



ILLUSTRATION FOR EUGENE WEEKLY BY JAMES MINCHALL

NO RESOURCES

The mentally ill and unhoused get kicked back out on the streets

BY JESLYN LEMKE

Nathan Anderson is looking back at me through the visitor's window at the Lane County Jail. He's wearing inmate scrubs and has old, shiny scars up his left forearm. He holds a note up to the glass.

"PTSD, depression, ADHD, obsessive compulsive disorder, bipolar disorder," the note reads.

I hold up my response to the glass: "When you were on the streets of Eugene, what were your daily symptoms?"

He writes back: "Out on the street, depends on how people treats me. Mostly I feel depressed. Keeping my mind on how bad I want death. Sometimes I feel anxious when I had a good day. Sometimes I see bad things that give me sadness and/or PTSD attacks."

Framed by the window, Anderson's torso stands out starkly in the barren and somewhat haunting jail visiting room. All of Eugene's madness comes charging through this building at weird hours; Anderson is sharing a facility with people facing charges of homicide, assault and rape.

With his cocktail of mental health issues, is this really the place for Anderson to heal?

Anderson, 34, has been deaf and mute his whole life. Currently he is being held at the Lane County Jail for a charge of possession of methamphetamine and first-degree arson. Police records state Anderson set fire to a cement wall of C & K Petroleum Equipment on West 2nd Avenue on July 15. The charge could carry a hefty prison sentence if he is convicted.

Anderson writes another note, saying he was admitted to the Sacred Heart University District "psych ward" [his words] for four days in January and then a second time for about a week in the spring.

"Felt rage and felt homicidal with suicidal," his next note reads.

Anderson's time in the ER on 13th Avenue, his rocky journey trying to keep a bed at the Eugene Mission, and St. Vincent de Paul's Service Station and his subsequent arrest in July are a grim reminder of the broken circuit of services for homeless mentally ill people in Eugene and Springfield.

The Eugene-Springfield area is under an immense strain for available resources for members of the homeless community going through a psychotic break, partially because of the closure of the Royal Avenue Shelter in 2014, which had 19 beds for mental health crises. The only