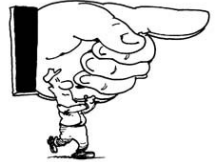


It's Our Anniversary!

A Decade of Birch Gleaning, Inc.

September 2002

Did you always know what you wanted to do when you grew up? Some have an inkling, some have a strong motivation, others haven't a clue. We (Barry and Suz) were cruising along in an entirely different direction when we were slowly and methodically redirected. When God speaks, we try to be good listeners! Most of you have read the story of the "House of David" which details how this all began. It has been amazing for us to sit and remember the process of arriving in our present position: ten years of gleaning!



Where We've Been...

Birch Gleaning began in September 1992 as a neighborly effort to help a few friends through some difficult times. At the onset, the squished bread we picked up looked mighty good to those families who struggled. Each additional gift of a donation we received was exciting. Both of us were working at different jobs, and we maneuvered those pickups around our work schedules. The front porch shrank smaller and smaller as the job grew bigger and bigger. Leann Rowlett would come over late at night and help bag bulk chili from Stagg's Chili or assist in equally unique and challenging tasks. With God's mighty provision we were able to purchase our home, and when we moved we brought about 50 gleaning families with us. We began to schedule for pickups. Our families showed up three days a week with their own boxes and lined up in our driveway. Sometimes it was comical to see; people with boxes over their heads

trying to avoid the ever-present rain and occasional snow. Our neighbors graciously put up with poor parking, increased traffic and people walking on their lawns. We remember being in the garage in the dead of winter when the thermometer showed 23 degrees. Our volunteers at that time were true and faithful; at the end of the gleaning hours (3:30 to 5:30) we would load up whatever was left in one of our vans ("Ugly" or "Vanna White and Blue"), or in Andy Hawksworth's (our live-in student) beater pickup truck (the "Chick Magnet"), and haul it over to Portland Christian Elementary School around the corner. They had given us permission to use their dumpsters if we were careful not to overload them. We, usually Andy, Barry or

Wayne Tengwall, would first jump on their dumpsters to push them down, then load our trash on top (usually in the pouring rain), then Andy would do the 'gleaner jump' again. We'd go back and sweep and mop our 400 square foot garage, then start dinner. It was an interesting time; our

son Jonah came home from school and fought through the garage to get to his bedroom downstairs. A myriad of folks wandered through our house to use the bathrooms. We had a one-yard dumpster in our driveway. Three years later, the growth in donations and responsibility was overwhelming. With the encouragement of our friend and insurance man, Egbert Kunrath, we formed a board of directors and applied for our non-profit status 501(c)3. We prayed for a real warehouse, and finally were blessed with the opportunity to move into a 2900 square foot building. It was bought with Birch Gleaning in mind, purchased by dear friends who supported our developing vision. We moved with about 175 families into an old auto-



repair shop that had been scraped and painted by many of those families. It was a castle! It actually had a covered area (previously the auto body painting area) where people could wait to glean - and eventually had a real door so we could keep out the weather. We could set up some shelving to be more organized, and had a back storeroom to sort and breakdown different foods. Having one sink in the whole building was not an impossible situation, although offered different challenges. The toilet stuck out from the wall in the middle of the main gleaning area, and was just that - a walled-in toilet. We all knew if people washed their hands when they were done, because the sink was outside in the main gleaning area. And even if the drain tiles underneath the back storeroom had a problem, we kept MOST of our product on pallets so when it flooded, as it was wont to do, hardly anything got wet. We were excited to have some parking, although it was a graveled area which almost always became the Birch Gleaning Pond in the winter. Our gleaners paid \$10 per family per month to cover the overhead.



