Shelter

Continued from Page 1A

relaxing and comfortable so guests can settle and sleep. A paid staff member, accompanied by at least one volunteer, stays awake all night.

"I remember one woman last year asking, 'Are you going to watch me all night?' Marshall said. "I sort-of apologetically said, 'Yes,' and she said, 'Oh, good!'"

Another time, Marshall noticed that all the guests seem to be tossing and turning. She was beginning to feel she'd failed at making the place comfortable enough, when a guest – clearly wanting to make her feel better – explained, "When you're on the streets, you don't sleep because it's not safe. We're just not used to sleeping all night," she recalled.

Silverton's shelter got its grassroots start in December 2016 when a then-SACA employee, Sarah White, started to worry about a homeless man in a wheelchair she knew. Temperatures were dropping, and she couldn't bear the thought of him spending the night outside.

White approached the pastor at Oak Street Church, already serving its free Monday night dinners: "The answer was, 'yes,' without hesitation, and we were open the first night snow started to fall," she said.

White became Silverton Sheltering Services' first executive director, a job she passed to Dumitrescu in April to focus on individual clients' case management. On the shelter's opening day this year, she was at Legacy Silverton Medical Center, advocating for care for a homeless man with severe health problems, including a collapsed esophagus, from alcohol abuse.

White and Dumitrescu aren't paid, but grant money is helping fund the night workers at the shelter. Dozens of committed volunteers make amenities for homeless and under-housed people possible. Every night, churches, groups and even individuals bring dinner to the shelter.

They also often bring breakfast to the day center a few blocks away. On any given day at the Community Center, at least 20 people show up to eat, get services and socialize, Dumitrescu said.

The warming shelter's opening day – Nov. 15 – was no exception. By 10 a.m., the day center on Water Street was packed with guests and volunteers. While advocate Trish Ambrose worked one-on-one with a guest and new hire Emily Neves assisted, people sipped coffee and ate homemade enchiladas.

"It's a warm and comforting atmosphere," said Nate, 40, a homeless man wearing cargo pants and a hand-knitted emerald green scarf. "The volunteers here are really trying to help me."

Another guest, Greg, 65, is a retired truck driver who recently underwent heart surgery. While he has enough money to rent a room down the street, it's still tough to make ends meet, and he comes to the day center for "food and company," he said.

"If I didn't have this place, I would be so disconnected from humanity; it wouldn't be good for my psyche," added another woman who didn't give her name. She lives in her car. "It's like a home away from home."

Dumitrescu has stepped into her leadership role at Silverton Sheltering Services with a mixture of consummate warmth and zealous anger. She's full of opinions and statistics; most of all she's a voice of urgency for the disadvantaged.

She's equal parts awed by community support for the homeless ("I'm convinced this city's giving mindset started many years ago at the community dinners.") and frustrated with critics and anyone who ignores the homeless. ("We could solve this problem overnight if we all wanted to.")

A former teacher from California and business owner, Dumitrescu turned 50 this month. On Facebook, she asked all her friends and acquaintances to donate to the shelter instead of giving gifts. In three days, collections topped $5,000.

Afterward, she said, "We have an extraordinary amount of people in this town who want to help, who look at a homeless person and think, 'That could be me."

Hungry

Continued from Page 3A

fice, but Bauman barely uses during the growing season. Her mobile office is the organization's gold truck, Sunflower. In between farm visits, Bauman stands in the vehicle's open door, one foot perched on the running board, busily entering harvest details using a wifi hotspot.

Her stationary office is located at Locke Engineers,the firm where she worked for 15 years as a structural engineering technician, back when she was still a Salem Harvest volunteer.The firm's owner, "Greg [Locke] could see, I would take long lunches to go do a site visit and I would maneuver and manipulate my schedule at the office so I could do more of Salem Harvest."

Things shifted for Bauman in November 2015 when the organization was offered 300,000 pounds of butternut squash, their biggest single harvest ever.

"We ended up harvesting 137,000 pounds...and it went all across the state and to Southwest Washington. Everybody had butternut squash for Thanksgiving."

"It was just so amazing. We just ran harvest after harvest after harvest."

