

**GENDERED, from page 4**

cold hands.”

“No one is going to hire someone who is looking dirty, carrying their baggage. It makes them look unstable,” says Sister Cathie Boerboom, the executive director of Rose Haven, a resource center for homeless women.

That dynamic may change. The Bud Clark Commons, which opened in June, provides showers, lockers and other basic resources to homeless men and women. JOIN, a homeless outreach agency, provides showers and lockers to men and women. Still, the resources are far outstripped by the demand.

Rose Haven provides a clothing closet for women, as well as a day space – but not necessarily a place where women could leave their belongings. And the Gateway Center for Domestic Violence, which opened last year, provides access and referral to other services.

Martha Strawn Morris, the program director of the Gateway Center for Domestic Violence, says the Gateway Center has had 4,000 visits in the first year of operation.

“I’m still a little bit overwhelmed by the terms of the number, realizing how many people are actively experiencing this in our community,” Strawn Morris says.

Peatow Nickels says domestic violence and homeless services are too “isolated” from one another to effectively serve victims of domestic violence and reduce homelessness.

Many survivors of domestic violence, she says, more often than not become homeless as a result of fleeing their home. Women fleeing domestic violence, she says, leave behind many of their belongings, may lose access to bank accounts, and may have no money of their own. They cannot necessarily



live with friends, because their abuser would know where to find them.

Despite the strong link between domestic violence and female homelessness, Peatow Nickels says the communication between domestic violence and homeless services providers is inadequate.

If adequate domestic violence services were provided in Multnomah County, she thinks, the numbers of women becoming homeless would dramatically decrease. “If there were suddenly 150 more beds, it would almost be double what we have today,” she says. “It would be an amazing help.”

There are approximately 170 women on the Salvation Army’s wait list, according to Singleton. Jean’s Place, the women’s shelter

operated by Transition Projects, Inc., has a similarly long wait list.

Seventy-five shelter beds are reserved for domestic violence victims. According to Strawn Morris, approximately 16,000 to 18,000 calls are made to a variety of crisis lines in Multnomah County each year, all requesting shelter.

Strawn Morris says that shelter is important for the people who need it, but it alone cannot solve homelessness among domestic violence survivors. “Are some of those people asking for shelter who would ask for something else if they knew there was another option?” she wonders.

Increasing the amount of shelter for women was something almost all of the women wrote at the bottom of the questionnaire they took without an interviewer.

“There are not a lot of places for women, at least in the Portland area,” agreed a 37-old woman.

Building more shelter for women without children, a 49-year old woman wrote, would “get them stabilized and trying to make them not feel they’re worthless.”

The “inadequate” services, Peatow Nickels says, are a direct reflection of the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness not prioritizing domestic violence. “You have this very narrow definition of who the plan was going to impact the most, or at all,” she says, referring to the 10 Year Plan’s emphasis on housing people who are “chronically homeless.”

No one from the Portland Housing Bureau would comment on the survey for this story. “We might in the future when we have more knowledge about (the survey), or about what the findings are,” said Maileen Hamto, the Bureau’s public information officer.

Boerboom calls the services available to homeless women “horribly inadequate.” Like Peatow Nickels, Boerboom thinks more shelters for domestic violence victims are needed. She also says there needs to be additional funding for mental health treatment. On average, she says the 2,000 encounters Rose Haven has with women each year reveal that the great majority of them suffer from mental health disorders and traumatic histories.

Boerboom worries that many women do not seek services, choosing instead to hide themselves as much as possible, in order to escape from abusers. Creed thinks many women are hesitant to tell their story or access services, to reveal something personal, “and then that abuser will go, aha, there you are,” Creed says.

Singleton, who says the sample size of the women surveyed is “too small to draw conclusions from,” thinks more needs to be done to integrate and connect the variety of services that exist in Portland. She points to some changes in the intake procedure at the Salvation Army’s shelter that takes into account a woman’s particular needs, such as asking about prior relationships and how those relationships currently impact the women.

Agencies not sensitive to the needs and worries specific to homeless women will not be able to adequately help woman end their homelessness, according to Singleton.

“You relieve what happened,” Creed says. “You just don’t have someone to talk to who knows what’s going on.”