We loved it ... and knew within six months it would never be big enough. Our donations were growing and more and more people had a need. Bear and I were spending much more time doing gleaning, and his own business of selling office furniture was suffering because of it. Our board members went on a mission to find another warehouse, and Jim Kelley found the perfect spot in the Gateway area. An older building that had housed a ping-pong club was connected to the Gateway Bowling Alley, now being used as a bingo parlor. Once again our volunteers came through, scraping, painting, cleaning. Stan and Harriet Carpenter epoxied all the cracks in the floor to keep the ants out. We totally redid the bathrooms, converting one into a Clean Room with a sink and counter space to break down bulk foods. We were so excited to have a roll-up door where we could unload Vanna inside the building instead of getting soaked each time. But the door was too short; Vanna would not fit. We considered all options, including letting the air out of the tires each time we needed to unload. We prayed for answers. On a whim, before we moved in, Bear drove Vanna over and began to back in the roll-up door to see how far he could get. A painter inside stared open-mouthed as miraculously Vanna slid in all the way and came to a stop. Apparently the slight downgrade in front of the door allowed the conversion van to move its highest spot into the building before the rest of the van. Amazing! We laughed and laughed at God's creativity. That roll-up door allowed us for the first time to have a covered place for people to load their cars, and we developed a crew of "loaders"... gracious men who got carts ready and loaded groceries. Like Safeway, but better! By this time, Bear had been voted a salary by the board, and was finally able to relinquish his own business. It was a scary step for us. I had stopped doing any outside work other than gleaning when we moved into our house. Now we were going to be completely dependent on gleaning for our income. Our monthly gleaning dues for the families had increased to \$20 per month to support the overhead and upkeep, and now to support us. We enjoyed this warehouse space tremendously, but within a year and a half the bingo parlor had gone out of business, and we "borrowed" space from the building next door for storage. The building was for sale, and we knew it wouldn't be available forever. Soon we had also taken over the office space next door, filling it with a used clothing area and the recent acquisition of Danner Boots. All in all, we were using about 9,000 square feet. Our landlord was



extremely gracious, and never charged us a penny extra. The board met, and once again the search was on - we needed more room! This search was frustrating, but eventually we found a brand new industrial space close to Gresham. With the assistance of Steve Allen, a board member involved in construction, we took on the job of doing the greatest majority of building a tenant improvement area, hoping to avoid paying long-term "improved space" rates. The warehouse had nothing in it; not a light bulb or electrical hookup, nor toilet facilities. And again - our volunteers jumped in to help. Over a period of six months

we built the current waiting room, clean room, store room, two bathrooms and mezzanine. It was what seemed like an impossible project. Sam Harding came in and did the major electrical work, donating many hours of his labor for our benefit. Kim Kortz painted an incredible 50' long mural on the waiting room wall (and has since added another beautiful picture in the distribution area). The City of Gresham seemed to counter us at every turn, and many days we felt discouraged. We had to move both toilets $\frac{1}{2}$ " because they didn't meet code. The front glass door had to be moved further down the glassed area fronting the building. But at the end of February 2000 Birch Gleaning moved again. Over 100 people assisted in the major move to our new space of 11,250 square feet (plus 2,000 upstairs in the mezzanine). We moved with 400 active families (paying \$30 per month) and no debt - over \$60,000 had been paid in full to cover all costs of construction. Our proposed goal was to reach 500 families and see where we stood.

Where We Are Now...

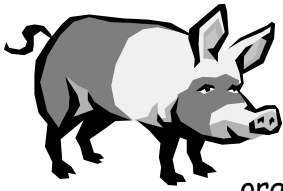
In the two years Birch Gleaning has occupied this lovely warehouse we have added 3-level pallet racking, and a few months ago, cut a hole in the wall to access the space next door (7,500 square feet). We're able to use this space for additional storage, staging, and utilizing two more docks to load and unload vehicles picking up product from us. Carton Services gave us a tremendous 20' dock high truck (the BAmobile -BirchAreaTransport). We bought an additional 14' cube van (VanGo) and retired our weary Vanna White and Blue. We were gifted with a high-reach forklift from Raymond Company which allows full use of the pallet racking.



