



## **“In the spirit of giving”**

By Lori McKean

Life is fragile. When our small town of Cannon Beach, Oregon was hit by sustained hurricane force winds of over 145 miles-per-hour in the winter of 2007, the town was cut off from the outside world for over six days. Our town, and those surrounding us, were left without electricity and any means of communication, due to downed trees and power lines. Unless they had a chain saw, people were unable to leave town, and most couldn't drive to work or even call to talk with fellow employees. Communication with anyone outside Cannon Beach (by cell and home phones) was almost non-existent. With communication towers down, there was no television and radio was limited to just two stations -- if you were lucky to have a battery operated radio.

It was amazing to see how, during this time of crisis, Martin Hospitality employees banded together to care for our families, friends and guests at our hotels and restaurants. Realizing the scope of this emergency, employees at Martin Hospitality immediately focused on how to provide food and shelter for their own families and then stretched their limits to also care for guests at the company's hotels and restaurants. In addition to this, they pushed their limits even further to help care for the entire community.

The Community Presbyterian Church in Cannon Beach, led by Pastor David Robinson, was the first shelter to open in Clatsop County. Outside, the church, generators were growling and the parking lot was lined with cars. Inside the Fellowship Hall, folks gathered around communal candlelit tables.

On the first night, church volunteer Marlene Laws and the Pastor's wife, Trina, cooked the shelter's first meal, filling two crock-pots with homemade soup. Gehrett Billinger, chef for Martin Hospitality, which includes The Wayfarer Restaurant & Lounge, The Stephanie Inn, and The Lumberyard Rotisserie & Grill, says that when he and his staff were finally able to meet, they had to determine what to do with all the food that might spoil. They decided to donate it to the church shelter. "At first, we were simply taking food over to the church," says Gehrett, "but then we realized they really needed help." Gehrett quickly recruited fellow chefs Will Leroux, Josh Archibald and Lisa Grillone from the Wayfarer, and Geoff Gunn from the Lumberyard, who worked hand-in-hand with volunteers. The chefs brought in the company's catering equipment and made sure everyone kept up with health and sanitary codes.

Within a few days, when food from the company's restaurants began to run low, Gehrett began coordinating with other local restaurants, calling to see who could donate food to make sure they were covered for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Pastor Robinson described the event as "a food extravaganza." "Martin Hospitality was

bringing in food for 150 people for every meal," he says. "We had some wonderful dishes, like prime rib with wild mushrooms, steamed clams, salmon and halibut. I recall Halibut Steverino (one of the Wayfarer's signature dishes) coming through the door one night."

"It was a very moving experience," says Gehrett of Martin Hospitality, "a lot of times when we arrived with food, people would start clapping. It was so great to feel all the warmth and to see so many people caring for each other."

Josh Archibald, sous chef for the company's Wayfarer Restaurant, admits he was frightened to leave his family (a wife and two young boys) behind in Hammond and his parents in Gearhart. "I was also really worried about our restaurant." When he woke at 5 a.m. after the storm hit, and realized there was no phone service and no other means of communication, he rushed south to Cannon Beach, hoping to beat the flood tides. "I couldn't sit at home; I'm not that type of person – I was worried about our restaurant." Due to downed trees and power lines, Hwy 101 from Seaside to Cannon Beach was closed to nearly all vehicles. Josh waited out the tide and finally made it through. "

By lantern light, Josh and fellow employees quickly emptied everything from the restaurant's refrigerators and transferred them to an outside walk-in refrigerator that was powered by a generator and could keep food cold. "We learned how to prepare from last year's storm," he recalls. The restaurant was running off just one generator and within a few days, no exhaust hoods were working, the kitchen was dark and smoky and dishes all had to be hand washed. "We were so lucky," he recalls. "Lots of people from the community kept showing up to offer their support. People would just pop by to see how they could help."

When Josh Archibald and the other Martin Hospitality employees heard that people at the church shelter were hungry, Archibald says, "There was never any question of what we would do. We had the talent; we had the products and the equipment to help out. Suddenly we switched from feeding friends, to feeding 200 people." "I've never been applauded, but when we first showed up with food, we got a standing ovation." He adds, "Helping others was simply second nature to the upper management of Martin Hospitality, especially for Ryan and Stephanie Snyder."

During the chaos, the Wayfarer was anticipating a holiday catering job in the Surfsand Ballroom for a loyal party of 100 people. Josh and his team were determined to make it work. "Our customers were the nicest people and they really understood what we had been through." "They were ecstatic with the food," he adds. "We also decided to order product from Portland and get the Wayfarer up and running by Saturday morning."

