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Jack
 continued from page 1

were even without a home — but their eyes are full of a visible devotion that money cannot buy.

"Single fathers are not heard of even in today's culture," Leavitt said. "Single fathers need help. There is nothing for us."

Leavitt said local churches and homeless shelters, such as the Eugene Mission, welcome battered women, single mothers and women with substance-abuse problems. But for Leavitt, like many single fathers in the community, the usual response is that there is no place for him and his daughter, he said.

He is supporting Tina on his own, Leavitt said, but it takes a two-person income to live comfortably in the current economy.

Becoming a single dad

Leavitt said his marriage reached a breaking point after three years of verbal abuse. He said he gave up on his wife five months ago after losing his job in railroad maintenance because she repeatedly showed up at his work drunk and verbally abusive.

Despite time spent with a marriage counselor, Leavitt said his wife picked alcohol over their family.

Without a job, Leavitt lost his house, and he and his daughter were forced onto the street, or as he called it — "went camping."

Leavitt and Tina have not always known what to expect or where to go next when they did not have the stability of a home, but they temporarily found a safe haven for eight weeks at the First Place Family Center. The local shelter provides emergency services and necessities for homeless families with children.

"This program could use a million dollars a year," Leavitt said. "This program works really hard to keep families together. A program should keep families together."

Tim Rockwell, the assistant director at the center, said he has seen an increase in the number of single fathers who need support. Rockwell, who has been working to help "broken families" for five years, said the day-use shelter holds up to 10 families for a maximum of 30 days each.

"We want to work with people," Rockwell said. "We try to make it a family thing."

He said there is a tendency for shelters in the community to cater to mothers with children, instead of fathers with children.

"There is a whole lot more out there for women," Rockwell said.

Day-to-day struggles

Leavitt's daily routine usually means waking Tina every morning at 7 a.m. to get her on the bus for kindergarten at Whiteaker Elementary School, where she is receiving a bilingual education in Spanish. Then the 48-year-old father puts in four hours of work a day, making

**Homeless shelters
 in the summer months**

Local homeless shelter staff say they often see changes in the populations that use their services over the summer.

Tim Rockwell, assistant director of First Place Family Center, said more families and homeless people are able to camp outside during the summer. "You see a more transient population," Rockwell said.

Rockwell said people passing through Eugene sometimes stop at the center in need of resources because of delays such as car trouble. He said many people may stay at the center a week or only a day. Rockwell added that he has seen an increase in the amount of young people traveling during the summer.

"Sometimes it seems like you have a bigger crowd during the summer," he said.

about \$20 an hour doing various jobs wherever he can, such as painting buildings. And when there is no work, Leavitt busies himself fixing up the center, where he works as a volunteer staff member and a client.

Leavitt works as a custodian at the center for 10 to 15 hours a week.

"Volunteer work gives me something to do, something that is profitable that has meaning to it," Leavitt said. "It is my way of paying the program back."

Rockwell said Leavitt contributes his time and energy to fixing up the center with a positive attitude and "good people skills."

"Others followed his lead," Rockwell said. "If he saw something that needed to be done, he did it."

Wearing a turquoise-colored, paint-splattered T-shirt, dusty denim jeans and a pair of sneakers, Leavitt's lean figure is tanned from the sun exposure he receives doing manual labor jobs. He said he has not always had to worry about where he and Tina would sleep from week to week. And it has not been easy for him to become accustomed to relying on food stamps and a \$128 weekly unemployment check.

The native Oregonian from North Bend received an education from Trinity Valley Community College in Ontario, Canada. In the early 1970s, he served in the Air Force as a helicopter pilot trainer for more than three years on the Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. He also spent 11 years as a farm mechanic in Missouri.

A house for the future

But for now, Leavitt and his daughter are just taking it one day at a time. And after keeping their fingers crossed for months, Leavitt and his daughter have finally found a home through the Connections Transitional Housing program offered by St. Vincent de Paul of Lane

The warmer weather is an incentive for people to travel more frequently for longer distances, Rockwell said. But during the summer, because families tend to take vacations, Rockwell said there are not as many volunteers and not as much funding at local churches where the homeless population takes refuge for meals and lodging.

In the seven years he has worked for the Eugene Mission, Assistant Director Lynn Antis said people who come to the shelter often stay for longer periods during the winter than they do during the summer.

Even though there is a higher turnover within the homeless population during the summer because of the weather, Antis said the staff at the mission is still busy.

"The numbers go down but the workload is just as high," Antis said.

— Lisa Toth

County.

Barbara Holman, program manager for the program, said the federally funded program offers 39 families the chance to move off the streets and into a house.

"The main goal is to help the family toward self-sufficiency," Holman said.

On May 10, Leavitt and his daughter moved into a three-bedroom house, located in a low-income housing neighborhood in Springfield. For the next two years, they will be sharing the five-year-old house with a single mother who has a daughter the same age as Tina.

St. Vincent de Paul's program will offer Leavitt assistance in paying rent for the first four months, while he and his daughter adjust to their new surroundings. After that point, it will be up to Leavitt to make the \$450 monthly payments.

Leavitt said the house is located on a quiet, safe cul-de-sac, and there are other children in the neighborhood who have become playmates with his daughter. And once school lets out, Leavitt said he will be looking for a full-time, stable job.

"It is working out well," he said.

Leavitt hopes to find a job at Home Depot and is looking to eventually purchase a car, but he dreams of much more for his and his daughter's future. Eventually, Leavitt would like to move to Sonoma, Calif., and make his living by panning for gold.

"I'd like to be on 500 acres," he said.

Leavitt said he would make more than \$100 a day "panning and high-banking" for the precious metal.


"It's still there," he said. "Every time there's an earthquake, more gold comes up."

The future looks to be coming up gold for Leavitt as well. No matter the trade he chooses next, he now has a foundation to build from.



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