

# Housing and the Three Grandmas good deeds



By **Bill Graves, The Oregonian**

**Follow on Twitter**

on November 17, 2009 at 2:41 PM, updated November 21, 2009 at 6:36 PM



Ross William Hamilton/The Oregonian

Reach Community Development gave Yvonne McCollister, 60, an apartment after she lost her job. The "Three Grandmas" who volunteer for Reach gave her a walker -- and enough mobility to earn money and independence as weekend monitor of her apartment tower, Station Place Tower. (She's pictured on a portable backdrop used to make portraits of her and some other Season of Sharing subjects.)

Yvonne McCollister had exhausted her unemployment benefits and her savings were down to her final rent payment when Reach Community Development came to her rescue.

"I came that close to becoming a street bag lady," said McCollister, 60, showing a tiny gap between her finger and thumb.

Then she saw an ad for Station Place Tower, Reach's 176-unit building in Northwest Portland.

McCollister got on the wait list and, after four or five months, got a studio apartment in Station Place in May 2006.

But she still had no income after losing her Portland insurance agent job. She moved into her studio with only a bed and computer, and no money for necessities and toiletries such as shampoo.

Then her left knee began giving out, causing her to repeatedly fall. That was when the Three Grandmas stepped up.

The Portland women -- Linda Hughes, 59, a compliance officer for Reach; Joyce Baldwin, 71; and Jeanne Le Jeune, 63 -- have been informally helping Reach tenants like McCollister since 2005. Last December, the Reach board formalized that assistance approving the Three Grandmas Fund.

"Our motto is, 'Give help and hope,'" Le Jeune says.

## Wishes

Reach Community  
Developments Three  
Grandmas Fund

- 14a. Personal hygiene items: \$10
- 14b. Grocery cards: \$10
- 14c. Kitchen wares: \$10
- 14d. Bedding: \$15
- 14e. TriMet passes: \$15

She and the other two grandmas donate about \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year to the fund. That does not stretch far among Reach's 1,500 tenants.

Reach operates on a \$7 million budget to manage about 80 buildings and homes. More than 70 percent of its money comes as rent from its tenants. It also draws donations, grants and leases from the city of Portland, TriMet and the Portland Development Commission.

The agency gives its residents financial classes and workshops, but it relies on the Three Grandmas Fund to help them with personal needs.

During Christmas week two years ago, the grandmas gave McCollister a walker, shopping cart, soap, pillows, sheets, blankets, coffeepot, toaster, binoculars and other practical gifts.

The walker gave McCollister enough mobility to take over as weekend monitor of Station Tower, earning her a small salary and more independence.

"Almost every day I use something I got from the Three Grandmas," McCollister says, "and I thank God every day for them."

---

Registration on or use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)

© 2018 Oregon Live LLC. All rights reserved ([About Us](#)).

The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of Oregon Live LLC.

**Community Rules** apply to all content you upload or otherwise submit to this site.

[▶ Ad Choices](#)

