

# Local charity aids locals

## WCCAO's Westco to help needy

A large number of people have joined forces to assist those in particular need in the communities of Cornelius, Forest Grove, Gaston, Banks, Gales Creek and other small communities in the western end of Washington County.

This effort is designed to supplement all of the other methods of assistance available to people with temporary problems in their lives. The Westco Emergency Fund is designed to give assistance after all other resources have been utilized.

It is administered by the Washington County Community Action Organization (WCCAO), but is supported by churches, businesses, civic clubs, other agencies and individual residents of the area.

"The goal of the Westco Emergency Fund is to provide for emergency needs while promoting self sufficiency," said Dan Jamsa of WCCAO.

The fund can provide grants of up to \$100 to help people in this area who are facing a crisis that may affect their housing, health or safety.

It is designed to prevent the problems associated with the previous unorganized ways of dealing with these types of needs. Previously, people would have to inquire at various agencies or churches for their particular needs. And none of the

agencies or churches were able to know if what they were offering was meeting the needs.

Anyone in need of assistance should go to WCCAO and learn of all sources of assistance for their particular needs. Then, after all sources have been contacted, and if needs still exist, the Westco Emergency Fund may make up the difference. Westco is a last resort method of meeting needs.

"We've got a database and a reporting system," said Judy Schilling of WCCAO. "We have a way to keep track of who's giving what, and the churches don't have to worry about whether they are giving the right kind or amount of help.

"We're combining our (WCCAO) expertise in social services and our system with their (churches and organizations) ability to raise funds and get people involved."

And Westco couldn't have come at a better time, according to Schilling.

"There's a growing need in the community," she said. "More and more people need help, and this is a better way to do it. It's really great that everyone is able to come together and share what they have to create something that's going to be the best way to serve people."

Much of the assistance is anticipated to help people with

needs that affect housing or employment, according to Barbara Chapman of the Forest Grove St. Vincent de Paul Society.

"A lot of it will probably go for rent assistance or utilities or transportation or medical expenses," she said. "We don't have as much of a need for food, because of programs already in place, but mainly for money."

Chapman said in its first year Westco expects to collect about \$12,000, and be able to distribute an average of \$1,000 a month. Already, the fund balance is about \$6,000 and the rest may be received within a few months.

Groups or individuals may send donations to WCCAO, 451 S. First St., Suite 700, Hillsboro 97123.

For more information, call Jamsa at 648-6646.