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Interview with Sandra Daubenspeck, from the Mt. Vernon Inter-Church social Services.

Sandra Daubenspeck

Karla Tibbetts

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Event: Interview with Sandra Daubenspeck, from the Mt. Vernon Inter-Church social Services.

Place: Inter-Church House, 114 E.Gambier St. Mt. Vernon. (740)-397-4825

KT: This is Karla Tibbetts interviewing Sandra Daubenspeck at Inter-Church in Mt.Vernon on Feburary.7, 2001.

KT-yes, I'm with the rural life center. This year we wanted to do something with food ways, originally we wanted to establish a local food system to help build community and help the local farmers. This turned out to be a little out of our reach for a year project. Instead were doing a 13 serious of articles all about foodways, everything from preserving food, to feeding the hungry, to food and healing...how food enters our life.

SD: Well how nice.

KT: This is only my second interview, but I was really impressed with what their doing out in Danville. I was amazed at how you fund all this, and how many people are involved.

SD: Volunteers. I think we only have...we have 6 paid staff, and close to 30 volunteers.

KT: how long has the Mt. Vernon branch been active?

SD: Probably 1962, I don't know, I'm not old enough, I'd have to ask some of these older women. It didn't start here, it started in the basement of a church,okay, and they had little partisions set up. One little partician would have food, another would have a councelor to help people budget, and another part would have clothes and emergency things, like pots and pans. In just a little space, they'd have to ration the food at first, they'd give them a little ball of hamburger like this.. They'd give them their staples, their flower, sugar, cornmeal, a loaf of bread if they had it. Gosh, that 30 years ago.....I'll find out.

KT: Is your food pantry stocked primarily by the food for the hungry drive, and by donations?

SD: Actually hold on.....45% of our food that goes out comes from mid Ohio food bank.

KT: you purchase that from the food bank?

SD: some of it, I ordered some water, 6 one gallon jugs of water, and it happened to be free.....the chicken noodle soup, that's a government surplus so that was free, we ordered 15 cases of that. Frozen pizzas, we stick those in Probably about 20 years ago the government surplus would be milk and cheese, bread.....The free stuff we got this time was the noodle soup, pasta, spaghetti sauce, we always put spaghetti in there. Once in a blue moon, canned fruits and vegetables. They want you to have the basic staples, the four food groups, it wouldn't be anything thats a luxury.

KT: Now what does the food for the hungry drive stock?

SD: the food for the hungry drive is probably 25%, you know what hun, we have more than one food drive. One year the Mt. Vernon developmental center out there on Sanitarian Rd, they wanted to do something, they wanted to have their own food drive, and they brought 2 dump trucks full of food, it was probably 5,000 pounds of food. Wow! That's more than we get at Christmas and July. We have the one in Christmas, and then smaller ones throughout the year. So 25% comes from the food for the hungry drive, and 25% comes from the churches. We personally have 13 churches in our community that support us. Every month, well, they a box sitting at the back of their church that people can always donate to, and every month they bring it in here. So, we are a Christian based organization. Sometimes we'll need an item, it might be tooth-paste, toilet paper or whatever. It will go in their bulliten, and people will go home and get that stuff and bring it into church. St. Vincent, there's a lot of money in that church, and they bring up lots of food. Yesterday they brough us 200 dollars worth of food. And the last 5% we purchase ourself.

KT: You must feel a real connection to the community, and feel that a center like this really brings people together.

