

How we let homelessness become a nationwide crisis

By CASEY CHAFFIN
For the Keizertimes

Before becoming director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency (MWVCAA), Jimmy Jones taught Western Civilization as a professor. When asked to explain the crisis of homelessness in Salem, he reverts to his background in history and sociology.

Starting around the 1980s, he explained, the federal government cut funding to social services, expecting state and local governments to pick up the slack. In many places, state and local governments either couldn't afford it or wouldn't prioritize it.

"So the greatest irony is the problem was government generated," Jones said. And, he added, "It's government perpetuated."

The system as a whole is underfunded. But social services funding, when it arises, often has restrictions, which may or may not be informed by the realities of homelessness. This makes it difficult for those in homeless services to serve individuals with the most acute needs.

Homeless families and veterans often receive more state funding, even though they're on the low to moderate end of need and aren't as often chronically homeless, Jones said.

Another significant point in the timeline, he said, is the state deinstitutionalization of mental health care in the 1960s. State funded institutions weren't replaced by increased local mental health infrastructure. People who struggled with mental illness weren't moved into new services. They were left without services.

For those who lived in state

hospitals, he said, "A lot of those people went outside and stayed outside and never went back."

For the following generations of people struggling with mental health, services didn't materialize, either. In Oregon, an underfunded and underserved youth mental health care system allows mental illness to reach crisis levels in adulthood. Some of them end up homeless, too.



J. Jones

Even for physically and mentally healthy individuals, the risk of homelessness looms. For lower income individuals throughout the U.S., the cost of living has increased faster than wages. Federal data shows that 39 percent of American adults would struggle to deal

with an unexpected \$400 expense.

In Marion County, the lack of affordable housing is a constant refrain.

According to Housing and Urban Development (HUD), fair market rent in the Salem area for this year is \$761 a month for a one bedroom.

An unscientific search of websites like Zillow, Trulia, and Apartments.com - the same kind of search someone looking for housing might do - turns up only a handful of apartments at or below fair market rent. Often, the search filter for "income restricted" or "low income" turns up zero results.

Fallyn McCarty, who works directly with homeless individuals in her outreach work for the HIV Alliance, sees a lot of older adults without shelter for reasons of affordability. One man in his 70s, she said, "gets \$600 a month for Social Security. What can you buy? Where can you live?"

"So he sleeps on a park bench."

The staff at ARCHES, a local homeless services agency, complicates the picture of housing affordability and availability further. Their agency works alongside the Salem Housing Authority to find apartments and provide rental assistance for homeless individuals through the Homeless Rental Assistance Program (HRAP). Even if they can find a unit with a reasonable rent, there are other roadblocks to placing people in housing.

"It's the right kind of housing for the person - that's what we don't have enough of," Ashley Hamilton, ARCHES' program director, said. "It could be an elderly individual of limited mobility. How many first floor bedroom units are there that are ADA accessible internally and externally" as well as affordable?

Another wrinkle: Is the apartment eligible for Section 8 vouchers for low income individuals, which HRAP tries to transition their clients to after a year or two?

And another still: Will the landlord work with someone with poor credit, a criminal record or an addiction?

The answer, often, is no, shutting out a sizable portion of people who are currently homeless or tottering on the edge of homelessness.

"I think it has been a total collapse at all levels that has led us to this particular moment," Jones said. "And since nobody wants to blame themselves, everybody struggles to see that."

Instead, he said, the blame shifts to those who are homeless, for making bad choices or for choosing to be homeless.

"If you're going to start blaming the homeless for their condition," he said, "we're not going to make any progress because you're looking in the wrong direction."

Lack of shelter makes solvable problems nearly insurmountable

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

One of the horrors of 52-year-old Sharon Rene Pritchard's death last month is that it was entirely predictable.

There's even something like a formula for calculating it, tri-morbid homelessness. If a shelterless person is dealing with physical ailments on top of mental health diagnoses coupled with a substance abuse problem, research suggests they will die on the streets around age 52.

As far as her family knew, Sharon was in decent physical shape, but that was nearly three years ago. And Sharon had been seeking relief from mental health problems in the bottom of a bottle for at least the past decade.

Ashley Hamilton, program manager for the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency's ARCHES Project, said it is difficult to speak about specific cases without a full medical history, but that Salem-Keizer's chronically homeless population "experience tri-morbidity almost 100 percent of the time, and all of the people in our homeless rental assistance program have experienced tri-morbidity."

Someone is tagged as chronically homeless if they have lived without shelter for more than 12 months or their episodes of homelessness outweigh the times when they have shelter.

The only proven way to move someone out of the tri-morbid designation is get them into safe, consistent shelter, Hamilton said.

"Housing is the first line of defense, people can have a place to live and survive the physical, mental and substance abuse problems," she said.

Without housing, the outcome can be fatal,

as it was in Pritchard's case.

Even though Pritchard did not die of exposure, her fate is not out of line with the patterns that have been studied, according to Hamilton.

