

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS UNHOUSED KIDS

In December of 2015, Eileen Chanti's pre-school program for unhoused children, First Place Kids, looked in danger of closing. The program had recently lost a staff member, and Chanti only had six months to find funding before she ran out of money.

Since then, Chanti says, an outpouring of donations from the Eugene community has saved First Place Kids from having to close.

After the program received some publicity in local papers, "there was a pretty intense stream of support," Chanti says. First Place Kids received donations from \$100 to \$5,000, and with a yearly budget of \$32,000, Chanti says the donations have allowed her to hire an assistant teacher.

First Place Kids is unique in the area — it serves around 200 children a year through drop-in classes three times a week at First Place Family Center. Because the program does not have mandatory enrollment, First Place Kids can accommo-

date the difficulties and unpredictable schedules often faced by unhoused parents.

Chanti says that in the past few months, First Place Kids has developed a gardening program and reimagined its classroom, replacing plastic toys with wooden toys donated from the Eugene community. The program continues to perform developmental screening for kids and connect families with resources across town that can help out.

Now, Chanti says, she would love to see First Place Kids expand to five days a week. The program will hold its first fundraiser June 24 with a paella dinner at Claim 52 Brewing.

"Our goal is to make enough money to be able to be there for families every day," Chanti says. "It's clear to me that the community cares."

First Place Kids' Paella Dinner Fundraiser is 6 to 9 pm Friday, June 24, at Claim 52 Brewing, 1030 Tyinn Street, Suite 1. Tickets are \$50. Call 541-743-7144 for more info. ■

SVDP LOOKS TO CONVERT CASCADE PRESBYTERIAN INTO HOUSING FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

There's no question that the crisis of the unhoused, the homeless, people on the street — however we want to designate those in need — has reached a critical moment in Eugene and Lane County.

And when it comes to the unhoused, kids and teens are the most vulnerable.

St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) wants to begin tackling this pervasive issue, says Paul Neville, SVdP's communications director. The nonprofit human services organization announced that it has a four-month option to buy the property at 3350 Willamette Street, the former home to the Cascade Presbyterian Church, which has moved its congregation to meet on Sunday mornings at Hi-Fi Music Hall.

The four-month option means that St. Vinnies, exclusively, has four months to raise the money to buy the property.

SVdP would use the property as residential facility for homeless youth with the main goal being, Neville says, keeping teens safe and in school.

"It's something we've been thinking about for a long time," Neville says. "This would be a facility that would serve homeless youth that are still in high school."

Neville says the target demographic is unemancipated homeless youth ages 16 to 18, a population he says is very vulnerable.

The idea stems from St. Vincent's job program for youth, the brainchild of SVdP's executive director Terry McDonald. Neville says there

are 40 kids currently in the program, which employs teens in SVdP and works together with the kids' schools.

"We provide a steady presence in their lives," Neville says. "We have a foundational base in this that helped inspire the idea for an actual residential facility."

The proposed facility would house anywhere from 15 to 20 teens at a time; each resident would have an individual room and bathroom. There will be an on-site residency manager and social services.

"The idea is to keep them in school and protect them," Neville says.

He adds that SVdP will continue to work closely with schools, as well as the city of Eugene, Springfield and the county.

"We have met with city planning officials, we have met with reps from both the Bethel and Eugene school districts — there is very strong support in the school districts for this project," Neville says, adding that Mayor Kitty Piercy and Mayor-elect Lucy Vinis both support the project.

He also says that the Council of South Eugene Neighborhoods has expressed its support for the project.

Neville says the next four months will be a "mad scramble" to raise the money to purchase the property, but the organization is optimistic.

"We've got the experience and the contacts to pull this off," he says. "I think there's going to be strong community support for something like this." ■

POLLUTION UPDATE

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) fined Junction City \$1,000 last week for discharging elevated levels of ammonia to Flat Creek from its wastewater treatment plant in December, January, February and April. The city's discharges take place pursuant to an expired Clean Water Act permit issued by DEQ in 2007. The permit expired in June of 2011, and includes a monthly average ammonia limit of 1.6 milligrams per liter; however, DEQ entered into an agreement with Junction City in 2013 under which DEQ will fine the city only when monthly ammonia discharges exceed 6.0 milligrams per liter (i.e., DEQ has essentially agreed to ignore violations unless the amount of ammonia discharged is almost four times what the city's Clean Water Act permit requires). The agreement between DEQ and the city does not protect the city from a third party Clean Water Act citizen suit.

Doug Quirke/Oregon Clean Water Action Project



HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

SAMANTHA WISE

In the spring of 2015, Samantha Wise took a job delivering *The Register-Guard* newspaper. She had a 5-mile route that took four hours to walk in the early morning. "I had painful knees from jogging," she says. "I learned about barefooting, and I went without shoes around the house and doing errands."

Within three weeks of beginning her paper route, Wise had become a 24/7 barefooter, and she no longer had pain in her knees. "It's one of the most enriching things I've done," she says. Wise became a barefooting activist after she was told by a manager at Market of Choice that she couldn't be in the store without shoes. She joined the online group Barefoot is Legal and returned with a packet a few days later. "If a store is open to the public," she told the manager, "it shouldn't discriminate on the basis of a dress code."

She points out that no shoes, no shirt, no service policies began in the '60s as a way to discriminate against anti-war hippies. An American citizen born in Mexico, Wise moved to White Salmon, Washington, her father's hometown, at age 3, then to Eugene, where her mother entered the UO, when she was 8. She graduated with honors from Northwest Youth Corps' OutDoor School in 2004. She started having children at age 21 and now has five: Simone, Syllas, Ayasha, Rylee and Sadie, ages 10 to 3. She lives with them and her husband-to-be Phillip, a wildland firefighter, in South Eugene. Her two online stores, Modern Zenobia and DIY Nails Direct, can be found on Facebook.