

Bags of Love, a Eugene-based nonprofit founded in 2008, provides necessities and comfort items to children who are in crisis due to abuse, neglect, homelessness or poverty.

The bags are hand-sewn by volunteers and filled with a range of constant necessities — toiletries, clothing, pajamas and school supplies — and items for enjoyment, including age-appropriate toys and books.

According to Bags of Love's website, each bag contains a handcrafted quilt or fleece blanket, made to help "soothe and comfort children experiencing scary and uncertain times, as well as address the immediate needs of these children during transition."

Bags of Love says it partners with more than 50 community agencies, including American Red Cross, CA-HOOTS, Hosea Youth Services and more, that help in the distribution of more than 1,500 bags annually.

"We rely on our volunteers and community support to meet this production goal," the nonprofit says.

Bags of Love is always in need of monetary donations and supplies, welcoming donations including clothing for children of all ages, disposable diapers, toiletries, toys and material for blankets and quilts. The group also welcomes volunteers of all ages to help at the facility or help make blankets and bags.

Bags of Love has seven donation drop-off locations around Eugene. For more information on where to donate items, how to volunteer or find information about upcoming events, visit bagsofloveinc.org. — *Dave Fried*

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Many veterans returning home from combat are not able to make the tough transition back to civilian life. These former soldiers often self-medicate instead of seeking professional help, leading to drug addiction, deeper depression, domestic problems and homelessness.

Veterans Legacy, a nonprofit organization in Springfield, proposes a novel and active solution to this issue.

Over the course of the past year, Veterans Legacy has been restoring the former Lane County Sheriff's Office Inmate Forest Work Camp in Alma. The group's eventual goal is to house 40 to 55 veterans suffering from PTSD, drug addiction and other adjustment disorders in the rural setting. These individuals will have access to psychological care as well as engage in agricultural therapy. The vision for Veterans Legacy is that this supportive community will provide the forum for the veterans to heal and restore the self-sufficient drive that residents feel like they lost after leaving the military.

After 10 years of disuse, the former work camp in Alma was in a state of disrepair. Since February, Veterans Legacy has restored some order with the help of community partners. John LeBow, president of the board of directors for the nonprofit, says, "The Sutherland Woodshop donated their time to laser cut our sign, then Gene Stringfield Building Materials donated the timber for the signage and finally the Lane Electric Co-op brought out augurs to dig holes in order to mount the posts. This story is a great metaphor for our organization."

Lane Electric, Comfort Flow HVAC and the Willamette Valley Rebel Rally are just a few of the businesses donating time and materials to Veterans Legacy. Like most nonprofits, however, this one still grapples with the financial reality of relying on the goodwill of donors in order to have operating revenue.

"There is tremendous enthusiasm for this idea," LeBow says. "But that hasn't translated into a lot of people writing a check."

The goal is to have Veterans Legacy up and running this summer, beginning with one to five residents. There are over 28,000 veterans living in Lane County, the highest per capita population in Oregon.

To learn more about the nonprofit, to donate or for a drone tour of the developing work camp in Alma, visit the group's homepage at veteranslegacyoregon.org.

Housing our Veterans is another nonprofit group seek-



REV. DOUG HALE RUNS THE STUDENT FOOD PANTRY

PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA

ing to help homeless veterans in Lane County who are often suffering from drug addiction and PTSD. Visit housingourveterans.org or contact Lorie Perkins at 541-606-9220 or housingourveterans@comcast.net about giving a hand to the group.

Reining Spirit is a horse rescue that works with dads of divorce and veterans that also buys horses headed for slaughter and rehabilitates them. Find them at [facebook.com/reiningspirit](https://www.facebook.com/reiningspirit).

Eugene PeaceWorks is a nonprofit that seeks to bring the reality of war and what it is like to be a soldier to the general public. Their website is members.efn.org/~eug-peace. — *Matthew Denis*

The season of giving is upon us, a cherished time to give to those near and dear to our hearts. As you ponder meaningful ways to give, think about supporting groups that seek to improve the lives of those in our community who need it most — the homeless.

