



PHOTO BY JOE GLODE

Robert Anthony, shelter manager with Human Solutions, talks with staff.

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hard-boiled eggs and chocolate cake. Anthony uses a megaphone to make announcements during dinner. As he starts talking, a child yells, "Quiet!" But it is never completely quiet. He talks to the residents about being mindful of their language around children and about the policy related to the plastic tubs. There is some grumbling.

After dinner, the tables and chairs are folded up and stacked in a storage room. People start laying mats on the floor and making their beds. By 9 p.m., there are 130 people in the shelter.

Lights-out is at 10.

Looking ahead

Whether people in the shelter have a good day or a bad day is as fickle as a rain shower in Portland. Jake and his family came to the shelter one day, looking utterly downcast. Their car had died. The engine began seizing as they drove to the shelter, and Jake said they barely made it.

"It's another blessing in disguise," Jake said with resignation. "It's just one less

thing to worry about."

They will have to throw out some of their possessions. Jake carried everything from the car after dinner and stacked their bags in the room they were assigned. He arranged for a towing service to pick the car up the next day.

The next day, they looked exhausted.

"We did a lot of walking today," Jake said. He sat on the floor, against the wall, and stared a few feet ahead of him. Their son lay on his stomach nearby.

Coney planned to move her family to San Diego, where her eldest daughter lives, in a few weeks. Menard and Raven are on the waitlist for a Section 8 voucher through the Columbia Gorge and Mid-Columbia Housing Authority. She would have to move to Sherman, Wasco or Hood River County. There is an 18- to 24-month wait with Home Forward, the housing authority in the Portland metro area.

After a year, Menard's Section 8 voucher becomes portable, which will allow her to move back to Portland.

"If I have to live in a tiny town like Morrow for a year, it's not going to be horrid," she said. "This has been a death of my old life and a rebirth of my new life in a very sudden and extreme way."



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MULTNOMAH COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

County installs needle disposal bins

STAFF REPORTS

Responding to what it called a significant increase in heroin and other injection drug use, Multnomah County Health Department officials have installed two large sharps containers along Portland's Eastbank to encourage the proper disposal of used syringes.

The containers – located under Burnside Bridge and on the Eastbank Esplanade near Salmon Street – are part of the city and county's 12-month pilot project called Health Streets. The pilot replicates similar programs in other cities to safely dispose of used syringes and promote harm reduction among injection drug users.

The pilot program includes outreach to injection drug users, including trainings and the distribution of the opiate-reversing drug naloxone, according to the department. County workers have been doing outreach for weeks in advance of the bin placements.

Used needles can spread HIV, hepatitis and other disease. A biohazard company has been contracted to empty the bins regularly.

In its announcement, the county health department said, "there has been a significant increase in heroin and other injection use in Portland as part of the overall increase in opiate misuse."

The county said it hopes the bins will serve people who, for reasons of disability, mental illness or personal safety, do not access existing local syringe exchange programs.

"This is part of a comprehensive public health strategy to reduce the harm of drug addiction in our community," said Dr. Paul Lewis, Multnomah County Health Officer. "This will help protect the community and at the same time, engage users. Engagement is the first step toward recovery."

The pilot is a partnership between the Portland Bureau of Transportation, Portland Parks and Recreation and the Multnomah County Health Department.

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