SD: Yes, mmm, Um, one time we had the St. Vincent, Father Thomas bring the kids down and he taught them about how there are people less fortunate then themselves. They do this every year, they have a little food drive. They all march down here with heir little foods, and I give them a little schpeal about where their food might go, and thank you very much for bringing this food. I tell them little juviniel stories they might relate to. I said we had a single mother come in, and she had four little stair step children, no father in the home, and she had work in the night and sleep during the day. The kids were hungry. So why she was trying to sleep during the day, the kids kept waking her up because they were hungry, but she had no food in the house. I told her to come on in, and we fed them lunch. We fed them Kentucky fried chicken...now Kentucky fried chicken, the chicken they don't sell, they'll put in the freezer and we go and pick it up the next morning. And the pot pies, rolls and bisquets, or cold slaw, so when the mother and little kiddies came in, I went down and got pork and beans, KFC, canned fruits, lemonade. They all sat down and giggled and laughed. And while they were eating, they were making up their grochery bags to take home. So, I told the kids their food might have gone out in one of those bags, to send out with that mother whose trying to make it, trying to work, raise her kids. Or, that food might go out to a homeless, we have many homeless in this community.

KT: I was going to ask you about that, because you tend to think of homelessness as a city problem, and its often ignored in rural areas.

SD: Last summer, for some reason, we had several people living under our city bridges. They would come up here....you have to understand, we have a hard time explaining this, but inter-church social service is an emergency service provider. Were only supposed to provide emergency service, weather it be food, clothes, their bills are threatened, so their electric or gas won't be shut off. We do have some clients who use us as their monthly food, its hard. Were only supposed to give them enough food to last for three meals a day for three days, to get them out of that bind, or that little pinch their in. Were only allowed to do that every 30 days. Now, in the summer time we up that because the kids are home. One year we did 4 days, another 5 days. Then we also threw in snack food for the kids. Sometimes we have to explain to our

clients...like we had this one client who was living under the bridge, he kept walking up here, and we would send him off with some bags of food, but he would want to come back in 4-5 days for some more food. I would say, I'm sorry, we can't keep doing this or we'd run out of food. I said we are emergency service provider, he would What were trying to do, is get more things in pop tops, canned soup, fruit, we send all the pop tops to the homeless, or motels. Sometimes we'll have a homeless come in and it'll be too cold for under the bridge, and she (Lolly) is allowed to put them up in a motel for three days. So then we can send them "transiet" food that they can open quickly, that's pop-tops, crackers, and chips and cookies and sweets.

KT: Is that under emergency financial service?

SD: Yes, she gets all different grants for different areas. And the client has to be in a certain guideline to get that money.

We also have our area Kroger and Big Bear, we get their day old bread, bakery stuff, we have somebody every day go and pick up their pies, donuts, bagels, cakes, breads etc.

KT: Do you ever run out of space?

SD: I'll show you, you want to take a break?

KT: Sure...

SD: Yes we do run out of space, but my motto is move it in, move it out because god will not replenish if we horde and save it, so just move it in move it out.

(Explains different bag sizes, from mid-Ohio,Ect.) There's a list of things we add in the kitchen..a package of hot dogs, a package of ground beef, all the breads, juices, and cereals, frozen pizzas, tea if we have it. Sometimes they'll get pop or chips if we had it, which is a nice little treat, nice little luxury. We just got this freezer, mid-Ohio food bank had gave us some extra grant money they had, toward the end of their fiscal year, so they asked if we could use a new freezer. We took the other one to our apartment on E. Vine street. One of them is transitional housing, the other they rent out for low income people. There's been some elderly women who have lived their for years.

(Go downstairs..)

Okay, this is where all the church foods are, we have volunteers who come down and stock the shelves, and when their stocked they pack the bags. This is what goes in here for 2-3 people, they'll get a can of potatoes, green beans and ramen noodles, a dinner package, everybody always gets pork and beans and hot dogs, macaroni and cheese, crackers, and an extra, (choose of the extra shelf) and a can of pasta. Than, this is my cabinet for people who drop off donations...We have a lot of things, little girls get pregnant, mom kicks them out, they have to go get an apartment, they have nothing, I come down here and try to get them set up.

This (in back) is all mid -Ohio foods, the truck pulls up here, and food slides down here. What we try to do every month, this place gets filled up, we can't order any extra because we don't have the room, but all the food goes out. Last month we did 248 food last month...that's just families, not mouths fed. Sometimes when I have time I try to go through the numbers and figure out how many mouths we've fed. Last year at this time we were feeding 178 families, its gone up to 248. I'll explain why theat went up when I go upstairs.

