

Learning from Each Other

Riverton Park United Methodist Church in Tukwila is a FAN advocating faith community and neighborhood service hub for their community. On a day this spring, cars for the food bank were lined up along the long driveway from the church out to the street. The *Raise the Wage Tukwila* campaign has an office in the church and folks were out gathering signatures at the food line. Rev. Jan Bolerjack said the bank serves about 1,200 families each week.

Tukwila is home to many immigrants; at one time the school district was the most diverse in the nation, comprised of people who speak more than fifty languages according to Rev. Jan. City residents face growing rents and scarcity of affordable housing, as Seattle pushes south, and the minimum wage is \$14.50, lower than in Seattle or SeaTac.

Riverton Park UMC is responding with both direct services and advocacy. Rev. Jan offered a tour, starting with resident dog Dakota, who hangs out in the social room available for tent and vehicle residents. These folks without homes have been invited to stay in the parking lot or camp on a grassy area. Tents will soon be exchanged for 20 Tiny Homes with supportive case management, in partnership with the Low Income Housing Institute. Last year the church sold some of its land to the Homestead Land Trust, which will soon start building 18 cottage homes there also; households can purchase a home for below market rate while the trust retains the land. Three small homes on the property are also rented out at 1/3 of household income so that people can build credit.

A recent fire displaced about 30 people in Tukwila, so two-thirds of the sanctuary became a home for donations of clothing and household goods; it continues to serve more recent fire victims as well as new refugees as they set up their homes. An equipped music room has become the site of free music lessons for children who otherwise might not have access to explore their musical talents.

Church ministries have been able to cultivate relationships with the police, fire fighters, and schools. As a result, during the pandemic Riverton UMC was chosen to allocate government money to prevent evictions and provide eviction counseling. Rev. Jan hired 15 case managers who allocated \$8 million.

What an inspiration for ways we can show love for our neighbors! Rev. Jan and church members also combine their direct experiences with advocacy to change policies and systems, at the local and state levels. If you have a story to tell from your faith community, or would like a visit from FAN's Partnership Coordinator, Elizabeth Dickinson, please [email](#) or call us 206-625-9790!