

# Veterans: They need more than housing to lead a fulfilling life

Continued from Page 1A

The program can afford to spend about \$600 a month on a single veteran's housing needs, yet few landlords in the community rent apartments and housing units for that amount, he said.

Coy has housed several veterans in the region, and has worked with cases involving single veterans, to veterans with a family of four living out of a car. Three veterans are scheduled to be housed soon, he said, but 11 additional veterans who qualify for the program must wait for housing to become available.

"It's a national problem," Coy added.

## Bottom-line barrier

The Northwest Oregon Housing Authority runs a program, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, called the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

The program's primary tool to support veterans is a "VASH" voucher, a relatively new asset for Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook counties that helps veterans rent from a private landlord. Right now, 41 vouchers have been allocated to the service area.

"We're excited and hope we can get more VASH vouchers on board," said Todd Johnston, executive director of the housing authority.

But the scarce housing options can prevent the vouchers from doing much good.

"That's the biggest issue we've seen right now, is a lack of available housing — just units in general, whether it's low-income affordable, or just market-rate units," he said. "Even people with a voucher that can rent a market-rate unit, there's just nothing available right now in all the three counties that we serve."

Herzig said housing vouchers amount to a "fishing license": They allow people to hunt but do not guarantee a catch — and veterans with vouchers in hand often remain homeless simply because homes are in short supply.

Local landlords sometimes evict veterans and other tenants because the landlords can make more money during the summer with a weekly or weekend rental than with a monthly rental, Coy said.

And the money to be made on short-term vacation rentals dissuades developers from building affordable housing, Herzig said, adding that he's heard developers say the bottom-line is better served by building boutique housing.

## Fighting for home

Veterans need more than housing to lead a fulfilling life after serving their country, according to Hannah Silverman, an emergency response specialist and active duty member of the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Columbia River who opened the presentation.

They need access to healthcare, nutritious meals, psychological counseling and, sometimes, substance



ABOVE: The crowd listens during the Lower Columbia Diversity Project's Helping Our Heroes: Addressing Veteran Homelessness in Clatsop County panel discussion Sunday. BELOW: Hannah Silverman, with the U.S. Coast Guard, gives a presentation Sunday about homeless veterans during the Lower Columbia Diversity Project's panel.

Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

abuse care and aftercare. Without these services, many veterans risk sliding into homelessness.

Dan Brown, a U.S. Army veteran living in Restoration House in Seaside, shared his story of post-traumatic stress and personal tragedy that led him to drugs and alcohol and, from there, to committing a robbery that landed him in prison for 10 years. Though he's been sober for 11 years and is working to put his past behind him, Brown's felony charge makes him, in most circumstances, unemployable and unhouseable.

Patrick Preston, a disabled veterans employment representative for the Oregon Employment Department who served in the U.S. Army, said post-traumatic stress, borne of experiencing emotional intensity day after week after month after year, is indescribable.

"It just doesn't come down overnight, sometimes never," he said, adding that veterans must often be housed in a stable environment before case-workers can effectively begin to address veterans' personal development.

Decent housing — a safe space for people to work, play, raise families and live their lives — is a main factor that determines the health of individuals and communities.

"Housing actually has a whole lot more to do with health than a lot of people realize," Brian Mahoney, director of Clatsop County Public Health, said.

Johnston said he once heard a landlord, after discovering the challenges many veterans — specifically former felons — confront just to get a roof over their head, remark: "These veterans fought for our home. Now it's time for us to fight for theirs."



## COMING IN FEBRUARY!

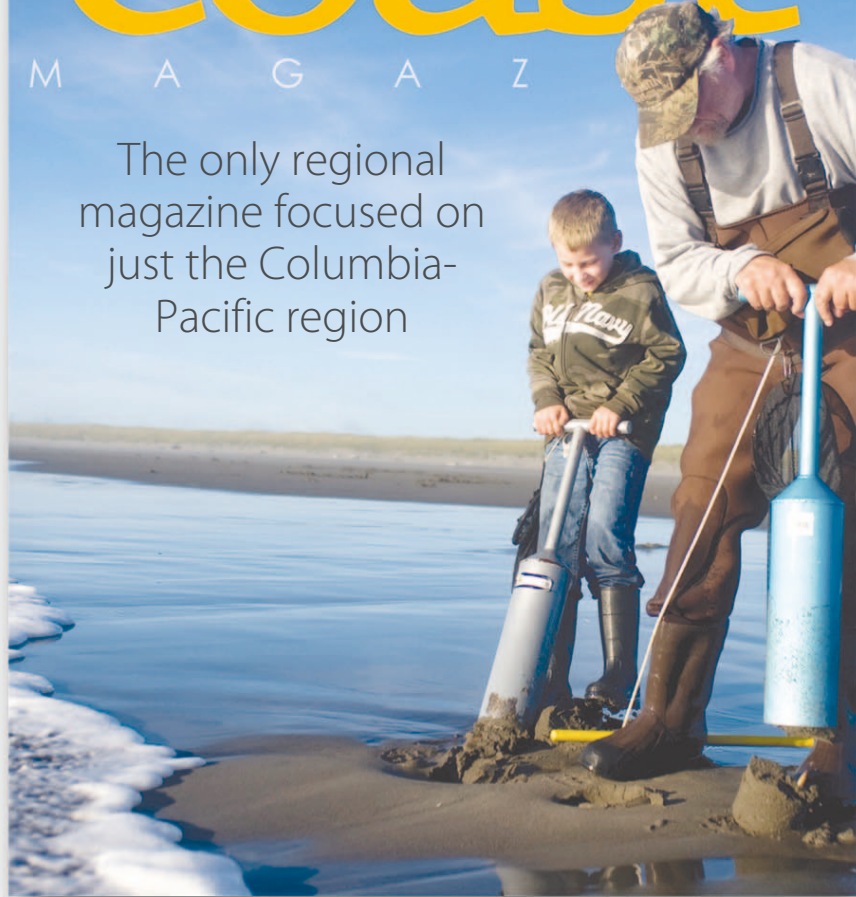
2016 EDITION

of the award-winning publication from the publishers of Coast Weekend

# our coast

M A G A Z I N E

The only regional magazine focused on just the Columbia-Pacific region



## RESERVE YOUR SPACE TODAY!

Advertising deadline: December 18th, 2015

**ALL VETERANS**  
AND CURRENT **MILITARY PERSONNEL**  
**EAT FOR 1/2 PRICE**  
VETERANS DAY WED, NOV 11TH

CHECK OUT OUR  
**DAILY SOUP & LUNCH SPECIALS**  
MONDAY - FRIDAY • OPEN DAILY AT 11AM

**NORMA'S**  
SEAFOOD & STEAK

1 BLOCK OFF BROADWAY • 1 BLOCK FROM BEACH  
20 N. COLUMBIA, SEASIDE • 503-738-4331  
NormasSeaside.com

*I Am Thankful*

*This is the time of year when we reflect on our lives and our blessings*

There are many that list something they are thankful for each day in November on social media.

On Thanksgiving Day, The Daily Astorian will dedicate a full page in our classified section to the community, allowing a time to share something you are thankful for.

There is a 20 word maximum for each submission. This allows more people to participate.

How to participate:  
email your "I am thankful" to- hlarkins@dailyastorian.com  
or mail to- The Daily Astorian, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103,  
Attn: Holly Larkins **Deadline: November 20th at 5pm.**