

Editor: The South Whidbey Record

For the last two years it has been my great privilege to serve as President of the Board of Friends of Friends Medical Support Fund, a local non-profit organization that helps our neighbors with unpaid medical expenses. Fourteen extraordinary volunteers serve on this board, giving their time and talents to organize fundraisers and manage day-to-day operations.

In 1997, our first year, we helped 10 people with \$3592 in medical expenses. In 1998 the numbers crept upward with us paying \$9102 to help 17 individuals. All funds have been raised in our local community, mostly through individual donations. We are also grateful for the donations from civic organizations, churches and the Whidbey General Hospital Foundation. It is our job to be good stewards of the funds our community so generously donates.

In 2009 we helped 235 South Whidbey residents with a total of \$81,446 in medical bills. Yes, we have grown over the years. In the beginning, our founder, Lynn Willeford, took calls from her home phone number. We now employ a part-time paid service coordinator to authorize services. In our years of existence we have been a temporary safety net, helping hundreds of individuals. Most people need our help for only a short period of time. Since 1997, FoF has been a conduit for donations from the community, paying over \$600,000 in medical and dental expenses. Our low overhead allows donations to go where they are intended.

Our voice mailbox, 221-4535, as well as web hosting, is provided by Whidbey Telecom. People can leave a message stating their need, and our service coordinator will return the call. Our website, www.fofmedicalsupportfund.org is a place to find information about community resources as well as photos and information about us. Donations can be made to us via this site. The generosity of a local south Whidbey resident allowed us to look to the future to create an endowment fund. We are tremendously proud to have helped two other organizations get established on the island. Small Miracles is located in Coupeville and Medical Safety Net of North Whidbey is in Oak Harbor.

I am honored to hand the gavel to our new president, Suzanne Schlicke. Executive Committee members are Melissa Young, Julie Buktenica, Becky Foote, Dana Kelly and Patty Willson. Our other board members are Bob French, Susan Gilles, Doug Johnson, Christi Ruscigno, Barb Schults, Diana Shirley and Mary Stewart.

Thank you to all who have donated to us in the past and who continue to support us. Already this year we have helped 36 South Whidbey residents. The need for assistance with medical bills continues. We hope to see you at our Mother's Day Plant Sale in May at Tilth as well as our annual Mr. South Whidbey contest in October. You may also contact us at our mailing address P.O. Box 812, Langley, 98260.

Claudia Fuller
Past President, Friends of Friends Medical Support Fund