



SHELTER: COVID-19 restrictions create hurdles

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life-threatening lows. The shelter uses space in a building separate from the church for the shelter and food bank.

The current shelter committee has recently held several meetings to discuss possible options for sheltering during extreme conditions. By comparison to previous years, last winter was relatively mild, so a number of the unhoused showed up for dinner and socializing, but went back to their tents, cars, RVs and campsites for the night. Providing meals is impacted by the same COVID-19 concerns as offering shelter. There may be a way to provide “to-go” dinners.

A number of possible options are currently being investigated, as well as back-up plans for life-threatening temperatures. The first winter the shelter was in place — two weeks before it opened its doors — a local man who worked in Sisters and was homeless, froze to death sleeping in his car.

There have been discussions about securing an unoccupied house to provide transitional housing for a few people who are working their way out of homelessness. Last winter, several people/families were in trailers at the Bend-Sisters Garden RV Park, with all or part of their rent paid by the shelter committee. They may have funds available to provide help in that way. The RV park located in town on Highway

20, across from the FivePine campus, has a year-and-a-half waiting list.

Besides COVID-19, another problem has arisen this year. Shepherd’s House, which provides services for the unhoused in Bend, is also running the Redmond shelter, and has been asked to do the same, if a location can be found, for the Bend shelter that was housed at the sheriff’s office last year. Since the Sisters shelter opened, Shepherd’s House has offered much needed assistance, including serving as the 501(c)(3) under whose umbrella the Sisters facility was able to accept much needed donations of money and materials. With the added work generated by the Bend and Redmond shelters, they can no longer offer that relationship to Sisters.

Without Shepherd’s House, the Sisters shelter needs to find a local non-profit who could fill that role, or they would need to apply for their own 501(c)(3) status, which takes time and money and the services of an attorney. Possible local partnerships are being explored

by the shelter committee. They are also investigating shelter programs in other communities for ideas.

Shelter is only one need faced by those without a home. Some medical care has been donated by local physicians in the past. Donations of warm clothing and camping supplies are always needed and can be dropped off at the Habitat ReStore at 254 W. Adams Ave. for camping supplies and the Habitat Thrift Store at 211 E. Adams Ave. for warm clothing.

For anyone interested in serving on the shelter committee, or who has ideas for addressing the present situation, or has questions, contact Gary Eidsmoe at gary.eidsmoe@gmail.com.

WILDFIRE: Local residents should be prepared to act

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Country residents are urged to be prepared. It’s never too late to create and maintain defensible space around your property and to make sure that it is readily accessible to fire equipment. That gives firefighters a fighting chance to save your home in the event of a blaze that threatens residences.

The website www.readyforwildfire.org offers extensive tips for evacuation:

Emergency Supply Kit Checklist

- Three-day supply of non-perishable food and three gallons of water per person.
- Map marked with at least two evacuation routes.
- Prescriptions or special medications.
- Change of clothing.
- Extra eyeglasses or contact lenses.
- An extra set of car keys, credit cards, cash or traveler’s checks.
- First aid kit.
- Flashlight.
- Battery-powered radio and extra batteries.
- Sanitation supplies.
- Copies of important documents (birth certificates, passports, etc.)
- Don’t forget pet food and water! (The website also offers extensive tips on preparing for pet evacuation.)

Items to take if time allows:

- Easily carried valuables.
- Family photos and other irreplaceable items.
- Personal computer information on hard drives and disks.
- Chargers for cell phones, laptops, etc.

Always keep a sturdy pair of shoes and a flashlight near your bed and handy in case of a sudden evacuation at night.

Sometimes residents feel compelled to stay to try to defend their home. Firefighters and other emergency personnel strongly advise against this impulse. Not only does it put the homeowner in danger, it endangers firefighters and law enforcement personnel at grave risk, because they are duty-bound to try to help you if you’re in danger.

Ready to act?
 Anyone interested in serving on the shelter committee, or who has ideas for addressing the present situation, or has questions, can contact:
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