

Housing Rural Oregon



PHOTO BY CELESTE NOCHE

A young girl looks ahead as her mother loads supplies into her car after a trip to the Next Chapter food pantry in Ontario, Ore.

Home on the range

On the edge of Oregon's poorest county, Ontario residents deal with high poverty rates and few housing options

BY EMILLY PRADO
STAFF WRITER

In the thick of sweltering 104-degree summer heat, dozens of residents cling closely to the bare thread of shade offered by the Next Chapter food pantry at First Christian Church in Ontario, Ore. Veterans, single-household seniors, housed and houseless folks, and multigenerational families alike wait for their names to be called to enter the facility, which supplies an average of 28 to 32 households with fresh and shelf-stable groceries twice a week.

Angela Flying Eagle sits on a bench with her caregiver, Adela Salinas, drinking bottled water as both await their turns to stock up at the food pantry. Flying Eagle, who moved to Ontario from Bend in 2012, said she's faced ongoing safety issues with her current apartment,

including a faulty stove that her landlord fails to address.

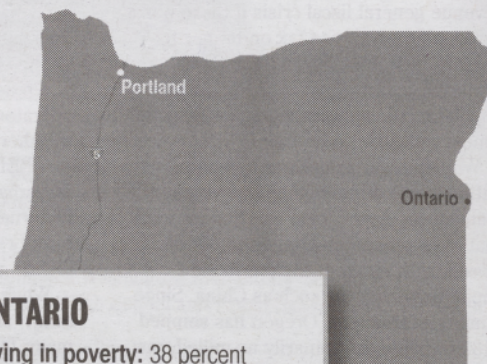
"I am a senior. I am on Social Security, and on \$700 a month they expect me to pay the rent, all utilities, and buy food with \$37 in food stamps," she said. "But I stay there because I need a roof over my head."

When Flying Eagle mentioned the difficulty she encounters in finding transportation to nearby food pantries, Irene Hunt offered to pick her up in the used vehicle she recently acquired.

"I feel that a lot more people would benefit and be able to come get services and food when they needed it if they had a form of transportation," Hunt said. "Or maybe it

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



ONTARIO

Living in poverty: 38 percent

MALHEUR COUNTY

Living in poverty: 25 percent

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

Adults experiencing homelessness: 151

Students experiencing homelessness: 318 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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