

Burr Boynton

1. Why do you volunteer?

“There’s obviously a need. I don’t think our government does a very good job of taking care of the people who really do need assistance. They have nowhere to go and many of the guests have no capability of taking care of themselves, whether that’s due to mental illness, alcohol, drugs or combinations of all three. The Sanctuary attracts some that have fallen on hard times. They’re living paycheck to paycheck and they’ve lost their job and that gives them about a six-week window. Then they get behind, and then they’re out and then they’re on the street. Occasionally you’ll see people come in for six to seven eight months. Their food’s taken care of, their shelter’s taken care of they have a job, they can save enough money, they can make their deposit on their rentals and they can get out of there. But for the most part it’s a home. I volunteer because that fulfills a pretty important need.”

2. What are your impressions of Interfaith Sanctuary?

“I look at it as a home and a refuge of last resort. For the most part many of the guests are not leaving Sanctuary. There is a core group that this is their home and they make it their home and they treat each other like family. The guests are very respectful. The staff does a wonderful job of running the place. It brings me back on a monthly basis.”

“At first I had no exposure to the homeless community. I had no idea. At Sanctuary, my impression is that it is where they go when all other options are taken away from them. It is an odd combination, since it’s open to anyone regardless. I think it’s nice that the Sanctuary doesn’t pass judgment but does provide a safe place for them to come and sleep at night. One of the interesting things since I’ve been involved in Sanctuary and because we live relatively close to downtown, is how often I will see a familiar face.”

3. How do you see homelessness in general?

“During these political times you’ll hear about politicians criticizing [President Barack Obama’s] proposal to tax the wealthiest two percent and instead turning around and taxing the bottom fifty percent that actually use the services. That’s frustrating for me. I would suggest that the people that do complain about the social services really get to know the people that use the limited amount of assistance that we provide our lower income citizens. It’s not much, most of our budget does not go social service it goes to wars and military. I’m happy to volunteer at the shelter to really experience how these people actually live.”

“Food is not a problem but very few people get any additional government services. If I have a general philosophy it’s that the wealthiest nation in the world should do more for its citizens. If you’re going to have a quality of life in your city you should provide homeless services to those in need because there are people in need. When I first went to Sanctuary I had a preconceived notion of homeless. You know, the guy with a big bushy

beard and oily clothes. The people who came in that night chose their clothes to reflect I guess how they saw themselves. I thought if I saw this person on the street I would never identify them as homeless.”

Burr Boynton moved to Boise in 2005. He is married, semi-retired, owns multiple properties in our community and works for the Idaho State Democratic Party.

- As relayed by Barry Franklin, Sanctuary Public Relations Team Writer