

Homelessness: Seniors have become more at-risk for it

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While the count has remained nearly stagnant, “the face of homelessness is changing,” said Suzanne Evans, crisis and mental health case manager at Helping Hands Re-entry Outreach Centers. The Seaside-based nonprofit agency was a partner at the event and provided clothing, shoes and cold-weather accessories to participants.

In particular, seniors and households with children are being more affected. In 2015, the 617 households counted included 278 people younger than 18.

“It used to be, years ago, mostly single men; then it transitioned to women, and then women with children,” Bruce said.

Staff member Viviana Matthews agreed, saying they still see “the chronically homeless,” but have seen more families come through. Evans, who made appointments for

people to sign up for health insurance, said she believed this year’s event brought in a lot of new faces. Close to 150 households attended this year’s Project Homeless Connect, according to Matthews.

Overcoming barriers

Clatsop County has tight resources and does not have many employment opportunities, Bruce said, especially those that provide living wages. Some people move to the area misinformed about the job opportunities or unaware of how the job market is seasonal, Matthews said. She feels local agencies and the media are doing a good job bringing awareness of homelessness in Clatsop County, but that also may be why some people see it as more of a problem.

Housing, personal habits, lack of marketable skills and numerous other situations contribute to the issue. As the disabled veteran’s outreach and placement specialist with the



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

People walk through booths set up at the Project Homeless Connect event Thursday.

Oregon Employment Department, Patrick Preston sees numerous barriers affecting veterans as they search for jobs. Often they have skills but not always those needed in today’s job market. The same goes for many senior citizens, said Theresa Medina, participant assistant for Experience Works. Medina and Preston said their agencies, as well as Pacific Northwest Works and other groups, help job candi-

dates receive training, hone skill sets relevant in the local job market and perfect resumes and interview strategies.

“The Employment Department isn’t going to get you a job,” Preston said. “What we will do is prepare the environment for success.”

Medina agreed seniors have become more at-risk for homelessness. Many are not as computer literate and technology savvy as may be

required, and they sometimes resist change.

“You get them out of their comfort zone and they don’t want to be there,” Medina said.

It takes a village

The Astoria Rescue Mission, which has partnered for the event since its genesis, emphasizes building a support system around those in need. The faith-based nonprofit provides a homeless shelter, food and clothing — items to meet people’s immediate physical needs. Their mission also includes a six-month discipleship program, daily Bible studies, services and other programs to satisfy spiritual needs, according to office manager Robert Warriner.

“When they find people to care about them and their needs, it becomes a family,” House Manager Bill Eckstein said.

Alisha Luck, a field program assistant with event newcomer Family and Community Together Oregon, also sees

how important it is for “underserved” community members to network and find support. The organization assists those with disabilities by providing education and opportunities to network with others in similar circumstances. As the proverb goes, Luck said, “It takes a village to raise a child,” and the “family networking piece is that key.”

Speaking from experience, Luck said that when she was homeless and raising a daughter with disabilities, she felt cut off from a lot of important information. Newcomers to the area also may experience a disconnect.

Project Homeless Connect’s value, she said, is it links people to the services, resources and information they need, or even those they did not realize they needed.

According to Evans, “It’s nice to see us all come together” to give people the referrals and resources they need “in one fell swoop.”

Land: Restrictions placed on ranchers gain visibility in D.C.

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“They’re less of a spectacle and should be taken more seriously,” Nie said.

Far-right interpretations

The philosophy of Bundy and his followers, meanwhile, is entangled with far-right interpretations of the U.S. Constitution and the power of county sheriffs but does not offer any serious proposals for changing federal land policy, he said.

“I don’t think this spectacle has helped that cause at all,” he said.

Among people who were uneasy about excessive federal authority, though, recent events will likely reinforce the notion that the government is out-of-control, said Mark Pollot, an attorney who is fighting federal agencies in court on

behalf of deceased Nevada rancher Wayne Hage.

Left-wing protests, such as “Occupy Wall Street,” invaded private property and were more disruptive than the refuge standoff but did not elicit a similarly strong-armed reaction from the federal government, he said.

Pollot said that distrust of the government will particularly rise if there are indications that federal agents overreacted during the arrests and that Oregon State Police did not have to shoot the protesters’ spokesman, LaVoy Finicum.

If nothing else, the confrontation will show that Western land policy is more than a minor issue and deserves congressional attention, Pollot said.

“It will add some weight to the debate,” he said.

On the other hand, there’s

the risk of a shift away from the political and legal channels that critics such as Wayne Hage have traditionally used in the “Sagebrush Rebellion” against federal land policy, he said.

“I’m concerned there will be people who will now think that’s worthless,” Pollot said.

‘Martyr for the cause’

The restrictions placed on ranchers have gained visibility in Washington, D.C., Salem and Portland, but that doesn’t mean they will be changed, said Bruce Weber, director of Oregon State University’s Rural Studies Program.

It’s unclear how the existence of a perceived “martyr for the cause” will change the situation, Weber said.

“People who believe the Constitution prohibits federal ownership and management

of those particular lands won’t change their minds,” he said.

Concerns about growing federal restrictions on public lands long predate the refuge occupation and will likely continue even if the current conflict is resolved.

Bob Skinner, a fifth-generation cattle rancher in the Jordan Valley area, heads a group opposed to the proposed Owyhee Canyonlands wilderness and conservation area, which would cover 2.5 million acres in Oregon’s Malheur County.