In April of 2002 our projected goal of 500 families was reached. In response to a gleaner survey we did in January, some changes were made to operate more efficiently. The biggest complaint was in regards to the parking; we changed our hours, allowing the parking to be more spread out. We added directional arrows to our gleaning area to keep the traffic flowing. We increased our gleaning time to 35 minutes. In June 2002 we purchased a 40 foot refrigerated trailer and placed it on the back dock to allow extra much-needed cold storage. Twice a year we offer a "Master Your Money" class, a six-week video series facilitated by three of our board members involved in the financial community. A March "Count the Value" showed that our families receive an average value of almost \$500 monthly. Overall our gleaners seemed to be happy and grateful for the service provided and the manner in which it is done. (We have GREAT volunteers!) We gratefully acknowledge the regular and amazing work done by our primo volunteer, Jan Wells, who serves on our board and coordinates volunteer efforts in the warehouse three days a week. The community and teamwork effort put forth has bound us together in a unique friendship as we have laughed, cried and prayed with one another. In September of 2000 all our gleaners agonized together through the death of our fellow board member, volunteer and beloved friend, Jim Kelley. The "family" attitude that pervades the organization has been heartwarming and an encouragement to all of us.



Although for a few months we paid a part time warehouseman for help, we are consistently operating with one paid employee, Barry. Over 250 active volunteers, almost exclusively gleaners, work an average of 1900 hours per month. Our board discussed our budget, and due to utility and gas costs, in March 2002 the monthly dues were increased to \$35. We continue to operate in the black, being self-



supporting except for periodic unsolicited monetary gifts that help us to purchase the additional equipment needed. Our product donations have been generous, which in the past year has allowed us to share with about 25 different agencies and non-profit groups with admirable goals. They have established weekly times for the organizations to come and get some of our abundance. Other larger agencies are on-call to receive pallets of product that exceed our usage abilities. We have a pig man on Monday, a chicken man on Wednesday, and a cow man on Friday, who all pick up unusable fresh product to feed their animals, avoiding more waste and higher trash bills. Our standards are set high as far as cleanliness (we still mop the entire warehouse three times a week) and integrity, with God as our best example. All in all, things are going well and we are privileged and very thankful.

Where We're Going...

Birch Gleaning membership grows through a referral system that pre-screens potential gleaners before joining. This "waiting list" consistently stays at about 100 families. The monthly attrition rate of 15-20 families is quickly replaced with those waiting families after an average of about 5 months on the list. As the economy struggles, with layoffs and cutbacks rampant, the needs continue to grow around us. Our desire is to increase our abilities to serve these additional families without losing the integrity of the program itself. The Board's vision is to eventually own our own building, with a projected space of 25,000 square feet. Bear has done a layout, and that amount of space is none-too-small to serve our families in an organized and efficient manner. Once again, this seems impossible... but God has proven that He is in control of Birch Gleaning, and will take us where He wants us to go. The Board is carefully and methodically taking the steps to pursue that vision, and in June 2002 we hired a grant writer to help us accomplish that goal. Trish Trout of CIRCA is beginning the somewhat overwhelming process of getting the information together to apply for a variety of grants that will fund a new home for this organization. The projected monetary amount could be in excess of \$2.5 million, and could take years. Because our focus has always been to remain debt-free and financially responsible, the ideal situation would be to gain enough grants to either purchase or build a new warehouse in this general vicinity and have it paid off immediately. This would allow our monthly gleaner dues to stay low and pay the operating costs without paying rent; even to hire a second full time warehouse manager and perhaps offer additional services. Birch Gleaning is distinctive and appealing in that we have always been self-sustaining. We've never had to campaign to meet our operating expenses. This self-supporting quality is rare and very attractive to those foundations and organizations that provide the grants and trusts.



This next step will take time, but at the moment, ten years into it, Birch Gleaning is operating well, and prospering. We won't be rushing into anything. God never asks us to do anything in a hurry except come to Him with our cares, but He has been faithful, and we'll follow His leading. We are blessed and fortunate people.



Suz and Bear, For the Board of Directors