Josh contacted the restaurant's suppliers in Portland, including Sysco and FSA, who said they were "lined up and ready to roll." "It's a good thing to have purveyors on your side," he says. The Wayfarer crew started work at 5 a.m. on Saturday morning. After prepping everything for the catering job, they open the restaurant at 11 a.m. and had a full menu by noon.

At the company's Stephanie Inn, Chef Crystal Corbin recalls that they did not have a generator until about 4 days into the storm, but the Inn had gas ovens and stoves. They kept serving food throughout the storm, boiling hot water for coffee, and making sure that the treasured cookie jar was always filled for guests. She and sous chef Aaron Bedard started serving breakfast, lunch and dinner for anyone who stopped by. "In a crisis," she says, "people need their comfort food." Spaghetti, meat loaf and potatoes, were all on the menu. "All of the company's managers met here on a daily basis," she says. "We tried to anticipate our guest's needs and we all came together as a team."

Aaron Bedard, sous chef for The Stephanie Inn was at home near the RV Park in Cannon Beach when the storm hit. "There were so many trees down that it was very difficult to get to work," he recalls. When he finally arrived

Aaron rode out the storm at The Stephanie Inn to help care for their customers and others in need. "Basically, we were shooting from the hip," he says, using whatever products we had."

"We served breakfast, lunch and dinner for guests at the Stephanie Inn and also for locals and guests and staff at the Ocean Lodge. When we ran out of products, the Wayfarer and Lumberyard started bringing us food. We also had hot water during the storm, so we made a deal with the Ocean Lodge next door to trade showers for food." In retrospect, Aaron says "It was great to see the community pulling together. We just pray that it never happens again!"

Chef Geoff Gunn of the company's Lumberyard Rotisserie & Grill was at work at the Lumberyard when the storm hit. "When the power went out, we weren't totally worried, we figured it would be like last year, when the power was out for a few days," he recalls. Geoff made it home to Astoria that evening, while the storm continued to rage. "The power was out at our house, so we road out the storm through the night, listening to news on the radio. The newscaster said that Highway 101 was completely shut down. We could not even call out of the area, so I waited out another day and finally we heard that the highway was cleared." When Geoff finally made it to work, he recalls that it was "completely dark and cold," so he headed over to the Wayfarer, where they were already making breakfast for people at the church shelter. Geoff jumped in to help. At the shelter, he says, "people were applauding for food – they were so grateful."

With the Lumberyard shut down, Geoff filled his truck with perishable food and distributed it to the Wayfarer and the Stephanie Inn. "The Stephanie had a generator and had gas power to their stoves, so they could still cook. "During that storm, Aaron Bedard did an amazing job. He was there three days strait, cooking three meals a day," says Geoff. "Gehrett also did an awesome job. He was the liasan for the shelter and all of the Martin Hospitality restaurants and other local businesses."

At his home in Astoria, Geoff's family was taking care of an elderly neighbor. They lost all their food in refrigerators and freezers. Geoff

says that on his way back from Portland, Martin Hospitality President, Ryan Snyder, remembered that Geoff's family lived in Tillamook, a county that was especially hard hit. Snyder drove miles out of his way, just to make sure that Geoff's family was alright. "Of course we didn't get the message until 5 days later, because the phones were out," recalls Geoff. Geoff had been working in Cannon Beach when the storm hit. When he was finally able to drive home to Astoria, he says, " I drove the whole way with my mouth open --aghast at the destruction. Sheet metal was wrapped around trees and telephone poles. In the Safeway parking lot, huge portions of aluminum ducting and glass and blown into the parking lot. It was something like we saw on TV with Katrina or a tornado in the Midwest, but not something you expect to see in your own neighborhood. It was like a horror movie."

"In the end," says Gunn, "the one thing that Martin Hospitality is known for is taking care of the community. It was all about keeping people fed and in good spirits – letting them know that we care. At Martin Hospitality we all feel the same, and when we saw a need, we came together to help. At the time of the crisis, we were not concerned about the cost of products that we were giving away, or about volunteering our time; our goal was to help the people -- that's what we care about."

"We never imagined that the power would be out for six days," says Chad Sweet, of the Surfsand Resort (who also works as a volunteer fireman for the Gearhart Fire District). "We had one generator working and we were prepared for a one-day emergency," but we were not prepared for that type of devastation – we never imagined it." Wooden shutters that buckle down below the sand were anchored in place. With 40 foot swells predicted and over 165 mile per hour winds, it was time to "batten-down-the hatches."

Chad, who lives in the Surf Pines community of Gearhart had trouble getting out of his own community to go to work at the Surfsand Resort in Cannon Beach. "I had to saw my way out of the neighborhood," he recalls. "The storm lasted for three days and I got really good at chain saws."

