

HOMELESS: Clackamas brief home for transients before moving on

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"It's not that dangerous in this area," she said. "I'm more nervous about falling asleep down in Portland, or in the homeless shelters or even worse the camps. It's not really about where you sleep anyways, it's about getting sleep. I can stand the hunger, I can't stand not getting sleep."

Her stomach is always empty, often calling out for something to fill it. She's dirty, a bath comes maybe once every few weeks. The lice is eating away at her scalp, making her anemic. The malnutrition has caused her to be so weak she can barely walk.

"It's hard to get a decent meal," she said. "Sometimes, I won't eat for

three, four days even. There aren't many places around here that feed people like me. I can't get to a doctor's office. I'm not sure where the nearest free clinic is, or if they even exist anymore. I just try to get by, each day is a test."

Heidi is only 29 years old, a few years younger than the average student on campus. She went to school once too, and tells stories of times in classrooms, graduating at the top of her class, wedding days and a good job. But, it's all gone now. Heidi is not her name on the streets. To her friends and fellow street dwellers it's "H", short for Heidi, but most importantly to her, it is symbolic for her new life.

"I was 25 when I first started living on the streets," Heidi shared. "I

lived in my car for a while. Then I lost that too."

Heidi's story is like many others before her: she got divorced, lost her job, began sleeping in her car, lost her car and now is left to the streets. She has been homeless for four years, since right after her husband left her.

"I can't remember the date now," she says between sorting through her odds and ends that she keeps in an old Jansen backpack. "All I remember is coming home and he had been gone. I lost my job a week later. I couldn't pay my rent and I stayed in a shelter for a while. Now I'm here. I'm not the only one though; there are many others who stay here."

Another Clackamas camper, Chris, said that Clackamas provided

what a lot of other places don't.

"When I slept in the camps in other places, I had trouble with my things being stolen, cops harassing me. I even got beat up by some punks that thought I was worthless," he said. "The shelters aren't much better, and it's tough getting a bed for the night."

Chris has been staying on campus for around four weeks, who followed a friend he met on the streets. He said that the buses provide a shelter during the day, but when night falls it's hard to find somewhere safe and warm. When asked how he came to living on the street, he clutches an old faded photo of a little girl he calls Nina.

Chris said that 15 years ago he ran away from home. He left his sister, the girl in the photo, and his mom to a dad who was abusive. He became heavily involved with drugs and never bounced back.

"I wish I could live a normal life," Chris said. "But sometimes, you can't just change how things work out."

Student Nathan Meyers said that he wasn't sure what it would be like to live on campus and that he was uncomfortable with the idea of the homeless using it as a campground.

"I don't like the idea of vagrants camping here when I'm walking around after class, especially at night," Meyers shared. "I guess I have a pretty negative viewpoint when it comes to homeless people. They usually are involved in drugs and crime."

Student Claudia Simmons refuted Meyers' idea, saying that there needed to be more done to help Clackamas' homeless.

"I know several students here who have been close to living out in the woods or their cars, because they had no where else to go," she said. "It's sad, but eventually they

will be asked to leave and that be the end of it. They need more than that."

Neither Chris nor Heidi say they get told to leave campus. According to Kandertieff, overnight anywhere on campus is against policy.

The big question for homeless people is where they should go.

Clackamas County has limited resources for people who are less than successful in finding job arrangements, and directing people to sleep. The system has faults. It takes months to get through the processes that put people into society.

"I applied once and got rejected the process," said Chris. "It took them months to find the right person and it's not like I have to mail for someone to leave a message. I never heard back from them though I stopped by a few times."

As of Friday, May 11, Heidi had moved on. According to Chris, she was gaining attention from too many people and was trying to apply for help.

"Sometimes you believe in getting help, a lot of the time you end up giving up and choosing not to try," said Chris. "We're in limbo, somewhere between people who matter and those who don't."

Disclaimer: The Print will withhold the last names of two homeless people in this article due to the conflict of their living on campus. Interviews with Heidi and Chris were done on campus over the past two months. Photo by Jon Petty. Staff member Lydia Bashaw. Other staff members contributed to this article. All comments can be emailed to chiefed@clackamas.edu.



Jon Petty Clackamas Print

Leftover garbage marks the spot of what seemed to be a homeless camping spot on campus.

SUSTAIN: Green grants may fund big changes

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Pending approval, Clackamas will be able to offer students a degree or certificate in renewable energy technology.

Going green seems to be a trend that is catching on. Ray Hoyt, director of Customized Training and Development, said, "This is a cultural change."

One of the first changes being made is changing the conventional hot water heaters in McLoughlin, Pauling, and Randall to solar heated hot water systems. Bill Leach, who sits on the Sustainability Committee, believes that by converting to these solar-heated systems, Clackamas is shifting the foundation of how business has been done in the past.

Leach commented, "By rede-

signing our infrastructure we are moving towards doing business that is more sustainable."

Another grant which the school has applied for would award Clackamas \$26 million. Along with that money comes two steam power generators that would give the school its own internal electric source. This grant would partially allow the school to be taken off the grid.

If awarded this grant, it would also give faculty enough resources for all exterior lights of the school to be powered by wind turbines with solar power battery back-ups.

Clackamas is competing against Portland Community College to receive the bid for this grant.

Not only will Clackamas benefit from this, but also local people who

are currently unemployed. People contracted to do the work cannot be employees of CCC. -One of the rules for this and other grants was that the school must hire outside contractors or laborers to perform the work. "The idea behind the stimulus money was to stimulate the local economy," Leach said.

Another project currently pending is to turn the gas station behind Barlow into an alternative fuels refueling station. The plan is to provide refueling for vehicles that run off hydrogen, biodiesel, electrical and compressed natural gas.

Moving into the future, Clackamas is laying the foundation for the next generation to come. Without funding it will be difficult to continue on the path it is headed.

Upcoming Events

- Community Congress Event | Saturday, May 16, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m. in the Gregg Forum
- FIDO Days | Saturday, May 16
- Alcohol Awareness | Wednesday, May 20
- Club's Banquet | Thursday, May 21, 6 p.m. at the Old Spaghetti Factory in Clackamas
- Memorial Day, No school | Monday, May 25
- Locks of Love event | Wednesday, May 27, 12 - 3 p.m. outside the Community Center

Clackamas Print

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