

Huts for the homeless and handcuffs to hardhats

Oregon unions will train state prison inmates, and build shelters for homeless

The Oregon AFL-CIO and a handful of trade unions are about to team up with Oregon Corrections Enterprises to introduce female inmates to skilled trades. Beginning in November, 90 inmates at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Wilsonville, Oregon, will take part in an experimental four-month-long pre-apprenticeship training program. Groups of 15 will have 260 hours of classroom instruction, and then, to help them put skills into practice and see how the skilled trades fit together, each class will construct a sim-

ple shed, which Oregon Corrections Enterprises hopes to make available to local governments for use as temporary housing units for the homeless. The project will use welding, machine and carpentry tools that were sitting idle at a shuttered shop facility at Mill Creek Correctional Facility in Salem.

Known as "First Chance," the project is the brainchild of Oregon AFL-CIO workforce liaison Mark Warne, who serves on the board of Oregon Corrections Enterprises — the state agency that manages inmate work programs.

"A lot of these people didn't have a first chance," Warne says, explaining the name. "To reduce recidivism, it's important to provide career opportunities for ex-offenders."

So far, the Carpenters, Painters, Roofers, Laborers, and Electrical Workers unions have pledged to provide instructors for 8 to 20 hours of basic training per class, and Warne is talking with other unions about participating.

The 8'X10' sheds the inmates will build will have insulation and electric



Designed by inmates, these huts are slated to be built this fall by inmates at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Wilsonville.

light and heat, but no plumbing. They'll have a window and a door, a composite roof, and 1.5"-thick floors of linoleum on top of double decking of 3/4" pressure-treated plywood. The sheds will be

set on three 4"x6" pressure treated skids to make them easy to move and level. Warne expects the program will build 10 huts over the course of the first year, some of which will be set up as a

demonstration village outside the Oregon Corrections Enterprises offices in Salem, to showcase the project to legislators.

The huts aren't meant as a long-term solution to homelessness, Warne said.

"They're simply to keep people from having to live in doorways or sleeping on sidewalks," Warne said. "This is something for somebody that is sliding down the economic scale or is in the process of building back up."

The huts are being offered to local governments at below the cost of materials, though none have agreed to take the huts yet. City of Portland officials declined, saying they're focusing resources on getting the homeless into temporary shelters and permanent homes; the sheds are something in between those two.

"It was a little disappointing," said Oregon AFL-CIO spokesperson Elana Guiney, "but there are a lot of other local governments in state. We're moving ahead with the other [skills training] part of the program."

Labor council puts out more political endorsements

Delegates to the Northwest Oregon Labor Council (NOLC) made several political endorsements at its monthly meeting Aug. 27.

The council endorsed the re-election of Clackamas County Commissioner Jamie Damon and Wilsonville Mayor Tim Knapp, and supports passage of statewide Ballot Measures 82, 83, and 85, as well as Wood Village Ballot Measure 26-142. It opposed Ballot Measure 84. All will be on the ballot in November's general election.

Measure 82 amends the Oregon Constitution to authorize establishment of privately-owned casinos and mandates a percentage of revenues payable to a dedicated state fund. Measure 83 authorizes a privately owned casino in

Wood Village. Measure 26-142 is tied to Measures 82 and 83. It is for residents of Wood Village only, and would permit the siting of a casino at the old Multnomah Kennel Club.

All three ballot measures must pass in November in order for the proposed \$300 million entertainment complex to proceed. Developers have signed a letter of understanding with the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council assur-

ing that it will be built with union labor. It is estimated that 3,000 construction jobs will be created over a period of 18 to 24 months if approved. Talks also are under way regarding a neutrality agreement for the 2,000 full time employees that will be hired to operate the center. A neutrality agreement is a pledge by an employer not to oppose efforts by a union to organize its employees.

Ballot Measure 85 seeks to amend

the Constitution to allocate the corporate income/excise tax "kicker" refund to K-12 schools, rather than back to corporations.

Measure 84 is a scheme put forth by Republican Kevin Mannix to eliminate the estate tax for millionaires. As it is, Oregon's estate tax only applies to estates worth more than \$1 million, and excludes family-owned farms and other

(Turn to Page 12)

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