

# More Oregon students homeless than last year

SALEM (AP) — More students in Oregon are homeless than the number tallied last year, a disturbing trend that has now gone on for three years, state education officials said last week.

The Department of Education said 21,340 students, or 3.7 percent of the K-12 population in public schools, don't have a fixed and adequate nighttime residence.

Reacting to the report, the Stable Homes for Oregon Families Coalition urged the Legislature to protect tenants at risk of losing their homes because of eviction and severe rent increases.

The number of homeless students increased by more than 1,100 from the previous year, the new report said.

Lincoln County Commissioner Bill Hall said rural communities have been hit hard, with nearly 1 in 7 students experiencing homelessness for part of the 2015-16 school year in his county.

"Our children should be thinking about their homework and playtime, and not worrying about where they will sleep at night," Hall said on Facebook. "We can do more to protect kids and

families from experiencing homelessness in Oregon."

State law allows landlords to evict families at any time without stating a reason and prohibits local governments from enacting rent stabilization measures, the Stable Homes for Oregon Families Coalition said. The United States Conference of Mayors has identified eviction as a leading cause of homelessness, especially for families with children, the coalition said.

The instability that homelessness causes often leads to school absences and falling behind, Marti Heard, homeless program liaison for Portland Public Schools, was quoted as saying by the coalition. That can jeopardize future college or career success, Heard said.

In some districts, 20 percent or more of their students count as homeless by the federal definition, the education department said. Unemployment and a lack of family-wage jobs and affordable housing in rural areas have contributed to the rise, it said.

# Commentary... Bull by Bull

By Judy Bull  
Guest Columnist

• The other night I walked down to get the mail in the dark. At least twice a day for 30 years I've walked down to get said mail and paper, sometimes in the dark. It never fails: walking in the dark is always a gift filled with night smells and sounds, welcoming light from the neighbor's window a ways off, and a bazillion stars. It is never scary.

• I have an antique carriage that has covered a lot of ground in the last 35 years, including all the Central Oregon parades and giving more than one Santa Claus a ride in the Sisters Christmas Parades. A while back a friend and I were talking about carriages and driving horses. He said it had always been his dream to refurbish an antique carriage, though he wondered if it was ever going to happen since he was now into his 70s. Since Irish, my best driving horse, died many years ago, my carriage has been sitting in the barn gathering only time and dust. The instant my friend began sharing his dream, I knew I

would give him my carriage. Dreams do come true.

• Just as I can tell when it's rodeo weekend by the litter on Cloverdale Road, I can also tell what season it is (water bottles = summer), and what holiday has just been celebrated (candy wrappers = Halloween). So, too, I can always tell when haying season is over by all the colorful tag-ends of baling twine laying along the road. It used to be there were only orange-colored ones, but now there are blue and purple and yellow and green striped ones, too. Of course nothing will ever take the place of balin' wire.

• Living in a log house means never having a truly clean house, dust-wise. While Ms. Agnes was waiting to move into their new house, she gave piano lessons in my home every Thursday. One Thursday morning I swear I heard Pepper think, "It must be Thursday. Mama's dusting." Over time I have decided that my favorite view windows are the only windows I really need to keep really clean.

• If ever there was a smell that brings back my childhood, it's the familiar, friendly smell of my crayons when I open the old tin box which holds all those colorful, worn bits of wax. I have not taken a liking to the adult coloring books with their intricate shapes and patterns that are all the rage, but rather I still prefer larger, less complicated subjects such as trees and mountains, horses and cowboys. Still, the best part of coloring, though, is opening up that sweet-smelling box.

• Yet another childhood memory comes alive when I play jacks. My wonderful friend, Sharon Anglea, and I used to play jacks on my dining room table — because we discovered the floor was just too far to go.



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