

HOMELESSNESS



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald
Jimmy Jones, executive director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, and Ashley Hamilton, program manager, connect with one of the area's homeless residents as part of their field work with ARCHES. "I wish I could spend the next year taking groups of 10 people out with me every day, that would be the best use of time I could make. Just to humanize the problem," Jones said

HOW TO SEE A CRISIS

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

STEP 1

FIND A REASON
TO SEE HOMELESSNESS

Ken Houghton is one of the hardest people to find around the ARCHES office in Northeast Salem.

Houghton is the first full-time outreach specialist at ARCHES, a provider of a wide range of services to the area's homeless population. He spends most of his time finding out what homeless people need to make their experience survivable and then figures out how to meet those needs. He might be in the field or an office around the corner, but no one ever knows where he is at any given moment. Even co-workers have to call him regularly to figure out where he is. Houghton once got locked inside the building one evening because he does the work so quietly and efficiently. It seems like a harried existence, but it's a step up as far as Houghton is concerned. He used to work with only homeless veterans,

but the toll it took was too much. "It was heartbreaking because I would have to tell people, 'I can't do anything for you because you're not a veteran,'" Houghton said. "Everyone deserves to be seen and be heard and the dignity that comes with that. My heart goes out to every single one of them."

Houghton's own experiences with homelessness inform how he approaches the people he serves now. "These are people who have experienced a life-long history of trauma. They've had their hope

"They've had their hope crushed so many times that they don't want to engage in that chance of it happening again."

— Ken Houghton, ARCHES

crushed so many times that they don't want to engage in that chance of it happening again," he said.

Ashley Hamilton, ARCHES program manager, feels the universe yanking at her heartstrings when she asks what someone needs to keep going and prompts another

potential client opens up and become vulnerable.

"I see the imperfections in myself reflected in them. It's the realization that any one of a number of mistakes could have put me on the path to homelessness — that could happen to any one of us and not everyone has the support they need," Hamilton said.

The fight ARCHES is embroiled in on a hyperlocal level is a personal matter for Jimmy Jones, executive director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency (MWVCAA). ARCHES is one of many programs that operate under the MWVCAA umbrella.

"I got into this work because my father had been homeless and I don't feel like I did enough when he was alive to address that problem. I have a personal drive in this," Jones said. "If I had my way, I would walk into the woods with a bucket of keys and say, 'Come follow me,' because those are the people that aren't being reached by this system. We are focusing on all the wrong outcomes and it's a tragedy of just Biblical proportions in my view."

The very need to explain anyone's motivation for pursuing help of the homeless would frustrate ARCHES Community Resource Program Coordinator Breezy Aguirre from the moment the question was asked — and she's not wrong.

Stories of unrecognized or overlooked talent among homeless people or unpredictable failures that ended with them on the streets tend

to draw the most attention to the problem and flood media streams on a daily basis. Such stories might resolve issues for the individual at the heart of the story, and maybe just until the next stumble from grace, but they do little to move the needle for the people still on the streets. Requiring someone to open a vein of pain and anguish in exchange for assistance might just as easily be considered offensive.

"They shouldn't have to tell us their story to be treated like human beings. They have the same hopes and dreams," Aguirre said. ■

STEP 2

ABANDON WHAT YOU
THINK YOU KNOW

For Jones, one of the fascinating-frustrating things about his work is that everyone seems to have an expert opinion on where homelessness stems from and how to solve it.

Depending on one's leanings, the origins fall into a couple of overly-simplistic possibilities.

For many, the source of homelessness is a crisis of morality,

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Thatcher rep: 'No reason this bill should have been killed'

Shooting range legislation disappears after gaining early approval

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

A bill that might have addressed a shooting range across from Keizer in Polk County appears to have died with barely a whimper last week in the Oregon Legislature.

The bill (Senate Bill 1040) would have allowed the owner, operator, lessee of the property to be held liable for injuries resulting from



K. Thatcher



B. Post

bullets leaving the range. The individual discharging the firearm might also have been held liable if the final bill had gone to the governor's desk.

Jonathan Lockwood, spokesperson for Sen. Kim Thatcher, didn't mince words when it came to the disappointment over its death.

"Sen. Thatcher worked very hard to get this public safety bill passed, but the Democrat supermajority is prioritizing tax scams and trampling on the Constitution, so her renewed effort to revive this needed bill is a long-shot," said Lockwood. "There is no reason this bill

should have been killed, it was a constituent bill."

Thatcher co-sponsored the bill with Rep. Bill Post.

After passing a vote during the third reading of the bill with a whopping 24-4 majority, the Senate Committee on Judiciary held a public hearing on the bill Monday, May 20. The Committee opted to deliberate on it the following day, but never did. SB 1040 appeared on the committee's

agenda on May 21 and 22 and then disappeared the following day without explanation.

"Real simply ... this bill has to do with, call it a recalcitrant property owner, refusing to satisfy the city that had a safety situation. This bill creates another layer of protection," said Thatcher during the May 20 public hearing.

Keizer City Attorney Shannon Johnson said the city is taking the position that the shooting on the

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Race walking Olympian?
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What it takes to be a principal
NO ADULTS
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Black student unions take root
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McNary softball ousted from playoffs
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