The **St. Vincent de Paul Service Station** (svdp.us) is a safe haven for homeless adults in the city. Located on Highway 99, the Station welcomes the homeless into a place of warmth and shelter daily from 8 am to 5 pm, providing food, the opportunity to shower and do laundry, as well as offering resources, supplies and assistance for personal crises.

The Station opened with the assumption that 50 or so people might pass through on an average day. Instead, according to manager Carmen Peer, more than 200 homeless come in daily, while others visit as they are passing through town.

"Everyone deserves basic necessities: a place to go to the bathroom, food, shelter," Peer says. "This is the place to come for those things for so many people."

The Station has indoor and outdoor elements, both featuring picnic or round tables for people to sit, chat with one another and "enjoy the family-style environment," Peer says. It has cubbies for people to check in personal belongings, movies always playing on large TVs and a free pet clinic twice a month thanks to **Pro-Bone-O** (proboneo.org).

Breakfast and lunch are prepared and served from the full-service kitchen, and a variety of snacks along with bottled water are offered generously until closing time. "We make sure to let everyone load up on snacks before they go, because a lot of them won't have anything to eat or any place to be until we open again tomorrow," Peer says.

With winter approaching, the Station will see more individuals on a daily basis. "Imagine being outside all day and all night, with no place to go," Peer says. "It's a privilege to be able to welcome so many people here."

The Station is always in need of support. You can volunteer to help prepare, serve or clean up breakfast and lunch any day of the week; you can donate items includ-

ing sleeping bags, backpacks, personal hygiene supplies, socks, shoes and coats; and, of course, you can give money to help support the operations.

"On the very rare occasions that we have to close for a day, we have so many people ask, 'Why can't we go home?'" Peer says. "This place is a home."

Occupy Medical is another volunteer-run group that faithfully serves the homeless, offering free medical care out of a mobile clinic every Sunday to those who otherwise can't afford services.

The group is in need of toiletries, first-aid supplies, nutritional supplements, winter shoes, boots and socks. Items can be delivered to Unitarian Universalist Church, or checks made payable to "Occupy Medical" and sent to PO Box 50354, Eugene, OR 97405. Visit occupy-medical.org for more information.

Another group that would benefit from support this season is **White Bird Clinic**, which "provides a range of safety net services for people who are unserved, underinsured, disabled and homeless," says operations coordinator Heather Sielicki.

"We see ourselves as operating below the safety net because we try and catch the people who fall through the holes," she adds.

White Bird Clinic prioritizes serving the homeless, offering a medical clinic, drug and alcohol treatment program, homeless case management, mental health services, 24/7 intervention services and more. The group is in need of money, winter supplies and volunteers for specific projects.

To find out how you can help, visit whitebirdclinic.org, find the group on Facebook or call 541-342-8255.

Carry It Forward is a small organization that delivers donations directly to unhoused individuals as well as to the organizations that serve them, including Occupy Medical, Egan Warming Centers, Community Supported Shelters and others. The group also provides emergency survival items and laundry assistance to individuals in acute need.

This winter Carry It Forward is launching a project to employ several homeless individuals to provide laundry services to the five sanctioned camps in Eugene. Donations of used warm clothing, coats, socks, winter shoes, camping gear such as backpacks, tents, tarps and blankets or sleeping bags go directly to those in need, and monetary donations are used to fund laundry and emergency needs. For more information, please visit carryitforward.net.

A Community Together, ACT, is an independent nonprofit community resource aiming to improve the quality of life for those in Lane County and beyond. ACT's projects center on civic engagement, civic journalism, financial services and community organizing, and the group focuses primarily on those in poverty and the homeless.

Monetary donations are the greatest need and can be sent to P.O. Box 1214, Eugene, OR 97440. Please reach