Witnessing that possibility, she said, was eye-opening to some of the organization's funders, who helped resource a staff position.

"Two months prior to ending my job [at Locke], I went in and visited with my boss. He said, well, your office is still your office no matter what you're doing in there." Salem Harvest, essentially, is a non-profit in residence.

In July 2016, Elise officially started running Salem Harvest full-time. During the growing season her days stretch as long as any farmer's.

"In the summer when you have the 9 a.m. harvest and the 6 p.m. harvest, and then you squeeze in all your paperwork and site visits, it's not hard to get to a 14 to 16 hour day and not stop for lunch."

Vicki Pedone, one of the organization's volunteer harvest leaders said, of Bauman, "it's rare to find somebody who can be that dedicated. If she's not out picking she's scouting, every moment. It's a tough job."

She thinks it sets a tone for the organization.

"The people who are part of the harvest, primarily driven by Elise, but everybody else, too, they're just so devoted to the cause.They give a lot of themselves and they're doing it because they believe in the mission."

Who eats it?

Despite the fact that she is two years old, Freyja James can clean the meat off of a chicken leg better than many adults. She recently demonstrated her skill at Friends Serving Friends, a free dinner on Tuesday evenings hosted by South Salem Friends Church.

The weekly event is one of Marion Polk Food Share's distribution points. Guests sit down in the church's community hall for a hot meal. Afterwards they can take with them a selection of fresh produce and other grocery items. On this particular Tuesday, that selection included bags of bell peppers picked by Salem Harvest volunteers the Saturday prior.

Freyja's mother, Heather James, is a Certified Nursing Assistant. She works nights while her husband, Daniel, cares for their four young children, all under age five.

The family has been coming to Friends Serving Friends on and off for the past year, said James. "We were going through some rough times. We came and it helped a lot, actually, because they also give leftovers."

It's tempting to think of food security as a static thing, but for many, including the James family, it's a moving target.

Being able to take home fresh produce, said James, "it helps you to not have to worry about it." They'll put the mushrooms into spaghetti, she said, and eat the green peppers raw.

"My daughter's not a big fan of vegetables, but if they're fresh she'll eat them," James said, "vegetables are vegetables, even if they come in a can, but the fresh ones help them get a taste for them."

At the next table, Lori Peschel sat with her father-in-law, Louis. They live with Peschel's husband and his mother. Louis, the cook in the household, said he planned to make stuffed peppers, filling them with ground beef and rice.

Peschel gets up at 4 a.m. to work the early shift at McDonald's. "It is not easy," she said, the "lunch rush starts at 10:30 and goes until 2:00." Though her life is stable now, it hasn't always been.

"I was in some of these guys' position," she said, gesturing around the room, "I was jumping from shelter to shelter for like eight months."

"I've been there. I've been in trouble."

Brenda Phillips, a congregation member and Friends Serving Friends volunteer, said "we get these bins every week and there's always something different in them."

The people they serve, she said, "they depend on it, especially some of the homeless...we see them taking as much food as they can. And that's okay. We have plenty, so take what you need."

The evening wound down and dinner attendees departed, produce packed into shopping bags.

A few days later, Bauman is back out in another field, greeting volunteers at another harvest, "thanks for coming out and sharing this lovely afternoon." She's warm but no-nonsense.

Harvest is here. This is the chance that we have to do this. If we don't do it now, she said, "it's gone."

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What causes on-farm food waste?

- **Anticipating Loss** – growers sometimes plant more of a crop than they need knowing that some portion might be lost due to weather, pests, or other factors out of their control. This can then lead to a surplus they may not have a market for.
- **Demand Fluctuations** – Order changes or cancellations can lead to a similar circumstance.
- **Labor Shortages** – Farm worker availability is a major factor, especially with perishable crops where harvest timing is critical.
- **Price Fluctuations** – Growers must weigh the cost of harvesting and transporting a crop with the price they can get for it.
- **Consumer Preference** – Consumer demand for produce that looks a specific way can lead to crops perceived as flawed being left behind.
- **Technological Limitations** – Mechanical means of harvest often have limitations that leave a portion of good food in the field.
- **Food Safety Concerns** – Whether actual or perceived, food safety concerns can result in product going unharvested.