



Photo by Martin Thiel

Lucy Kingsley and Tom Akins are in CAHOOTS to help out on the city's public safety problems. CAHOOTS is an acronym for Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets.

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Some confusion between the 911 desk and the van over "what calls belong to whom," and a lack of space in the Eugene area to house people in need of alcohol or drug treatment has slowed the program down at times, Dritz said.

The construction of a new sobering station at the Buckley House detoxification center, 605 W. Fourth Ave., should help.

"Right now we are never

sure that we have a bed for someone," Dritz said.

The program could be expanded beyond the streets of the city and into homes and dormitories; scenes of domestic disputes for which the police are again expensive and sometimes inappropriate problem solvers, Dritz said.

"A more efficient response could come from the human services system," he said.

Now, when not specifically

dispatched, the van is free to roam Eugene's 'hot spots,' as identified from police records.

"We are patrolling parks, downtown, by the mission... not in a police way, but looking for people who need help," Dritz said.

CAHOOTS is one part of Eugene's Community Response Team, which also includes juvenile outreach, mental health and substance abuse programs.

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gram. Medicaid is a federal-state program that helps pay for health care for the needy, aged, visually impaired and disabled, and for low-income families with children.

The loss was partially due to the lack of staffing for the facility. The Legislature designated an additional \$2.7 million for an increase in staffing for state hospitals.

"Hopefully this (funding) is the beginning to getting Medicaid back," Sand said.

The fact is that because of a shortage of housing, low wages and poor job skills, there are more homeless people on the streets. And many of them are mentally ill, Unger said.

Many of the state's homeless are people who were released too early from state mental institutions.

"Part of the problem is that many of the mentally ill don't meet the criteria for care in the state's hospitals," Marsha Snortland said, nurse manager for the Psychiatric and Behavioral Medicine Division of Sacred Heart General Hospital.

"Many people just fall through the cracks," Snortland said. "In order to qualify for state hospital care, people must either be a danger to themselves, or others or cannot care for themselves."

In some cases, Snortland said, people might qualify for help, but are too paranoid or afraid to get the help they need.

Getting help for a mental illness is a long process. Snortland said the hospital might see people two or three times in a six month period.

Mental illness is not like getting the flu, she added. It's not something one gets over in a

week.

With winter on the way, Hershel Bloom, case manager for the White Bird Clinic's Homeless Project, is concerned with what will happen to the homeless population.

"It's going to get very hard when it gets cold," Bloom said, stressing the fact that for people with mental handicaps who don't learn quickly, it will be even harder.

"It's difficult to deal with problems for people with disabilities," Bloom said. "It's hard to socialize, to direct yourself, to get to work and to be on time."

"We need to move more toward comfortable understanding rather than heavy enforcement," he said. "We need to nurture the people and build their self esteem instead of telling them that they're bad."

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