

COUNTY-WIDE CHAPLAINCY

"There to Help
When it Hurts"

800 SE 28th Circle, Battle Ground, WA 98604 Phone: 360-687-4596 Email: chapepp@msn.com

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Web Page -
911chaplain.org

Dear Friends of Chaplaincy,

This past month I had an appointment with my new doctor for a physical. He knew that I am a trauma chaplain and that I have been doing this for a number of years. I was expecting the regular listening and probing, etc. But when he sat back and asked me if I ever thought of harming myself . . . I was rather taken aback. He asked me if I knew anything about the cumulative nature of long term stress and that it often can lead to depression and burn out. I thought to myself - yes, I know that, and I do Critical Incident Stress Management debriefs with the folk I work with after encountering a bad scene. Then he asked me, "What do you do for fun?" I thought to myself, "Since when is life supposed to be fun?" I told him that I raised some cattle for a hobby, and I enjoyed feeding and caring for them.

Well, I have thought a lot about his question since then. I have a lot of very gratifying involvements in my life as a chaplain. One of these was a call I had late one Saturday night when a 42 year old man was discovered dead by his uncle and aunt who had come from Alaska to check on his welfare. He had been without work, was depressed and had used alcohol as his coping mechanism. He had died a week or so earlier; so, needless to say, the uncle and aunt faced a terrible scene. After his body was removed, there still was a terrible mess, both in the house and the yard, which needed to be dealt with before his mother and sister would arrive from Alaska to take care of his personal things.

The next day in church I asked my pastor if I could make a brief announcement and see if anyone would like to help with the cleanup of this house which was a real mess as he had not done any cleaning or maintenance for a long time. Well, I want you to know, I was thrilled when 21 people showed up the next morning to help. We hauled a whole dump truck load to the dump, mowed, weeded, trimmed overgrown bushes, washed dishes (lots of them), cleaned bathrooms, etc. It was a buzz of activity, and what so thrilled me was that everyone seemed to be enjoying working together to help someone they didn't know, and had never met. Some of the ladies commented while working in the kitchen that they should alternate cleaning each other's homes! The transformation to

the home was amazing; and when the uncle and aunt came later that afternoon, my wife was just doing a



Just a few of my friends who helped. Others wanted to come after work and even gave money to help buy supplies.

few last things. They were so astounded, they just wept and hugged her. I guess I would have to say, it is really fun to do

for someone else what they cannot do for themselves. And I was so proud to have so many willing workers come to help me!!



I was asked to conduct a memorial service for the family, which was one of 4 deaths this past month which were related to alcoholism!! So sad!

As I send this monthly update to 465 friends and supporters on my mailing list, I am again reminded that without you, I would not be able to have all the FUN of serving people in crises, as together we are "there to Help, when it Hurts", - and we can have fun doing it. It keeps us from depression and lifts our spirits in the process.

Joyfully serving together with you,
Chaplain Landis Epp

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