



# Issues Brief

*City of Yakima e-Newsletter*

## ✦ Santa to Again Share Breakfast at the Harman Center

With Christmas fast approaching, preparations are underway around the world for visits from the Jolly Old Elf himself, Santa Claus. Part of Santa's packed public appearance schedule includes his annual stop at Yakima's Harman Senior Center on Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> for a special "Breakfast With Santa" event.



*Part of a very busy pre-Christmas schedule for Mr. Claus will be a visit to Yakima's Harman Senior Center on December 7<sup>th</sup>.*

The man known to many as Father Christmas will spend a couple of hours at the Harman Center greeting people, taking gift requests, and handing out candy canes. Santa is scheduled to be at the Senior Center, which is located at 101 North 65<sup>th</sup> Avenue, from 8:00 am to 10:00 am that day.

During his visit, everyone will also have the chance to get their picture taken with Mr. Claus. Anyone interested in snapping a photo of themselves with Santa, who will be donning his traditional outfit of a red coat with white collar and cuffs, white-cuffed red trousers, matching hat, and black boots and belt, should bring their own camera or other picture taking device.

It will cost only \$4.00 for the delicious breakfast on December 7<sup>th</sup>, which is being sponsored by Yakima Valley Senior Citizens, Inc., a non-profit group that supports activities and programs at the Harman Senior Center.

"We're really looking forward to Santa being here on December 7<sup>th</sup> for breakfast," said Parks and Recreation Supervisor Traci Bennett. "We're already working to get the Harman Center decorated with lots of holiday cheer. On the day of the breakfast, we'll have Christmas music playing, the fireplace will be blazing...it will be a lot of fun," said Bennett.

People who plan on attending the special "Breakfast With Santa" event at the Harman Center on Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> are being asked to make reservations before November 29<sup>th</sup>. Reservations can be made by calling 575-6166.

**Help  
Wanted**

*Be Part of the Solution!*

*Help reduce panhandling. Instead of giving money directly to panhandlers, donate to local agencies and organizations that provide services to people who are low-income or homeless.*

***Yakima is our community – Be Part of the Solution!***

## **Winter Weather Shelters Need Volunteers and Supplies**

Since 2005, the Homeless Network of Yakima County has coordinated the Extreme Winter Weather Housing Project, which has provided a safe haven from the bitter cold for hundreds of people throughout the Valley without homes. The program has mostly utilized churches as shelters during what can be brutal winter months in the region.

The Homeless Network, in collaboration with Sunrise Outreach Ministries, will operate three overnight shelters in Yakima from November 15<sup>th</sup> through mid March. The shelters are located at Unitarian Universalist Church of Yakima (2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Lincoln Avenue), Englewood Christian Church (44<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Englewood Avenue), and First Baptist Church of Yakima (6<sup>th</sup> Street and Yakima Avenue).

The shelters are mostly operated by volunteers. The Homeless Network is in search of people who want to help serve the homeless population during coldest part of the year.

“It takes about 500 volunteers alone just to keep the shelters going during the winter,” said Pastor Dave Hanson, Executive Director of Sunrise Outreach Ministries. “In order to be a shelter volunteer, people do have to go through a short training class. But no special skills are needed to work at a shelter,” said Pastor Hanson. “The most important qualification is wanting to help”.

Sunrise Outreach Ministries also relies heavily on donations in order to operate the shelters and provide care for people who are cold and hungry. Pastor Hanson says donations of men’s and women’s winter clothing, blankets, coffee, sugar, creamer, cocoa, and other non-perishable food are always needed.



***The Unitarian Universalist Church on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Lincoln Avenue will serve as one of three Yakima homeless shelters.***



***First Baptist Church at 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Yakima Avenue will also serve as a homeless shelter this winter.***

The Homeless Network is also working toward opening a year-round service center and shelter in the Downtown Yakima area that would provide a more permanent location for people who are homeless to utilize. The organization is going through the process of securing use of a building located on the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Lincoln Avenue. Exactly when the year-round service center and shelter might open is still unknown, but the group is hoping to have it up and running as soon as possible. The facility will be based on the “Housing First” model, an approach to providing services to the chronically homeless population that has proven successful in other parts of the country including the Seattle area.

Anyone willing to become a shelter volunteer or make a donation to support the shelters is

encouraged to contact Sunrise Outreach Ministries by phone at 225-9310 or by e-mail at [afish4christ@aol.com](mailto:afish4christ@aol.com). Information about the shelters can be found on the Homeless Network of Yakima County website - <http://www.yakimahomeless.org/Pages/default.aspx>

## **MLK, Jr. Blvd Underpass Marks 8<sup>th</sup> Month of Construction Activity**

It has been about eight months since construction crews closed down MLK, Jr. Boulevard and began major work on a multimillion dollar underpass project. Prior to that, the focus of the project centered on utility relocation efforts. Working four, ten hour days, construction crews are making steady progress on the 900-foot-long railroad underpass project.

Completion of major excavation work has cleared the way for construction activities to move ahead on both sides of the railroad tracks. On the eastside, a 70-foot high yellow drill rig continues to punch shafts into the ground for reinforced concrete columns as part of the retaining walls. Nearby is a white 70-foot high drill rig that is digging hundreds of unreinforced concrete shafts for the retaining walls and the critical bottom seal that will help keep groundwater from seeping into the underpass. On the west side of project, work is focusing on completion of a new railroad bridge.



***A temporary shoo-fly detour will be removed soon and BNSF trains will begin using a new bridge over the MLK, Jr. Blvd underpass.***

Completion of the railroad bridge will eliminate the need for the so called "shoo-fly" which has been serving as a temporary detour for mainline BSNF train traffic through Yakima for several months. The eventual relocation of the mainline will also enable work to begin early next year on a bridge that will allow North Front Street traffic to travel over the finished underpass.

Despite some early challenges associated with installation of the BNSF shoo-fly that required the construction schedule to be reconfigured, progress on the underpass continues to move forward at a good pace. Mowat Construction Company, the Woodinville-based firm serving as the project's primary contractor, is expected to continue work on the underpass until late summer or early fall of 2014. The roughly \$10.6 million underpass project will eventually take MLK, Jr. Blvd traffic below the BSNF tracks near North Front Street.

You can watch progress on the underpass project by visiting a page on the City of Yakima website- <http://bit.ly/12q70a8> . Two cameras are focused on the construction site and pictures are updated every 30 seconds.

Both the MLK, Jr. Blvd underpass and the Lincoln Avenue underpass, which opened in May 2012, have been designed to improve driver and pedestrian safety, reduce exhaust emissions from cars waiting for trains to pass, and speed the response times for police, fire, and other emergency service providers.

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