

# ARCHES,

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and concerns he encounters during conversations:

- Distrust of shelters and warming centers.
- Assistance enrolling in the Oregon Health Plan.
- Questions about getting into a shelter.
- Applying for food assistance.
- The location of the nearest landromat.
- Displacement because of rising waters along the banks of the Willamette.
- The location of a payphone anywhere in Salem.

Marshall knows a few of the regulars by name, but many are new to him. He runs the warming center program for ARCHES as well as its day center where the area's homeless residents can take a shower, do laundry or pick up a hot meal.

For Marshall, there was very little of the beforetimes. Before a pandemic that launched millions of job losses, before requirements to quarantine and limit contact pushed thousands more who were already in tenuous housing situations onto the streets of Oregon, before a wildfire displaced yet more homeless people into the Willamette Valley. Marshall started his job in January 2020.

Despite such crises, Marshall is a veritable fireball of enthusiasm.

"There's a role for everyone to get engaged, anyone that's got a heart to serve. I'm confident that I'll be able to find a role for that person," Marshall said.

In part because of people like Marshall, ARCHES has not only continued serving the homeless population but expanded its services in multiple ways. One of those is in doing outreach in places where homeless camps have appeared.

"We're still taking COVID precautions, but we are now visiting all the outlying areas (such as Independence, Dallas, Woodburn, Silverton and areas of the Santiam Canyon). And we're able to make the rounds to each of those places about once a week," Marshall said.

Infusions of grant money from regional, state and federal sources gave ARCHES the ability to hire more outreach coordinators and outreach employees that cover the expanded ground. A renewed sense of partnership between local organizations seeking to support homeless individuals is also helping create more of a blanket than a shawl for homeless people.

Still, Marshall said, the agency needs more volunteers. With temperatures forecasted to dip into the teens and 20s in the run-up to Christmas, Marshall needs about 45 volunteers every night to staff ARCHES' three warming centers. Interested readers can apply for warming center shifts and other duties at: [tinyurl.com/volwarm](http://tinyurl.com/volwarm).

There are as many circumstances leading to homelessness as there are homeless people, but those who haven't experienced it often think they know a one-size-fits-all solution. The executive director of the Community Action Agency, Jimmy Jones, would rather the community think about it as a public health crisis that can be solved by making shelter a priority. Unfortunately, some areas, like Salem and Keizer, are more in the business of making homelessness survivable.

For Marshall, the answer isn't even that complicated.

"Everyone out here is somebody's somebody. Underneath it all, they have the same beating heart to stay alive," Marshall said.

Because ARCHES has been able to expand its outreach efforts, one of the ways they've tried to foster connections is sending the same personnel to the same camps.

"We don't push people to services, but we come back as often as we can to keep the

connection. Someone living outside for years might have to be contacted hundreds of times before choosing to accept help," Marshall said.

If a client decides to start the process, ARCHES workers walk the individual through every step.

Frequently, getting help means meeting certain expectations or checking a variety of boxes in exchange for assistance. In the past 18 months, Marshall and others at ARCHES have tried to eliminate some of those hurdles.

Because of the pandemic, a warming space that once held 80 people can now only admit 30. ARCHES created additional warming sites with community partners and tried to keep barriers to a minimum. At one time, if a client was found to be breaking a warming center rule, such as consuming alcohol on-site, they could be banned from using them again. Marshall began trying a different approach and it came down to language as much as anything else.

"If we find them in violation, we tell them that 'It didn't work out tonight, so let's try again tomorrow,'" Marshall said. "I don't like the term breaking down barriers, but I like to think we are chiseling away at them."

Even phrases that many take for granted — such as "have a nice day/weekend" — feel like a microaggression when dealing with the homeless population.

"It's not like they are going to Coachella," Marshall said.

For Marshall, the next steps include doing more of what local services are already attempting to do, figuring out where weaknesses are present and finding another partner whose strength fills in that gap.

"There is a lot of coaching and mentoring each of our

organizations can do to keep building each other up," he said.

In the grand scheme, finding one person willing to accept assistance might not seem as though it makes a difference, but Marshall has seen what those connections can do, even if it is temporary.

"I found out about a guy near the I-5 exit on Portland Road. A person had stopped to offer some help and found out he was covered in bug bites. I went down there and found him and we got to talking about what happened. He'd laid in a bush and got eaten up by whatever was in there.

"Unfortunately, I hadn't brought anything with me so I raced back to the office and grabbed a tent and a sleeping bag and some first aid supplies. On my race back to him, I called someone who makes hot meals for us and asked her if she could meet me there with one. By the time I got back, the person who had posted about this guy on Facebook had already come back with ointment for the bug bites, too."

Marshall spent about two hours with the man and walked with him to a public bathroom where he could clean up and apply the treatment to the bug bites. While the story is one of his favorites to retell, it wasn't the bug bites that stuck with him most.

"It was his age. That guy could have been my younger brother. He's somebody's somebody," Marshall said.

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Ridge. Paslay started off buying everything with her own money, but that was not sustainable. It meant she had to find an alternative way to raise money.

About a year ago Paslay established Capital Senior Services— a business designed to whisk independent seniors away from their homes on their dream adventures.

"I would take elderly to the beach. We would go places and go to the casino, or we would go to nice restaurants on the coast, like the Spanish Head," Paslay said, adding that Spanish Head is a "hit" with the elderly.

Previously, she worked as a Certified Nurses Assistant (CNA). While Paslay loved spending time and talking with elderly folks, she did not enjoy working for large corporations, so she became an independent contractor.

Things were looking up for Paslay, who found a job she thoroughly enjoyed, until the pandemic hit in March.

Since older seniors are at high risk of complications or death due to COVID-19, Paslay dedicated her time to getting supplies to people who were afraid or unable to leave their homes. She posted a fundraiser on Facebook and was able to raise around \$6,600 to buy groceries and supplies for seniors.

"[I thought] 'What can I do to show people my business cares?' So, that's what I did," Paslay said.

Eventually she ran out of money, but restrictions were starting to lessen in the summer so she was able to take a client to the beach following all COVID guidelines.

As the holiday approached, she began thinking about seniors who would go without family contact this year, and how she could raise money to do it.

"I'm from Washington, I didn't know that if you return a bottle you get 10 cents back. That's new to me," Paslay said.

Her and her twin sister, who lives in Portland, set out to collect as many bottles as possible, but Paslay ran into a problem as she went door to door.

"They'd give me like 10 cents and their garage would be open and you'd see 10 bags just sitting there from quarantine," Paslay said.

Even so, Paslay purchased enough gifts for the entire memory care unit and then started purchasing other gifts for seniors in need. The gifts contain chocolates, a puzzle, a blanket, non-skid socks, jewelry for the women and a razor kit or body lotion for the men.

"My husband was like, 'it's the memory care unit, they're going to forget,' but it's not about that. It's about Christmas and giving back to the community. It's about showing people how to make others happy," Paslay said.

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