Singleton also thinks service agencies can lower barriers to their programs in order to attract more women “There are still a lot of programs that (require) sobriety,” she says, which “keeps a lot of doors closed.”

And subsequently, women continue to remain homeless and not access services.

Whitbeck and his fellow researchers plan to do a larger, two-year survey that would involve interviewing at least 100 women at three or four month intervals. Whitbeck wants to continue to do the survey in Portland, Omaha and Pittsburg, but also add Boston and New Orleans.

By tracking women across time, he told the group, themes and stronger data will begin to emerge as to what distinguishes homeless women from other homeless populations. More details about their physical and mental health will also emerge.

“If we can pull this off ... this will be the first study to focus only on women,” he said.

And he emphasized that the survey is not just for the sake of academic research and esoteric data crunching.

“This data needs to be put into practice.”

**FAIR HOUSING, from page 3**

practices in multiple districts, including in Polk, Umatilla, Clatsop, Tillamook, Lincoln and Washington counties, and the cities of Eugene, Corvallis, Beaverton and Klamath Falls – all resulting in evidence of discrimination much higher than standard complaint rates.

Commissioner Fish said the city could conduct another fair housing audit as soon as late fall, however, “we’re not going to do testing until we get it right,” Fish said. “I have a sense of urgency, but most importantly, we need to do it right.”

Moloy Good said he stands by the methodology used by his organization in showing different treatment to inquiring renters. He told Street Roots that the survey conducted for the city was never intended to stand on its own in a complaint process, but was rather a snapshot of what was going on for the city’s reference in crafting a plan.

“There has been a lot of misunderstanding about what the original intent of the study was, and what can be done with it now that it has been completed – especially with the public disclosure of who the targets were,” Good said. “That made it harder for us to move forward.”

Good said that FHCO typically conducts multiple tests and interviews before filing a complaint, however, they felt they had substantial evidence against Cascade.

“I went through their summary report,”

Good said of BOLI’s findings. “There are some times where (BOLI) just saw it differently than we did,” Good said. “We do believe that the results show different treatment, which is what we reported.”

Federal and state law lists a spectrum of “protected classes” as a measure of including all individuals and prohibiting discrimination of any category. Federally protected classes include race, color, national origin, religion, gender, familial status and disability. Oregon goes further in protecting marital status, legal sources of income and sexual orientation and gender identity. More recently, domestic violence survivors have also been listed as a protected class.

Good disputes the notion that his organization has an interest in finding housing discrimination in its surveys as a means of self-preservation.

“Our mission is to eliminate illegal housing discrimination, and that means we have to look for it everywhere, and sometimes that makes people feel uncomfortable. But we wouldn’t be doing our jobs if we weren’t doing that. Nothing would make me happier than to do one of these studies and find no different treatment.”

Caushana Hill, the fair housing staff attorney for the Oregon Law Center, was a member of the city’s Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Committee, for which the fair housing audit was conducted. She said it is important to put the audit in perspective as to the nature and prevalence of housing discrimination that happens in Portland. It can be a case of

racial prejudice, but more often than not, it stems from the needs and rights of people with disabilities, and even families with children. Hill noted in one case where the landlord charged a tenant a fee for letting her children play outside.

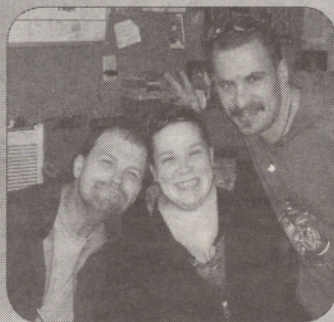
“It would be unfortunate if the discussions around this test became a distraction from what is the real issue, and that is the fact that people across the state are experiencing discrimination in housing.”

Hill emphasized that it doesn’t take a test from FHCO to stand up for your rights if

you believe you have been the victim of housing discrimination. The case always begins with a call, she said.

“It affects the way that all of us lives,” Hill said. “It’s difficult for people who live in Portland to feel like we’re a part of a just society when we still have people who don’t have the very basic right to decide where they want to live, to live in a place that is not only of their choosing, but also safe and welcoming to them.”

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