## Housing

**Continued from P1** 

"Because of the scarcity of state funding, affordable housing developments are becoming more reliant on local support," said David Brandt, executive director of Housing

'The city of Redmond has long recognized the relationship between affordable housing and the growth of new businesses and has included housing in its economic development program."

The City of Redmond provided more than \$3.2 million of the funding needed through an Urban Renewal Loan, Community Development Block Grant and system development charge fee waiver. Without the city's support, this development would not have been



The development features one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments and is the first affordable housing development in Central Oregon to include apartments for households earning up to 80% of the area median income.

Additional funding was provided by Oregon Housing

and Community Services and includes Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Oregon Affordable Housing Tax Credits, Oregon Multifamily Energy Program, and loans from Washington Federal and Housing Works.

Midtown Place is loaded with efficiency measures including extra insulation, high performance windows, ductless mini-split heating and cooling, LED lighting and energy star rated appliances. Midtown was designed with an urban flare by Pinnacle Architecture from Bend and constructed by Pacific Construction Company from Redmond, the release said.

Housing Works, the project developer, is the regional housing authority for the three Central Oregon counties and has built or acquired over 1,200 affordable rental housing units since its founding in 1977. Housing Works is currently developing a new affordable rental community in Prineville and soon will be starting a rehabilitation project on a 96unit development in Bend. Housing Works has existing communities in every incorporated city in Central Oregon except Culver and Metolius.

Midtown Place is the third affordable housing development in Redmond undertaken by Housing Works in the past three years. The other two communities include Canyon Edge Apartments, a three-building 67-unit family development on Reindeer Avenue near Canal Boulevard, and Liberty Lodge, an 8-unit community reserved for tenants with developmental disabilities.

To learn more about Housing Works and the variety of housing services they provide throughout Central Oregon, visit www.housing-works.org, or call 541-923-1018.

## **Fluke**

**Continued from P1** 

"I didn't know what was going to happen, and I ended up losing a good job," Fluke remembered. "Merchandising was not important after that because of COVID, and they wouldn't travel and everything was shut down."

Fluke had a lot of physical issues she wanted to heal, so she took time away from working for much of 2021 with the help of expanded unemployment benefits.

When those expired in September, she made a new plan, this time to take her talents and abilities to Arizona with a friend.

But once again, her plans changed when the friend she planned to go with "flipped a switch," and the move was off.

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So, Fluke took to the road. She spent days and nights "wrestling" with herself at a rest area on U.S. Highway 97 overlooking the Crooked River, trying to figure out how to keep trying. She wanted to be a "giver," but it felt like every door she tested — jobs, family, friends closed.

Then, the cold came.

In early November, she drove to Redmond, reading about the warming shelter online and making it her temporary

"I just know that I'm supposed to be here, even if I don't know where I'm going," Fluke said. "As far as I'm concerned, it's better than I could do on my own right now."

Now, she goes to the shelter early each night, offering to sweep or otherwise help prepare for the two dozen guests that sleep there each night.

Fluke wants to work — she did another short spell at Home Depot, but a prior meniscus injury she didn't get physical therapy for made it a challenge to stand for hours at a time.

"My knee wasn't ready for me to be on my legs for four hours. So I switched gears just to focus on getting healthy and building up my legs so that I can do something — what, I'm not sure," Fluke said. "I have goals of doing something, but I go to therapy three days a week right now, until I can feel like I can keep up a job, especially because a lot of jobs here are on your feet."

Wanting to hold a job while being homeless forced Fluke to overcome the common misconception that those experiencing homelessness don't have a desire to work. She's also learned about the invisible struggles many face and the mental health services needed to overcome them.

"When you're working and you have everything you need, you don't realize how much of this is people are fighting their demons on a daily basis," Fluke said. "You can't just give them a tent and a blanket and say, 'go there."

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## John Breen: Family of three living in Redmond shelter after rent went up



Rvan Brennecke/The Bulletin

John Breen, 79, sits down for a meal at the Redmond warming shelter at Mountain View Fellowship Church on Thursday, Jan. 20, 2022.

66 Me and my

**BY ZACK DEMARS** 

he Redmond apartment John Breen shared with his wife and son fit the family's budget. Then the landlord raised the rent and their home went from affordable to unaffordable.

An increase from \$965 a month to \$1,050 a month was all it took for the 79-year old and his family to be homeless for the first time.

"We lost our apartment because it got to be too high for us — it's supposed to be low-income housing, but it's not," Breen said. "They just jacked it up, you know."

That was five months ago. They've been trying to find a new place to live ever since.

"Me and my wife have been together 28 years and this is the first time we've ever been homeless," Breen said.

Breen is a retired Walmart employee, and his wife worked for an area motel until she got injured.

When the rent went up at their apartment, they tried to find rent

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wife have been together 28 years, and this is the first time we've ever been homeless."

John Breen, 79, pictured above sitting down for a meal at the Redmond warming shelter at Mountain View Fellowship Church earlier

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assistance to help cover the difference. The nonprofit they contacted for help told the family they made too much to qualify for assistance.

"How much is too much? By the time you cover the rent and the electricity and all the other stuff, you've

**BRING EVERYTHING** 

pretty much used up your money," Breen said.

When that didn't work, the family moved their belongings into a Bend storage unit and started living out of the family's station wagon.

(We) went from a big place to a little car," Breen said. "Had to put all our stuff in storage, that's expensive."

When the weather got colder, and the three wanted to save money on gas, they found their way to the Redmond Winter Shelter, where they've been staying.

Earlier this month, Breen and his family pushed three mattress pads together on one side of the shelter, turning one corner of the gymnasium, where Shepherd's House hosted the shelter, into the best home the family could find for the time being.

Breen said the family wants to stay in Redmond, where they've lived for 20 years and raised their son. They're hoping to find new housing in the next few weeks — but they aren't having an easy time.

He hopes the region can provide more affordable housing for families

"We're looking around right now. The cheapest one we found was \$1,800 a month and there's no way we can afford that," Breen said. "That's a robbery."

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