

Public panel talks on homeless

By Josh Miller
Emerald Contributor

A forum sponsored by the Eugene-based peace group Clergy and Laity Concerned convened Wednesday to discuss the ways in which local and national policies benefit the privileged and oppress the poor.

The forum at Temple Beth Israel, 42 W. 25th Ave., was led by Ron Chase, the director of the Oregon chapter of Sponsors, a service providing transitional help for people just released from correctional institutions; Donna Riddle, a member of Gov. Neil Goldschmidt's task force on hunger and editor of "Toward Self Sufficiency," newsletter of the Oregon Human Rights Coalition; and Norman Riddle, an outreach worker for Whitebird Clinic, 509 E. 13th Ave., specializing in health care for the poor.

Over 40 percent of the people living in

Lane County pay half their income in rent, and one-fourth of the people in Lane County are classified as living below the poverty line, Chase said.

"Some of these people have jobs but are living out of their cars," Norman Riddle said.

Panel members attributed the majority of the problems to the lack of aid, and the diversion of aid given by the government. According to Donna Riddle, local institutions such as the Hult Center, Downtown Athletic Club, and the new research park all received funds that were diverted from the federal Housing and Urban Development fund. HUD has cut its funding for affordable housing by 80 percent since 1981, members said.

"It's not a lack of wealth but a lack of will," Chase said. "New housing is the only answer."

Lane County has commissioned a housing task force to assess the homeless crisis.

Hill requests state funds for cold weather shelter

[AP] — State Sen. Larry Hill says he will ask the state Emergency Board for matching funds to provide emergency housing for hundreds of homeless families in Lane and Multnomah counties this winter.

"These are counties with the largest populations in the state and they have the greatest need," Hill said Wednesday. "In those two counties, we have several hundred families who are literally living in their cars and we need to provide housing for them."

"The need is too great for the cities and the county to meet it on their own," Hill said. He urged officials in the two counties to agree to his proposal for

state matching funds before the Emergency Board's Oct. 26 meeting.

"If the county and the cities are able to take positive action and place money toward meeting homeless needs, then it is much more likely that the state will come up with money," he said.

Lane County Commissioner Jerry Rust said he expects the county to provide such a commitment. "I'm prepared to support that and will work for board consensus," he said Wednesday. "I think a matching funds effort is a good cost-effective way to shoulder that burden."

The amount of the request that will be submitted for the two counties has yet to be determined, officials said Wednesday.

Hill, a Springfield Democrat, described the rise in homelessness as the "backside" of Oregon's economic recovery. "We've got more people working than we did 10 years ago, but the demand for housing has gone up so fast we don't have enough housing for people. And the housing that is available is too expensive," he said.

Hill said he is writing letters seeking the support of legislators serving on the Emergency Board. "At this point, it looks pretty good. I think we can get some help," he said.

The senator's comments came one day after Lane County received word from the state Department of Human Resources that it wouldn't carry the county's request for a grant of \$220,000 in emergency homeless funds to the Emergency Board's October meeting.

Noting the "tremendous financial demands generated by other established programs," Community Services Director Victor Vasquez wrote in a letter to the county. "The lack of affordable housing and the increase in rents should be jointly addressed by the city of Eugene and Lane County."

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