remodeled to become the clinic, which has focused on serving the uninsured and those who make less than 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines. Some of their services include dental and mental health care, and they will accommodate all other health services for each person that walks through their doors. The clinic is run with



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volunteers except for a thin layer of staff. Pharmacists, doctors, nurses, social workers and dentists take time out of their schedules to help serve the community.

Executive Director Steve Reames said they have seen a drastic change in the kinds of people they are helping. "It used to be the poor class whom we saw, but now we are seeing more and more middle class people needing help due to the economy," he said. During the fall of 2010, the clinic was denied three significant grants totaling \$50,000. In December, the clinic had to cut two positions and struggled to meet its financial needs. Fortunately, a

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recent grant of \$100,000 from the Ada County Commissioners allowed the clinic to hire a nurse practitioner and a part-time social service coordinator. Reames said one trend they are seeing during this recession are churches stepping up and seeing their responsibility to help people, not only spiritually but physically as well. As a result, more churches are starting health clinics or sponsoring one, he said.

The Idaho Foodbank

Since 2008, The Idaho Foodbank has had a 93 percent increase in the volume of free emergency food it has provided to church pantries, senior centers and shelters in 39 of Idaho's 44 counties, said President and CEO Karen Vauk. The foodbank hit a record in December 2009 of providing 139,000 people with free emergency food donations that month alone. In March 2011, a second high of 132,000 people was reached.

In fiscal year 2011, the Idaho Foodbank distributed more than 10.6 million pounds of food, up more than 3 million pounds from 2010. Donations of food and funds have increased over these same years, but are not increasing at a rate needed to meet the increased need. As of 2011, about 1 of every 6 Idahoans, or about 236,000 people, didn't know where their next meal was coming from. About 1 of every 4 children, or 95,000 kids, were food insecure.

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Ashley Cross is an undergraduate with an interest in municipal government and social welfare.

Retired biologist **Allan Ansell** has been a professional photographer for six years, specializing in portraits. He is project director of "Inside-Out Boise," a photo exhibit that documents the lives of people with everyday jobs. His work can be found at ansellphotography.com.