



Protestors stand downtown Portland Oct. 6 shouting and demanding support of local schools by increases taxes on the top 1 percent of all Americans.

'Occupy Portland' takes over city streets

By Mandie Gavitt
Arts & Culture Editor

Today in the heart of downtown Portland you can find a city within a city: tents are set up for food, medical supplies and even a library, not to mention the other smaller tents and sleeping bags covered with tarps. There's a lot of cheering and chanting as the group gathers together in hopes of making change.

Occupy Portland is well under way as people from all walks of life are joining together in hopes of seeing change for the 99 percent of Americans who don't fall into the 1 percent of people who control the majority of the money. It is now considered the biggest "occupy" event in the country.

The motivating factor of what brought people to Occupy Portland seems to vary but with common theme. "People are here for a lot of different reasons but the common thread is corporate control over the American experience," said Tripp Jennings, a film producer that came out to show his support for the movement starting on day one. "The overlying sense that I get is that people are tired of profit being put over people," he said. "Corporations control our lives and our government and it has to stop. And what we're saying here is enough."

Jennings said that he came out on the first day, Oct. 6,

but didn't camp because he had to work a twelve hour shift the following day. He does, however, plan on being at the protest every moment he's not working until it's over.

The variety of people at Occupy Portland vary from infants to senior citizens, from people in suits, to people sleeping on the street. "I came out here because I'm homeless and self employed and self educated which means unemployed and uneducated and I'm really excited to see everyone else is doing the same thing as well," said Maya Holden, who has been at the event since day one. "It's been really beautiful. It's really nice to see all these people getting together ... We have everything we need ... We are totally self-sustained at this point," he said.

One elderly couple who lost their house to foreclosure are sleeping under their walkers with tarps draped over them.

Bosh Baro, a Portland Community College student, has been involved in Occupy Portland since the Facebook group was at 25 members. He said his motivation for getting involved was the amount of homeless people he sees on a daily basis.

"I'm tired of seeing people going to bed starving, wet, freezing their asses off," he said. "I'm tired of 401k cuts; I'm tired of people feeling they don't have a voice ... We are one of the richest, wealthiest nations in the world and we have the third world levels existing in our sect."

Baro said that he is determined to stay until it's over, "I told the news I'm not leaving and I'm sticking to it." However, he is still devoted to his education.

"All of my teachers are super supportive and I don't plan on missing any classes either," he said.

Conveniently for Baro, the Occupy Portland community has set up a shuttle that meets at Portland State University every hour and runs to the various college campuses. This is just one example of the various forms of support that have been coming in for Occupy Portland attendees. "I can't tell you how amazing it is to see pound after pound after pound of food, medical supplies, blankets, clothing that are being donated by people who know that we are out here fighting for them," said Baro.

The group considers it a peaceful movement with "peace keepers" walking around to try to defuse any unsafe situations that may come up. "We don't have any more authority than anyone else ... we are just folks that deescalate violent situations," said peace-keeper Richard Vanbarriger. Fellow peace-keeper James Vick agreed. "We try to moderate and precipitate open conversations," he said.

The camp has a no-drinking policy it takes seriously with signs up that read, "Drinking negates the cause." According to Vick, "Most of the people here can't even afford alcohol anyway and the 95 percent of those that

can willingly leave camp with it."

Vick said the support the community has been receiving is outstanding. "It has been the most amazing thing I've ever witnessed," he said. We have more food than we know what to do with. We have medical people ready to take care of anyone. There's even people walking around asking if you need a cigarette." A lot of this support has been coming through a website called kickstarter.com, that helps inform people of what is needed at the protest.

Vanbarriger said that it was easy for people to come together at this event because despite the diversity of the people involved the issues at hand are not about political parties or religion. "This isn't a Christian thing or a Muslim thing or an atheist thing. This is about our rights."

"We just want a chance," said Vick.



While protestors begin to fill Pioneer Square, a woman holds a peace flag as a reminder to keep the occupation peaceful.