

City, county looking for landlords to house homeless veterans

BY EMILY GREEN
STAFF WRITER

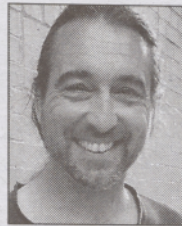
With approximately 360 Portland-area veterans still in need of housing, city and county officials are pleading with landlords to consider taking homeless veterans as tenants in order to reach local and federal goals of housing all veterans by the end of 2015.

"Maybe these veterans don't have the best credit history or rental history, but we're here to partner with you to make them successful," says Mary Carroll, Multnomah County's project manager for the Home for Every Veteran campaign.

In early June, County Chair Deborah Kafoury and Portland Mayor Charlie Hales signed off on a letter sent to 600 landlords, property owners and managers across the metro region, urging them to consider renting to homeless veterans. With local and federal funding allocated to pay all costs associated with the program, landlords can participate with little financial risk, according to Carroll.

Home for Everyone and Home for Every Veteran, local government and nonprofit collaboratives, have "made a commitment to landlords that they will not be left with unpaid expenses," should they rent to a homeless veteran, says Home for Everyone Director Marc Jolin.

But despite veterans' access to vouchers and funding, finding landlords willing to rent to them has been a challenge, says Multnomah County spokeswoman Jessica Morkert-Shibley.



Navy veteran Shawn Followell is one of 10 Street Roots vendors who signed up for housing vouchers in May. All 10 are still homeless. Followell says he usually sleeps under Tilikum

Crossing or along the waterfront so he's close to Street Roots for early morning newspaper pick-up. He sells in front of Stumptown Coffee Roasters on Southeast Division Street and 45th Avenue.

"We realize that the rental market is really tight, and they pretty much have their pick of the litter when it comes to having a tenant," she says, "but we are asking them, please, give a shot to homeless veterans."

To date, only about a dozen landlords have expressed interest in the program, says Carroll.

Homeless veterans who qualify are able to pay rent with vouchers provided to them through the Veterans Administration, and veterans who don't qualify for VA benefits are eligible for vouchers through Transition Projects and Home Forward. Funding from the state, Multnomah County and City of Portland cover additional moving costs, such as application fees, security deposits, and even a 24-7 landlord response team should problems arise. There are also funds available to cover any damage incurred to rental units not covered by the security deposit, says Carroll.

The county estimates it needs to find

housing for two veterans per day moving forward in order to end homelessness among veterans by 2016. Jolin says every year about 690 veterans in the Portland metro region experience homelessness. Locally, 300 veterans have been housed through the effort to end veteran homelessness so far this year, he says.

While the future of the federal incentive program is uncertain, Jolin says that locally, "We're trying to build a system that has the capacity going forward to fulfill the needs of homeless veterans and continue to have local investment."

In addition to federal and local funding for rent vouchers, application and other moving fees, Portland's regional public housing agency, Home Forward, has prioritized veterans, committing to renting 50 units located at properties in downtown Portland and the Pearl District to homeless veterans when they become available. A side effect of this prioritization is that other households that may have been waiting for housing longer may continue to wait.

Joani Jones, a landlord with property in Gresham, has decided to participate in the program. She says it's less risky than

renting to a typical tenant, who may have lied on their rental application, have an outdated credit report, or whose ability to pay rent may change after signing the lease.

She says the program even offered to pay the \$1,400 a month rent for the three-bedroom condo she had available while she screened potential tenants. She was also allowed to set her own parameters. She said she didn't want a smoker or pet owner. She rented the unit to a veteran with two young daughters a week and a half ago and says the process has been smooth.

"Right now finding housing is very hard, so if he didn't work out," she says, "I could put it in the paper and have 200 people wanting the unit."

"I would urge any landlord to at least look at this program," she says.

Carroll says the

offices of Hales, Kafoury, City Commissioner Dan Saltzman, County Commissioner Jules Bailey and Gresham City Councilor Karylinn Echols are following up with large property managers by phone in an effort to find housing for the remaining homeless veterans.

"We cannot be successful unless private landlords participate," she says.

GET INVOLVED

Landlords interested in renting to homeless veterans should contact Mary Carroll by emailing her at mary.carroll@multco.us or by calling 503-988-6796.

If you are a homeless veteran in need of housing, you can get started by going to the VA Community Resource and Referral Center at 308 SW First Ave. in Old Town, Portland, or by calling 211.

OHP Navigation Clinics in Downtown Portland

CareOregon and our partners make Oregon Health Plan navigation easy!

We offer help with:

- Medicaid medical, dental and mental health appointments
- Medicare eligibility for disabled and elderly adults

Find us at these locations:

City Team, 526 SE Grand Ave.
July 15.....8-10 a.m.
July 29.....8-10 a.m.

Clackamas County Community Corrections-Transition Center, 1024 Main Street 97045
July 14.....1-3 p.m.
August 11.....1-3 p.m.

Folk Time, 4837 NE Couch Street
June 29.....12:30-4 p.m.
July 27.....12:30-2:30 p.m.

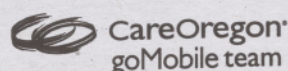
Lloyd Center, 2nd Floor by Cinnabon
July 8.....11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
July 15.....11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
July 22.....11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
July 29.....11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

P:EAR, 338 NW 6th Ave.
July 7.....noon-2 p.m.

Portland Rescue Mission, 111 W. Burnside
July 16.....8-10 a.m.
July 23.....8-10 a.m.
July 30.....8-10 a.m.

Sisters of the Road, 133 NW 6th
July 10.....5-7 p.m.

Union Gospel Mission, 3 NW Third Ave.
July 21.....2-4 p.m.
July 28.....2-4 p.m.



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Vendors sell Street Roots throughout Portland. If you want to find a vendor near you, call our vendor department at 503-228-5657