"When you are homeless, you cannot meet your basic needs, you aren't eating, you aren't showering, you aren't sleeping - that's a huge one - and you are not able to access the services you need to have better health," she said.

The stresses of living without consistent shelter also ages people more quickly.

"Someone who has been on the streets for 10 years, might have aged 20 or 30 years," Hamilton said.

Unfortunately, fatalities are also hard to track when people fall out of touch with support services such as ARCHES.

"Anecdotal, we probably have five cases like this per year and they're devastating each and every time. The next time we hear about them is in the news when someone gets hit by a car or dies of hypothermia," Hamilton said.

It's also going to keep happening until area officials commit to a solution that goes beyond shuffling people from one public space to another. Less than a month after Pritchard died, another 44-year-old homeless man walking his bike in south Salem was struck and killed by a driver reaching for a fallen cell phone.

"This is just going to keep happening until we can find adequate housing solutions for everyone. It can be rental assistance, transitional housing, adequate shelter capacity or anything that gets the first brick in the wall," she said.

"Anecdotal, we probably have five cases like this per year and they're devastating each and every time."

— Ashley Hamilton
ARCHES program manager

public notices

NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS

In the Matter of the Estate of Robyn Wellman Marion County Circuit Court Case No. 20PB01318

All persons having claims against the above-identified estate must present them, within four months after the date of the first publication of the notice to the personal representative at the address designated in the notice for the presentation of claims or they may be barred.

Tristan Wellman,
Personal Representative
c/o Sam Sears
570 Liberty St. SE,
Suite 240
Salem, Oregon 97301

All persons whose rights may be affected by the proceeding may obtain additional information from the records of the court, the personal representative, or the attorney for the personal representative.

This notice was first published on March 20, 2020.

3/20, 3/27, 4/3

NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS

NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS
In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon
for the County of Marion
Case No. 20PB01794

In the Matter of the Estate of Sharon Gienger, Deceased.

Notice is hereby given that Sharon Gienger died January 23, 2020, and that by order of the above entitled Court, the undersigned has been appointed Personal Representative.

All persons having claims against the Estate are required to present them to the Personal Representative at 693 Chemeketa Street NE, Post Office Box 2247, Salem, Oregon 97308-2247, within four months after the date of first publication of this notice or said claims may be barred.

All persons whose rights may be affected by this proceeding are advised that additional information may be obtained from the records of the Court, the Personal Representative, or the attorneys for the Personal Representative.

Rebecca James
Personal Representative

Sherman, Sherman, Johnnie & Hoyt, LLP
Attorneys for Personal Representative
693 Chemeketa Street
Post Office Box 2247

Salem, Oregon 97308-2247

Date of first publication: March 20, 2020.
Second and third publication: March 27, 2020 and April 3, 2020.

3/20, 3/27, 4/3

NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS

NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that SARAH J. SPRAUER has been appointed Personal Representative of the ESTATE OF PATRICIA C. BATHKE, deceased, by the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon for Marion County under Case No. 20PB01808. All persons having claims against the estate are required to present them, with vouchers attached, to the said Personal Representative at Stayton Law, PO Box 248, Stayton, OR 97383, within four months after the date of first publication of this notice, or the claims may be barred.

All persons whose rights may be affected by the proceedings may obtain additional information from the records of the court, the Personal Representative, or the attorney for the Personal Representative.

Dated and first published March 20, 2020.

Personal Representative:
Sarah J. Sprauer
1538 Westfield PI
Stayton, OR 97383

Attorney for Personal Representative:
Jennifer L. Tiger,
OSB#990890
Stayton Law
PO Box 248
Stayton, Oregon 97383

3/20, 3/27, 4/3

NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS

NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that SARAH J. SPRAUER has been appointed Personal Representative of the ESTATE OF PEGGY ELLEN FOURNIER, deceased, by the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon for Marion County under Case No. 20PB01807. All persons having claims against the estate are required to present them, with vouchers attached, to the said Personal Representative at Stayton Law, PO Box 248, Stayton, OR 97383, within four months after the date of first publication of this notice,

or the claims may be barred.

All persons whose rights may be affected by the proceedings may obtain additional information from the records of the court, the Personal Representative, or the attorney for the Personal Representative.

Dated and first published March 20, 2020.

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Stayton, Oregon 97383

3/20, 3/27, 4/3

NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS

NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS
In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon
for the County of Marion
Case No. 20PB01873

In the Matter of the Estate of Douglas B. Arensmeier, Deceased.

Notice is hereby given that Douglas B. Arensmeier died January 14, 2020, and that by order of the above entitled Court, the undersigned has been appointed Personal Representative.

All persons having claims against the Estate are required to present them to the Personal Representative at 693 Chemeketa Street NE, Post Office Box 2247, Salem, Oregon 97308-2247, within four months after the date of first publication of this notice or said claims may be barred.

All persons whose rights may be affected by this proceeding are advised that additional information may be obtained from the records of the Court, the Personal Representative, or the attorneys for the Personal Representative.

Gayle A. Arensmeier
Personal Representative

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