

**SHELTER**

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days, with most people staying an average of 30 to 40 days, said Char Hall, the shelter's advocate counselor.

Hall said about half of the adults at the shelter have jobs but are unable to find an apartment or house because they cannot afford it or have bad credit.

"There isn't a picture I can give you (of a typical homeless person) ... because they're everybody," she said. "The line where people become homeless is rising. It's attacking the middle class too."

The Family Shelter has a two- to three-week waiting list, and once people get in, they must scramble to find permanent housing, Hall said.

"It's a full-time job being homeless," she said.

If adults with jobs have a hard time finding a place to live, a person with

mental illness is often faced with even fewer housing opportunities.

If a mentally ill person is receiving government benefits, the most a person gets is an average of \$400 a month, Eaton said, which is not enough to live on when rent is \$250 to \$350 a month. Another problem is that "the symptoms of their illness make them unattractive candidates" for housing, he said.

But another of Eugene Emergency Housing's programs, Royal Avenue Shelter, has been working since 1988 to provide mentally ill adults with temporary — two-weeks limit — housing with other much needed assistance.

The shelter serves as a stabilization facilitator for the mentally ill person who is fresh off the streets. When a person first arrives, the staff works to get the person to take their medication and tries to stabilize his or her mental condition.

"Royal Avenue is the most valuable resource we have," Eaton said, adding it

is so unique it does not have state rules to fit it. "They take people the hospital won't take because they're too weird," he said.

Royal Avenue holds 16 people who, in order to stay there, must have a referral from Lane County Mental Health.

The people who come there are from everywhere, program manager, Tom Terrell said. Some have just been evicted from their apartments or have been released from mental hospitals.

The approximately 35 people a month the shelter serves often need some basic help with things, such as filling out paperwork for benefits, or help in resolving a conflict with a landlord, Terrell said.

"Any number of little things we do and take for granted, they can't do," said Terrell, who has worked with the mentally ill for 11 years.

"We save the system a whole lot of money and it is much less disruptive for

the individual," he said. "Sometimes you feel like you're shoving water with a spoon. (But) I guess I'm just an eternal optimist."

But some people do appear to get better, like Joyce Bridges, 48, who has schizophrenia and is one of the Royal Avenue's six full-time permanent residents.

Bridges worked as a waitress and a typist in a newspaper office when she was younger, before she started hearing voices and was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Last year, after being evicted from her apartment for not paying her rent, Bridges lived in a halfway house for four months and then on the streets.

She said she has plans to someday move back to her hometown of Toledo, Ore. but for the present time feels lucky to have a place to go. "We're really fortunate," she said. "I'm really happy to be here."

**Who are they?**

- 33 percent are families
- 25 percent are school-age children
- 51 percent are single men
- 46 percent are black
- 30 percent are veterans
- 33 percent are chronically mentally ill
- 10 percent have a physical disability
- 21 percent have experienced domestic violence
- 33 percent of those in shelters have an alcohol problem; 25 percent have a drug abuse problem

**Other facts:**

- An estimated 3 million Americans are homeless
- Families with children represent the fastest growing sector of the homeless population.
- A recent congressional study predicts that nearly another 19 million people will face the prospect of homelessness in the next 15 years.

—Source: Homelessness Information Exchange, National Coalition for the Homeless, The United States Conference of Mayors

**REACTIONS**

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handling," said Joyce Assadourian, manager of the mEating Place. "Let's face it, these guys are down-and-out bums."

**Saxon's beat**

Eugene police officer Ken Saxon knows most of the street people by name and said he considers them his second family, but he said they realize he has a job to do.

"(Street people) know where the fine line is — if they cross it, they'd rather be arrested by

me, because they know me, than by someone else," said Saxon, who patrols from 11th to 15th avenues and Patterson to Kincaid streets.

"I don't judge people by the length of their hair or their skin color," he said. "I treat them with respect until I am treated differently."

Saxon said he sees his job as not only to arrest or give tickets to street people who are committing crimes, but to seek help for them if they want it. Saxon has found jobs for a few street people and has been successful in having some attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings regularly.

"They have to reach their

bottom before they will be ready for help," he said.

Just as there are "good" street people, there are "bad" ones as well, Saxon said. An aggressive panhandler, he said, ruins it for the ones who are sitting peacefully asking for money.

Saxon said the majority of the crimes street people commit have to do with drinking violations, aggressive panhandling or trespassing.

**Merchants band together**

But Peterson, who has worked at the Red Rooster for 22 years, said that even more goes on than Saxon is able to see.

The officer is only able to work eight-hour shifts on his patrol, leaving a lot unseen, Peterson said.

Street people are one of the reasons 13th Avenue merchants requested an officer to patrol the area. Saxon started on the beat about a year ago, and his salary is paid jointly by the University, the Eugene police department and the University Small Businesses Association, which includes merchants on 13th.

Greene said the addition of Saxon has made a "1,000 percent" difference.

"Before Ken came, it was a total zoo," said Greene, who has worked in the area for 14 years.

**Worst during summer**

The area was at its worst last summer, Greene said.

"Last summer was the worst I've ever seen. Absolutely," Greene said. "I've never seen Ken rattled before, and he was pretty rattled."

Shirley Gall, who is the U.S. Bank campus branch manager and has worked at the bank since 1974, agreed with Greene, saying customers started coming through the back door of the bank in the summer because the stairs leading to the front door were always clogged by loitering street people.

Many of the merchants say panhandlers loitering in front of their businesses leads to a decrease in customers.

"I'm sure that we have lost a lot of customers due to it," Assadourian said of the mEating Place.

Greene said customers have been very vocal to him about having to face panhandlers before entering Rainbow Optics.

"Everyday I get calls from people saying, 'I don't want to come to your store because of the panhandlers,'" Greene said.

Applicants sought for

**EWEB Board Vacancy**

Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB) is currently accepting applications for the Board seat representing Wards 4 and 5. The Board seat will become vacant due to the resignation of Jack Delay December 31, 1991.

To qualify, an applicant must be:

- a registered voter;
- a resident of Wards 4 or 5 (see map);
- a resident of Eugene for the past 12 months;
- available to attend Board Meetings every 2nd and 4th Monday of each month;
- able to run for election to this office in the May 1992 primary.

The term of appointment will extend through December 31, 1992.

Applications are available weekdays, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., at Eugene Water & Electric Board, 500 East Fourth Avenue, P.O. Box 10148, Eugene, Oregon 97440.

Application deadline is 12 noon on Wednesday, November 20. For more information, contact Krista Hince, Assistant Secretary, 484-2411.



**Eugene Water & Electric Board**  
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