The next morning, when he was leaving his house, a neighbor's car was pinned by trees that had fallen on each end of her car. After using his chain saw to free her car, Chad made it to work at the Surfsand. "I was amazed that a lot of our guests felt secure here," he says. "The management really pulled together. Many people who should have stayed home came to work. Much to our surprise, our staff kept coming in. Our front desk was covered 24/7. "

Chad, with his experience in fire fighting, was poised to organize staff. "We had so many people coming in to volunteer, with so much creativity and so much experience, that we decided it was time to sit down as a group and form a strategic plan – it was a great team building experience for everyone."

"Ryan Snyder (President of Martin Hospitality) was the key player," says Chad. "He was there making sure that the staff was all cared for. He took care of his family by driving them to Portland and putting them up in a hotel."

Then he purchased generators for our businesses and drove back to Cannon Beach. Ryan made himself available for everything that anyone needed."

When Ryan returned to Cannon Beach, his house was cold and dark, so he called Cynthia Elliot at the Surfsand. "She was the ultimate host," says Ryan. "She was constantly taking care of the people around her. When I moved into the Surfsand, where we at least had the warmth of a gas fireplace, I walked into my room. Cythina had candles burning and the fireplace was on. It felt so cozy and warm."

As a group, according to Sweet, Martin Hospitality arranged the businesses according to ultimate priorities. Supplies, generators, fuel? Who needs rooms? What to do with people who had no place to stay? Food? Money (it was right before Christmas and payroll was due, but no banks or ATMs were working). These were a few of the basic questions.

"This catastrophe brought out the camaraderie within our company," says Sweet. "We tried to set up communication as best we could," Fortunately, as a volunteer fireman, Sweet could call his Fire Chief in Gearhart to retrieve some information. "Most of the time," he says, we spent dispelling rumors about when communication would be restored."

"Once people within the company had direction – everything just clicked," says Sweet. "It's hard to be inspired in times like this, but everybody had a smile on their face. Everybody who turned out chose to become part of something very special."

Rick Lantz, the Assistant Manager for the Stephanie Inn, is also a volunteer fireman for the Gearhart Fire District. He was at home in Seaside when the storm hit. "I knew that something was coming in," he recalls. I left one maintenance person on staff and I went to check the tides and wind conditions. We saw that far larger than normal waves and wind were predicted, so Sharon Major (General Manager of The Stephanie Inn) and Dave Norstedt (Vice President of Operations for Martin Hospitality), made the call to board up the whole front of the Inn."

Like everyone within the company, Rick first made sure that his family was safe, then he headed straight to work. "With a hotel, you have an extended family that you need to care for," he says.

"Carrying huge sheets of plywood in 145 mph winds is extremely difficult," he recalls, "but we got the Stephanie boarded up." "The power outage was our biggest concern, he says." Each day the company managers met at the Stephanie Inn library to make a game plan. Ryan Snyder, Dave Norstedt, Sharon Major, and others met every day to discuss our priorities -- who needed what and when. It was amazing to see how a large company could come together in a time of crisis. Good people can do good things!"

"This was a huge testament to the whole community, from Astoria, south to Tillamook County, as to how we take care of each other," says Rick. Even our bellman and house keepers came down on their days off to help out. It's a terrible thing to have a tragedy like this, but it is beautiful to see how it pulls us all together. "

As a former teacher, accountant Barb Knop relied on her training in management crisis when the storm hit. "My perspective of storm management changed dramatically after the hurricane," she says. When the power was still out after three days, Barb took a drive to see what was going on and she ran in Ryan Snyder, President of Martin Hospitality.

"I knew that we needed to make payroll," she recalls, but with the power out for days, my hands were so cold that I couldn't even import information into the computer." It was just before Christmas and payroll was due, so Barb and her supervisor, CFO Ron Logan, went to extra lengths to make sure that Martin Hospitality employees received their checks. After Ryan returned from Portland with a generator, Barb worked long hours at her computer, keeping her office window opened to prevent gas fumes from flooding the room. Her supervisor, Ron Logan then drove to Manzanita, where cell service was available, to transfer the payroll checks by phone. Meanwhile, Barb, who had formerly worked summers at a country club between Warrenton and Seaside, volunteered to wash the hotel's linens. "During the storm," she says, "we had a lot of time to chat in the dark." "It was a great time to get to know our fellow employees on a different level and to see their generosity and care. I was very impressed by how everyone worked together."

"Ryan won't talk about this," says Abbie Hart, Marketing Manager for Martin Hospitality, "but he and Stephanie do amazing things for all of their employees. They don't just take care of their employees – they take care of their employees' families." With their dedication and generosity, Ryan and Stephanie Snyder carry on the spirit of Stephanie's late father, Steve Martin. "Once I knew that my family was safe," he says, "I knew that I had to get back to Cannon Beach and take care of our people."