

# Homeless camp: 'Most of the people here are good people'

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## Behind Goodwill

The homeless camp was established by a group that included Richie Williams and Jim Hughes, both in their 50s at the time.

The main part of the camp is nestled under a canopy about a two-minute walk from the Goodwill parking lot. Beyond that, a network of tents are spread out in discrete locales throughout the woods. While some enjoy the bustle near the main camp, others prefer privacy in other parts of the woods.

For most of its existence, the camp was more peaceful than it has become lately. Especially in daytime hours, campers would sometimes talk about topics like politics, philosophy and religion.

The camp includes makeshift wood shops, paintings, clotheslines and a number of large tarps and tents for privacy. It also features garbage bins and fold-out chairs. Tree branches have been cut for shelter and to clear pathways.

"Most of the people here are good people," said Lonie Davis, who lives at the camp. "Most of them are doing drugs, but they're not a harm to anyone else. But there's a few bad eggs in the batch."

Warrenton has experienced sharp growth in development paired with — like other cities in the county — a lack of affordable housing.

Housing options for people with substance abuse or mental health issues are limited, said Alan Evans, CEO and founder of Helping Hands, a nonprofit that works with the homeless. As a result, many resort to camping.

"People are just trying to survive and get by with their ailments," Evans said. "It's going to take a long time to solve the deeper issues in our community."

The camp is unusually large for Warrenton and, unlike other camps, not on public property. For the most part, though, its appearance and location — near a store — are similar.

"It's kind of a citywide issue," Workman said. "We have, probably, not the same amount of homeless, but ours are all hidden."

The camp's location is ideal. The woods offer seclusion, while the nearby businesses and offices allow for quicker access to resources.

"It's convenient because there's a store right there. There's a bank right there, you



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian  
**Marcus Journot rides his bike past a wagon loaded with material to be removed.**

know," said Tammy Lagerquist, who doesn't live at the camp but spends significant time there because her daughters have been there on and off about four years.

Lagerquist's daughters, Christina Dawson and Lori Lagerquist, gravitated to the camp because of Hughes, whom they knew well. With Williams dealing with physical ailments like severe back pain, Hughes tried to keep the camp from becoming disorderly, and he vetted people who entered.

"This was his camp, and he took care of everybody. He was like the dad of all the kids, even me," Tammy Lagerquist said with a laugh.

But that changed a few months ago when Hughes died of natural causes. Since then, more people moved in, and complaints about noise and unruly behavior increased. The Warrenton Fire Department was called this summer after a man fell out of a tree, and police have noticed less cooperation from the campers.

"Jim wasn't really around to put his foot down, I guess," said Marcus Journot, who lives at the camp.

The opening of Walmart nearby may have compounded the issues. Astoria 911 Dispatch has received 172 calls since the store opened in June, 29 of which were related to property crimes.

Snodgrass has seen about 20 to 30 more homeless people in the area than usual this summer.

"It's kind of weird. I guess they follow Walmart. I don't know," Snodgrass said.

The escalation hit a high point in August. After a dispute about his wife, Ryan Dawson allegedly struck Ernest Bean with a hatchet several times in the head while Bean was in his tent, which was situated where Hughes once lived. Dawson is at the Clatsop County Jail and has been charged with attempted murder and first-degree assault. He is scheduled for an early resolution conference in October.

Bean still has scars from his injuries, but he was treated and released fairly quickly.

"Luckily I have a pretty hard head," Bean said.

Campers point to the incident, which happened less than two weeks before the notices were issued, as a primary reason for the police department's urgency. But police notified the property owner, Washington-state based North Coast Retail LLC, about the camp weeks before the hatchet attack and had been given permission to issue the notices.

"Everything was in the works already. It was kind of coincidental. We knew it could happen out there," Workman said.

## Eviction

While the 72-hour eviction notices were issued nearly two weeks ago, police planned to give people still at the homeless camp at least a couple of weeks to move out due to its size, Workman said.

Police will return to the camp soon. People trespassed in August will be subject to arrest or citation, Workman said. Anyone who was not

issued a 72-hour notice before will be handed one and given time to move their possessions.

The property owner is responsible for the leftover trash but can request criminal mischief or littering charges for damaged property or garbage.

As people have left, much of their property hasn't. Neighbors have complained that trash is beginning to form on streets and walkways near the camp.