KT: This is amazing, and you really see who your helping in a small community like this.

SD: Well that's one part of my job a lot of other people don't get to see. I have people calling up, I'll have to tell you some of the stories when we get upstairs. I get to use the expression God works in mysterious ways, and a lot of times, somebody will call up and need this or that, and I don't have it. Well, 15 minutes later my phone will ring and somebody has that specific item to a tee to donate. So I get to put those two together and everybody is happy.

Now, these are all extras, these are called free shelves. All the clients know that their welcome tho anything on these shelves at any time.

(Back upstairs, I meet Joanie stockida, executive director of Inter-Church)

This is our executive director...Ms. Inter-Church herself, Joanie Scockida (?)

KT: Hello

JS: Are you interested in what we do down here?

KT: Yes I am, I'm doing a project with the rural life center at Kenyon looking at foodways, and I'm specifically looking at feeding the hungry in Knox county. I volunteered at the Inter-Church in Danville, and they led me to you.

JS: Wonderful. It started in 1968, with a shop of food in a sunny school classroom. It was unique for its time, ahead of its time, but we've been able to grow, open the branches in the rural settings to make our resources for accessible to people. Danville happens to be the largest client population in our branch community. Its kinda far flung, eastern Knox county is part of the Appalacian region. It been here 12 years, my predecesor was with the organization 18 years, Jean Forner? She's working at mound-builders now. We use 100 volunteers a week, and 17 part time paid staff (all inter-church branches.)

KT: That's amazing, only 17 paid staff at all the branches.

SD: Lets see, what else was I going to tell you, I could tell you a story...we had a woman call up at the front, her baby had just died of SIDS, okay, and she wanted to know if we could take the baby furnature, and as she was speaking the baby was being autopsied. So when she came back here they had everything, the baby clothes, the furnature, the high chair, the daiper pail, the pictures on the wall, everything. She didn't want to have anything that reminded her of this. So I just took it in and pretended I didn't know anything about what happened. I thanked her for everything, and told her I'm sure it will go to good use. Well, about 6 or 7 days later I had a grandmother call up, her grand daughter was pregnant for a baby, and she had kept it from her mother. She was a young girl. She had just told her mother on that Sunday, and she went into labor on that following Wednesday. So her mother only knew she was pregnant for three days before she had the baby.

KT: She never saw her mother?

SD: Yes she did, she wore baggy clothes...it happens here in this town you know. She was going to give the baby up for adoption, but after she had the baby she decided she was going to keep it,

she couldn't give it away. So the Grandma called up and says she wants to keep the baby and she doesn't have a bottle or a booty or nothin'. I said well, ma'm I have everything that baby is going to need, so why don't you guys come down here, bring a trucks. I gave that family everything they needed, I mean everything.....I love my position because I get to see things like that. I mean we do have people who try to pull things over on, so we always have to stay on our toes.

We also give out pet food vouchers. They come here for a voucher, and go the human society and they give them one month supply of pet food. We also have the clothing store, clothes encounters. Every penny we make over there comes right back here and goes out as financial aid or for food. The clients can come in every 30 days and get a clothes voucher, their entitled to 2 complete outfits, from the skin out.

The new thing I wanted to tell you about..we applied for some grant money. Its through the PRC, which is Prevention, Retention, and Contingency. That's where if there's a family, they have to have a child under the age of 18 int the home. They asked us where we needed the money most, and I said taxables, toilet paper, shampoo, razors, shaving cream, deodorant, etc. They worked it out, families with one child will get three vouchers, and each voucher is worth \$20. A family of 4 gets for 4 vouchers, and up. You can only get them every three months. Word spreads fast, its almost like a \$20, any taxable items. If we get rid of that money quickly, Department of Human Services might be able to apply for some more. (133) side a