



Break it up!

Depave, an organization working to tear out pavement and restore green space, partnered with Human Solutions to transform a parking lot into a garden area for people in shelter

Photos and story by Joe Glode

More than 100 volunteers arrived on Saturday morning, July 30, ready and willing to help nonprofit organizations Depave and Human Solutions tear out 4,000 square feet of pavement from the parking lot of the Human Solutions family shelter in Southeast Portland. The morning's work was the first step in the creation of a green space, playground and garden for the residents that stay at the year-round, 24/7 family shelter.

"Today we're starting to build what every homes needs: a backyard," Human Solutions Executive Director Andy Miller told the crowd before the work began. Miller hopes the project will provide an example of how the collaborations and partnerships can address the city's homelessness crisis.

"In terms of meaningfully solving homelessness, we have to take to the kinds of partnerships that came together today and bring that to scale. While projects like the one we are doing today feel great and are really important in terms of changing the face of this shelter, I remind people constantly that a shelter is the beginning of the road, not the end of the road. We need to build the whole road."

The project, slated to be finished in September, was made possible by a grant from the East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District, and supplies and volunteer hours donated by Dennis' 7 Dees Garden Centers and several businesses and community groups throughout the city.

"Always when these projects get big, we pull in really generous partners. That's kind of what I like about the job," said Depave Executive Director Eric Rosewall. "There's some great funding sources. Then you have to figure out how to harness generosity throughout the community, and you always do. There's always so many awesome folks to help you get it done."