"I see new garbage every day, I swear," Snodgrass said.

A few of those remaining say they want to help clean the place before leaving. That task is becoming more difficult, and the constant search for Nimz's bow and arrow continues to be a thorn in the camp's side.

"This is a cool place and we're wrecking it. If you go back here and look now, I can't clean up after these dudes faster than they're throwing garbage back into the road looking for this bow," Davis said. "You know what, I've been trying to leave for three weeks. I'll be the last dude standing here. I might get a big ticket for it, whatever, but I'm



**A notice to vacate left by the Warrenton Police Department lies on the ground in the main camp.**

not walking away."

Nimz and Snodgrass wanted to move out of the camp this week. After all of the fuss over the missing bow and arrow, Nimz was given the weapon back. The couple hopes to move to Portland and seek treatment for Nimz, who has Crohn's disease and wears a colostomy bag around his stomach.

Others have no clue what they will do next. Since Williams, for instance, has trouble walking, he is unsure how he will be able to relocate. Police may as well "slit my wrists and shoot me between the eyes," Williams said while lying down inside his tent.

Some, like Bean, have found other places to camp. Bean said a permanent living situation is not realistic with his monthly income — \$750 in Supplemental Security Income and \$122 for food stamps.

"Wherever I go, they'll find me again and say, 'No, you can't be here,'" Bean said. "In the landowner's defense, I wouldn't want to come back and see my property like that. I feel for them."

Criminal records will also present hurdles for many of the campers trying to find permanent housing. Snodgrass, Nimz and Davis, for instance, have been convicted of drug-related

crimes, along with other felony offenses.

A few in the camp have suggested that the city or county should establish a central location for homeless people to camp, which could include access to services like water and plumbing and trash disposal while allowing police to supervise them.

For now, police attempts to find homeless camps and remove them can be like a game of whack-a-mole.

"No one's going anywhere," Davis said. "They're going to move right. They're going to move left. You're never going to find them."

## Bow and arrow

Nimz and Snodgrass were cleaning their tent area Wednesday afternoon, still hoping to move out sometime this week. At the beginning of the afternoon, Snodgrass seemed embarrassed by the mess.

"Have you ever seen an organized house that you've moved out of?" she asked rhetorically.

About an hour later, with Lori Lagerquist's help, they tidied the inside and outside areas of the tents, putting them one step closer to leaving.

They were missing just one item: a bow and arrow.

## Food cart: Will expand its hours in the next week

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The couple moved to Astoria with their daughter, Kate, in 2014, barging their food truck to Seattle and driving it down. But before they could start their venture on the North Coast, Christine Karna was diagnosed with stage 4 non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

After going through treatment and being cancer-free for three years, she and her husband started working again on Bucket Bites. They had a food cart custom-built in Portland and parked it next to Astoria Eco Wash, long home to the El Asadero Mexican food truck and a rotating cast of neighboring carts along Marine Drive.

Bucket Bites replaced the short-lived Astoria Express, a comfort food cart started by Seaside couple Gustavo Mar-

inez and Cindy Mendez. They had replaced Finni's Fine Foods, an Italian food cart that relocated to Eugene.

The couple are looking to sell the van they had hoped to start Bucket Bites in. It made more sense in Alaska, where they would have had to constantly drive between town and winter sporting events in the nearby mountains, Chris Karna said.

Christine Karna mainly runs Bucket Bites while her husband works in facilities maintenance for the Astoria School District. The couple's daughter, Kate, helps out while on break from Portland State University.

Bucket Bites opens from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Next week, the cart will expand its hours from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday.

## Foot chase: Adams cited for third-degree escape

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Adams was taken to Columbia Memorial Hospital with an apparent leg injury before he was transferred back to the jail. He was cited for third-degree escape and is being held on the Multnomah County warrant.

Adams was previously arrested in Multnomah County in a different case in Feb-

ruary 2017, when he was charged with four robbery and three assault counts. Despite being acquitted in August 2017, he was held in jail on other, unrelated charges, missing the birth of his son, according to the Portland Mercury.

Adams was eventually released in June. Portland Bail Out, an activist group, raised money to cover his bail.

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**For Information & Registration:**  
**Clatsop County Emergency Management**  
[clatsopemd@co.clatsop.or.us](mailto:clatsopemd@co.clatsop.or.us)  
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