

## Group continues to feed unfortunate

By Sheri Metzler  
Emerald Contributor

With Thanksgiving right around the corner, most people think of turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and pumpkin pie. Thanksgiving is a time to be with family and be thankful for having food and a warm place to sleep.

Not everyone is so fortunate. In Lane County, according to Lane County Housing, 20 percent of the population lives at or below the poverty level.

Many of these poor people are homeless, and gather near the University campus each night. A group of friends, who call themselves a family, have taken it upon themselves to make sure that these people get a decent meal every day.

Last week however, the family was evicted from their house on Augusta Street. But even though they are now homeless themselves, they are determined to keep the meals going.

Kashmir Bishop, 18, is one of the family members. Originally from Montana, she has been in Eugene for several months and is putting all her efforts into feeding the homeless.

"People think we're trying to bring problems by doing this," Bishop said. "The (homeless) people are already here. We're just feeding them."

The family has been living out of a van since it was evicted from the house last Tuesday. Bishop and other family members have been trying to keep providing hot meals for the other homeless although they don't have regular access to a kitchen.

"We've been living out of the van and bouncing from kitchen to kitchen," said Christo-

pher Hoffman, 22 and also a family member.

Hoffman said that some of the co-op houses around campus have been letting the family use their kitchens to cook hot meals.

"We really need access to a kitchen that we can use and store things in," Hoffman said.

The family gets their food from local charities and a few local stores. All meals are vegetarian.

"If we serve vegetarian meals, everybody's happy," Hoffman said. "If we served meat dishes, the vegetarians couldn't eat."

The family is currently looking for a house. Hoffman said that they need some money and someone "who wouldn't mind having us."

Another homeless person who identified himself only as Rainsong said, "Even a garage would do. We have propane stoves."

Hoffman estimates the family has been feeding 15 to 20 people every night since they started about three months ago. The group gathers every night outside Condon Hall where they have a love circle to give thanks before the meal is served.

"We'd like cooperation from the University to keep holding it," Bishop said. "Campus security sometimes gives us problems."

The house on Augusta Street was condemned by the City of Eugene's Department of Development. Eugene Fire Marshal Roger Cleland said it was because of electrical hazards.

Bishop said she thinks the eviction was a conspiracy between the neighbors, the house's legal owner and the police.

"The mother didn't like the idea of our love family," Bishop said.



Photo by Andre Kanieri

A local group keeps feeding the homeless near campus even after being evicted from their own home.

## Forum discusses solutions to Eugene's homeless problem

By Shawn Grassman  
Emerald Contributor

The City of Eugene's solution to its staggering homeless problem begins by dealing with domestic violence and the homeless mothers with children that result. Dr. Marsha Ritzdorf told a group yesterday in a Women's Brownbag Forum in the Hult Center lobby.

Ritzdorf, an associate professor in the Planning, Public Policy and Management department at the University, based her presentation on a study she co-authored with Carol Rucker dealing with homeless mothers

with children in Lane County. Ritzdorf claims that instead of dealing with the obvious problem of putting a roof over the homeless, community and civic leaders should deal with the complex issues that lead to the homeless problem.

"We really need to stop playing games with these temporary mandates designed for temporary solutions," she said. "These findings are a poignant representation of the failure of our social planning policies in dealing with the homeless. There are a lot of serious problems looming, and the single most predominant factor is do-

mestic violence."

Ritzdorf's study showed 54 percent of the surveyed homeless mothers left their home due to abuse to them or their children.

"These women are leaving their homes because of extremely lousy relationships within their own household," she said. "Most of them were being battered and simply got their children and left to save their lives."

The forum, sponsored by the Eugene Commission on the Rights of Women, is the second in a series of discussions designed to address the various

social problems facing the city. The Women's Commission is one of five citizen commissions in the City of Eugene's Human Rights Program. Commission members are appointed by, and act in an advisory capacity to, the city council.

Greg Rikhoff, human rights analyst for the city and coordinator of the forums, believes programs like this are long overdue.

"We obviously have a variety of problems facing our society," he said. "What we want to do locally is build up publicity and simply let people know how grave some of these prob-

lems are. Instead of people turning their heads, we would like to see some community activism."

Ritzdorf's study consisted of random sample questionnaires conducted between April and June 1988. She and Rucker interviewed 46 homeless mothers; a figure she estimates to be less than half of the actual amount of homeless mothers in Lane County on any given day.

Her findings both paralleled and contradicted several national trends of the homeless issue, and helped shatter some existing myths.

Of the respondents to the 91-question inquiry, 78 percent were caucasian and 65 percent were younger than 30 years old. Contrary to the "transient myth" that the homeless move around and eventually leave, Ritzdorf found that 46 percent of the women had lived in the Eugene-Springfield area for at least five years.

The study also disproved the notion that homeless mothers are uneducated and unable to get jobs: 46 percent of the respondents finished high school, and almost half of those who graduated spent at least one year in college.

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