

Housing Rural Oregon



PHOTO BY CELESTE NOCHE

Jim pushes a cart full of food out of Junction City Local Aid's food pantry. For Jim and his wife, the pantry is offsetting the cost of fixed expenses.

The new normal

Limited incomes, rising housing costs push families to food pantries to fill monthly budget gaps

BY THACHER SCHMID
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Walking through the immaculate, well-organized aisles of Junction City Local Aid's food pantry,

Jeanie Burr chatted happily with volunteer Peggy Saltz about produce.

"OK, so I got a cauliflower," Burr said, clutching three bags. "Look at the size of those potatoes! One of these will ..."

"... make a meal," said Saltz, finishing his sentence. "Raisins?"

Jim, another shopper who declined to give his last name, also seemed to be enjoying his trip to the pantry.

"I love brussels sprouts," Jim said. "My wife hates them."

A big man with a long white beard, Jim smiled as he described his love for super-spicy peppers. Another volunteer placed a bottle of Tabasco in his basket.

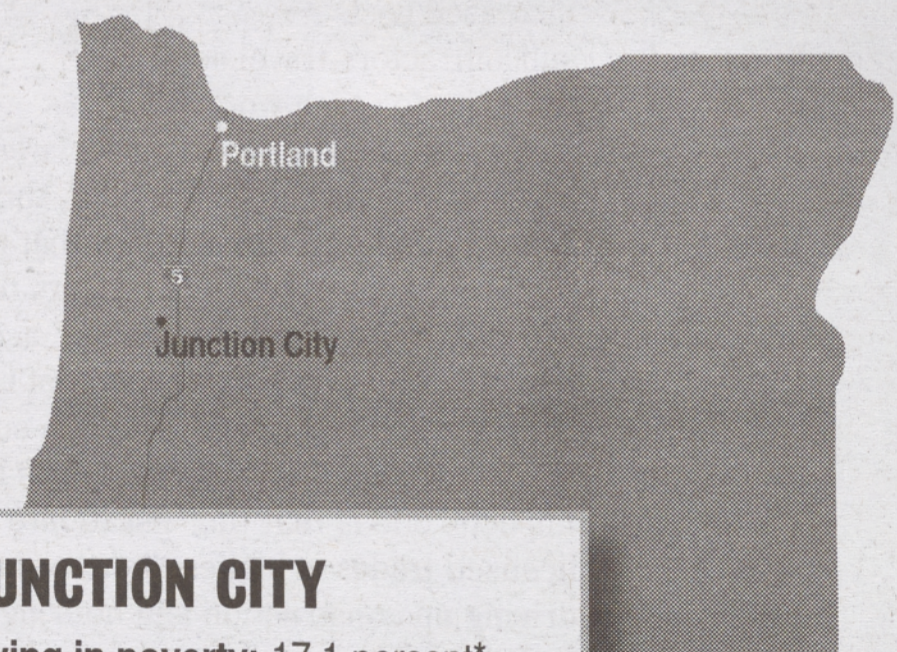
Burr and Jim said they felt no stigma accessing the pantry, even in a small town like Junction City, home to about 6,000 residents, in Lane County. It's a place where "everybody knows everybody, so everybody knows if you're having a hard time," said the pantry's executive director, Kori Rodley.

It's trips like these that have become normal for some families as a way to offset the burden

of housing costs, even in rural areas. Food

About this series

This article is part of Street Roots' Housing Rural Oregon series. Street Roots received funding from Meyer Memorial Trust's Affordable Housing Initiative to develop dedicated reporting on rural housing issues. Read previous articles from the series at news.streetroots.org/ruralhousing



JUNCTION CITY

Living in poverty: 17.1 percent*

LANE COUNTY

Living in poverty: 19.7 percent*

Mean renter wage: \$12.27**

Renters paying more than half their income in rent: 1 out of 3**

Homeless: 1,529***

Students (K-12) experiencing homelessness: 2,373 at some point in the 2016-17 school year**

Sources: *2012-16 American Community Survey five-year estimates, Census Bureau

**Oregon Housing Alliance

***2017 Point in Time Homeless Count (although the numbers are widely considered an undercount)

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