

# HOMELESS

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was made worse by the little amount of time the state has given them to move on.

"Five days just isn't enough time. We need to get all of our belongings together," Rosemary Hammons said as she sat outside her and her husband James' make-shift home of plastic sheets supported by wood crates for walls.

Eleven-year-old Jody, one of the Hammons' three children, struggled with a soiled chair as she dragged it home from a recently vacated camp site. After asking James to fix it for her, he gently told his daughter that it was going to be thrown out anyway because they had to leave soon.

Rosemary Hammons said she was concerned the most about her children, two of whom are enrolled in Coburg Elementary School and the other at Sheldon High School, because they will likely be forced to withdraw indefinitely.

The Hammons do odd jobs in town whenever someone takes them up on their "Will Work for Cash" sign. This particular evening they were both exhausted from a day of landscaping and housework. The family also receives food stamps.

Gary Gustafson, the acting director of the state lands division, said throughout the past year, people from the lands division have been to the encampment telling the families they aren't supposed to be camping there.

Also, people from the state

housing division and others have been there to distribute literature about options.

The land is owned by the state and is not designed to be a campground, Gustafson said. He said at Lane County's request because of the significant homeless problem, the lands division agreed not to enforce the law at the encampment until Oct. 1.

"This is something nobody takes great joy in doing," Gustafson said. "We know Lane County needs a long-term solution to the homeless problem, but this is not the site, mainly because the site is under water in the winter."

Gustafson said if the campers refuse to leave, the Lands Division will obtain a court order that would enable the county sheriff to make the campers disperse. If they still refuse, he said there could be fines or even jail time involved.

Commissioner Rust said he is visiting the encampment to discuss low-cost options to the homeless living there.

"Rather than making it impossible and driving people out of the camp," Rust said, "I'd rather us lend a hand and have a number of scattered camp sites with camp hosts, good drinking water and portable toilets. Also, I'd like to look at other ways that they can earn money."

Bridgette and Rick Aquizap say they can't get ahead because of the stereotypes that exist about homeless people.

The Aquizaps are both registered with a temporary agency in town, but because they gave White Bird Medical Clinic as a

phone number to contact the agency recognizes they are homeless and won't give them any work, they said.

"I don't want to be homeless and living on food stamps," Rick Aquizap said, "but once you're on the street, you're branded with that stereotype."

Aquizap said he believes the state should just leave the campers alone because he said they aren't doing anyone harm.

Jean Smith, who camps in a run-down camper with her four children ages four to 15, said she has no choice but to stay here.

"A friend transported our trailer down here, and we have no truck to move it out again," she said.

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