The designation would severely regulate or prohibit grazing and other activities on an area that is bigger than Yellowstone National Park and covers 40 percent of Malheur County.

Skinner said his worst fear is that the arrests of several

protesters and the death of Finicum will “activate” people who hold similar anti-government views.

Visibility for Western concerns

Even so, the incident has brought more visibility to Western concerns over public land.

“I can’t help but think it’s brought some awareness to government overreach, that might have some impact,” Skinner said.

U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Ore., compared the standoff in southeast Oregon to the “Black Lives Matter” movement, which arose in reaction to conflicts between law enforcement and the black community.

“Rural America faces the same lack of recognition,” Schrader said.

There’s a “palpable sense” that government policy has focused on the economic welfare of urban areas while overlooking rural areas, he said.

As to the effect of the occupation on the federal land debate, Schrader said the impact is uncertain.

While people sympathize with the hardships faced in the rural West, the occupation has also shown they have no appetite for lawlessness, he said.

Schrader said he and other members of Oregon’s congressional delegation are pushing to reform overly restrictive rules on grazing and logging while protecting the environment on federal property.

“The scales have tipped so far to the left that you can barely do anything there, it’s so cost-prohibitive,” he said. “We’ve got to change the federal policy.”

Ferry: Tourist No. 2 serviced Astoria from 1924 to 1966

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“‘Bring it home’ is sort of our catch phrase right now,” Dulcye Taylor, vice president of the nonprofit board, said.

Inspections, repairs planned

The ferry is scheduled to get dry-docked and inspected by the U.S. Coast Guard at a shipyard near Seattle’s Lake Union next month. A consultant interfacing with the Coast Guard may perform an extra in-the-water courtesy inspection, either at Lake Union or at its current location at the Bremerton Marina in Washington state, the owner, Capt. Christian Lint, said.

After seeing to the minor repairs, Lint plans to personally skipper the ferry down to Astoria, where it will undergo final repairs and certification. But whether the Tourist No. 2 would stay moored in place during the bridge commemoration, or whether it would welcome riders and ply the riverfront, remains to be seen.

“One way or another, I’m bringing the boat down,” Lint said.

In service from 1924 to 1966, the Tourist No. 2 is Astoria’s last ferry still intact.

Last summer, Robert “Jake” Jacob, the majority owner of the

Cannery Pier Hotel, contacted Lint after discovering the ferry’s whereabouts. Along with The Astoria Ferry board, they are working to get the vintage vessel seaworthy and southward before the year is out.

That said, Astoria City Councilor Cindy Price, who is leaving the board but will continue to support the effort, added, “We’re not concerned about the timing because, when boat gets here, it’s going to be here for many years.”

On the waterfront

All of this — from the haul-out in Seattle, to the refurbishment in Astoria, to purchasing the ferry from Lint — will cost money, of course.

The Astoria Ferry — which still has board seats available — has formally affiliated with the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association, which will act as the fiscal sponsor as the nonprofit solicits funding.

Lint said he has not fixed a price but is open both to leasing the vessel to the nonprofit and selling it on a contract for a down payment and installments.

“Fortunately, (Lint) believes that it belongs in Astoria,” said Taylor, who is also the president of the downtown association. “He has been giving it tender, loving care as it sits and waits for us in Bremerton.”

After the initial investment, the ferry could pay for itself over time — including the staffing, insurance and maintenance — through user fees and donations. Even tied to a dock, companies could rent out the ferry for cocktail cruises and private parties, generating a great deal of revenue, Jacob said. Trips along the waterfront could feature narrative tours of the city.

Lint, who bought the ferry from Ferry Kirkland LLC about six years ago, said that, based on its last inspection, the Tourist No. 2 — a three-deck wooden-hull ferry built with old-growth timber — is sturdy enough to “outlive all of us.”

“Wood boats live way beyond our lifetime,” he said. “They don’t deteriorate. They last for as long as you maintain (them). They don’t rust away.”

Lint said he can’t wait to steer this particular wooden boat over the Columbia Bar and beneath the bridge that put it out of business.

“I’m anxious to get cruising down the coast,” he said.

Interested donors can visit the Tourist No. 2’s official website, astoriaferry.com, and its Facebook page at <http://bit.ly/AstoriaFerry>.

“I think this is a historic opportunity,” Price said.

Distiller: ‘I think it’s ludicrous’

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Cary, who has won praise for his line of craft vodka, gin and other spirits, plans to fight this time.

“I’m taken aback by it,” he said. “I think it’s ludicrous. It makes no sense.”

If House Spirits Distillery was truly concerned about intellectual property, Cary said, the company would have also gone after larger operations, such as Rogue Ales and Spirits, which runs the House

of Spirits in Newport.

Cary said he spent \$10,000 on his last name change and had vetoed several options before settling on Pilot House Spirits, a name that evokes Astoria’s history as the home of bar and river pilots.

“Pilot house has a special meaning,” Cary said, adding that he tried to explain the name to House Spirits Distillery, to no avail.

Trademark infringement issues have grown as the number of distilleries and breweries

around the United States has reached historic levels. Last year, the American Craft Spirits Association reported 769 distilleries nationwide. The Brewers Association reported more than 4,000 craft breweries.

Cary is not the only local purveyor to face trademark challenges. River Mile 38 Brewing in Cathlamet, Washington, was forced to change its name from Drop Anchor Brewing last year after Anchor Steam Brewing in California threatened to sue.

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