



ANGELA STRAWSER AND JACOB POLLARD VOLUNTEER AT ST. VINNIE'S NEW DOWNTOWN DAY STORAGE

PHOTO BY ATHENA DELENE

NEWS

BY TAYLOR GRIGGS

TAKING A WEIGHT OFF

People can now store their stuff in a new day storage facility in downtown Eugene

The city of Eugene and St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County have started a day storage facility where unhoused community members can drop their belongings. The PODS storage container is located in downtown Eugene, and is mainly intended for people who don't have another place to store their stuff, which requires them to lug it around so it doesn't get stolen.

This storage facility provides a daytime solution to the problem, and SVDP employees staffing the storage say the response downtown has been positive.

Roxann O'Brien, the director of the SVDP Lindholm Center, is one of the people approached by the city to start the project. "We see where people are struggling with all their belongings on their back," she says. "I think, number one, their bodies will be saved a little bit."

Judith Baker has been using the facility. She says it has been valuable to have a place to store her things while she is dealing with some personal problems that require her to be mobile, not carrying a lot of stuff. She watched as a man came up to the facility, frus-

trated because the things he left the day before weren't there anymore — the PODS are emptied at the end of each day. "It's going to be helpful," Baker says. "But it's too bad it's not available 24 hours."

The facility is located in an otherwise empty lot by The Kiva grocery store at Olive Street and 11th Avenue. Melissa Brown, one of the owners of The Kiva, says she was trying to get something to fill the lot, which has been vacant for a while and has filled up with trash and become an environmental hazard. "Anything is better than this empty lot," Brown says. This project goes along with other efforts from the city of Eugene to clean up the downtown area and make it safer.

Lack of 24-hour access aside, the facilities have been popular so far. O'Brien said 61 people accessed the facility in the first four days it was open, and more are expected as the word gets out.

The PODS storage facility is at 11th Avenue and Olive Street in downtown Eugene. It is open every day of the week from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm.



HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

JASUN 'PLAEDO' WELLMAN

"I had a rough childhood," says Jasun Wellman, who grew up in Estacada, Oregon, until age 7, when his father died. Wellman then wandered through Oregon, Washington and Idaho, "a lot of different schools, drugs and violence, police visits and poverty." Adopted at age 11, he lived with his grandma when he graduated from high school in Deary, Idaho. "I was always a good student," he notes. "School was a respite from chaos at home. I concentrated on poetry and history." He enrolled at the University of Idaho in Moscow, where he escaped the scourge of drugs with the help of a sympathetic policeman, who caught him with drugs but let him go free, and a poetry professor, who arranged a year of study abroad at a Buddhist monastery in Thailand. On his return to Idaho, he stood

up at an anti-Iraq-war rally to read the poem that was slipped under his door in Bangkok, "Our Deepest Fear," by Marianne Williamson. A woman in the crowd got up to say that the poem had changed her life. "She's now my wife, Megan Swan," he says. Swan chose to call him "Plaedo," a name that inspired him to change his major to philosophy, and later sparked his career as a storytelling hippie-hop philosopher, workshop coordinator and social justice activist. Shortly after he and Swan moved to Eugene in 2011, Plaedo emceed a rally for Occupy Eugene that drew 1,800 participants. He co-founded the Eugene Avant-Gardeners food activism group in 2013, and currently works with at-risk youth in the city's Downtown Youth Initiative. He hosts monthly events at the Peterson Barn Community Center. Catch his performance at 2:30 pm Saturday, July 14, in Community Village at the Oregon Country Fair.