

Rural areas differ on approach to homelessness

An emphasis on law and order

By APRIL EHRLICH
Jefferson Public Radio

Chilly winds and hail don't bother Buckshot Cunningham, who lived outside without a shelter for years until he came across a tiny house village in southern Oregon.

"This is my umbrella," he says as he shrugs on the hood of his coat, walking into a late January winter storm.

Hope Village is run by Rogue Retreat, a nonprofit serving low-income people in Medford. It's a collection of about a dozen small cottages with a communal kitchen, dining area and bathrooms. It's what housing advocates call a low-barrier shelter, in that there are few rules and requirements to get in. There are some behavioral rules — you can't be violent or do drugs on the premises — but you don't have to be sober when you come in, and you can bring your family, partner, or dog.

"Twelve years of drug and alcohol" is how Cunningham says he got here. But there's more to his story: a career as a firefighting smokejumper left him with physical disabilities. He lost his son to suicide, then his wife to cancer.

"And I just went downhill from there," he says.

Homelessness is often seen as an urban issue, but



Buckshot Cunningham stands in front of a small cottage at Hope Village, a tiny house shelter run by the nonprofit Rogue Retreat in Medford.

rural areas along the West Coast are also struggling with large homeless populations. Many of these areas don't have the resources for shelters like Hope Village, but even when they do, they're sometimes reluctant to build them.

Just across the state border in rural Northern California, Shasta County had earned a \$1.6 million grant to help fund a similar low-barrier shelter. County supervisors considered the proposal last winter when they heard from Anderson Police Chief Michael Johnson.

"It is just another enabling mechanism for the homeless, the transients, and

the displaced people here," Johnson told the board in February 2019. "When you create something and enable people, you're going to attract more."

Shasta County supervisors pushed the project back several times, citing their concerns about crime and a fear that it would attract more people. So Johnson proposed an alternative: a detention facility to house people who have committed low-level crimes like public drinking, urinating in public or sleeping in public spaces, crimes that are often unavoidable when you don't have a home.

Johnson says incarceration

can be used as a tool to provide services to people who are homeless and struggling with drug addiction or mental health issues.

"That's our opportunity to try to get that particular person involved in a program that will turn their life around and help them," Johnson says. "That's when they're most vulnerable, when they're the most willing to accept help and possibly agree to go into a program like that."

Back in Oregon, Jackson County Sheriff Nathan Sickler has a similar sentiment. Sickler has spent the last few months advocating for a ballot measure to increase jail

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Buckshot Cunningham | lived outside without a shelter for years

space at the Jackson County Jail in Medford.

"Jail is a resource because when they come (to jail), there may be opportunities to become sober; and once they become sober, they tend to start to think differently," Sickler says. "Maybe they would see a benefit to taking advantage of available services."

Sickler and Johnson say they don't want their rural communities to become like San Francisco or Los Angeles — overwhelmed with large homeless populations. They say providing free housing to homeless people is an urban approach and it isn't working. Instead, they emphasize law and order: bigger jails and more police officers.

Tristia Bauman, an attorney with the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, disagrees.

"That is not only an ineffective approach, it's also the single most expensive approach."

Bauman says housing-first initiatives — providing free housing with few strings attached — is the best way to end homelessness.

"It produces better out-

comes," Bauman says. "Not only in health, but also in education. And importantly to any lawmaker: it saves communities money. In fact, it is the cheapest and most effective intervention, and that is established by a number of national studies."

Still, not everyone is open to the idea. Rogue Retreat plans to build another shelter like Hope Village in Grants Pass, but it's facing some pushback from city councilors. They worry that it could increase crime and generate litter.

But Cunningham says those fears are unfounded.

"Look at this place," he says, motioning to the neat row of cottages. "It's clean. It's beautiful. And it stays that way seven days a week, all year round. It's pretty simple."

Cunningham has had his own room here for about four months. Now he's sober, he has a girlfriend, and he's saving money to rent an apartment.

"Getting my feet back on the ground here has enabled me to get back to society," he says. "Making me better myself. Not making me, but helping me want to."

OBITUARIES

Helene Lee Koniak

Columbia City

May 25, 1944 — Jan. 16, 2020

Helene Lee Koniak, who fled Brooklyn in the 1970s and became a distinguished Oregon educator for more than four decades, died Jan. 16 in Columbia City, where she lived with her husband, lifelong Oregonian Ken Doney. She was 75. At her request, there was no service.

The couple owned a home in Warrenton for many years.

Lane is survived by a son, Sheperd Doeleman, and his wife, Elissa Weitzman; a daughter, Jeffa Doeleman, and her husband, Jack Levy; her best friend and "debate foe," Mark Jensen; a brother, Robert Koniak; and several grandchildren.

She finished her teaching career working with visually impaired students for the Education Service District in Washington and Multnomah counties.

After retirement, she helped create and direct a nonprofit organization, Second Sight International, to help people with vision disabilities worldwide. Her efforts on behalf of Second Sight have included gathering and sending school supplies and basic personal items to weather-devastated regions such as Puerto Rico.

She also led an organization that held monthly meetings for people living with post-polio syndrome. She was a post-po-

lio survivor herself, and later was a caregiver for one of the attendees. She more recently became a certified volunteer with the Community Emergency Response Team and a Democratic Party committee person.

One of her best friends described her this way:

"She was a teacher, mother, wife, seamstress, jewelry maker, tile layer, carpenter, polio survivor, excellent cook, world traveler — and never left home without her knife and \$100. Something she said 'every woman should have for emergencies.'"

The words of other friends and co-workers say much the same thing:

"She was one for the record books — for many reasons."

"What an amazing force she was."

"She was one of a kind, a good friend and always there when you needed her."

"I admire you for helping so many people. You have done so all your life. And you're knowledgeable about so many things. And I love your laugh ... and your huge heart of love."

Her husband, who married late in life because of his Norwegian hippie heritage, acknowledges all of this, but says the best way to remember her is to read the bumper sticker on her prized 1999 Toyota PreRunner: "Real women drive trucks." That was our Lane.



Helene Koniak



OBITUARY POLICY

The Astorian publishes paid obituaries. The obituary can include a small photo and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge. The deadline for all obituaries is 9 a.m. the business day prior.

Obituaries may be edited for spelling, proper punctuation and style. Death notices and upcoming services will be published at no charge. Notices must be submitted by 9 a.m. the day of publication.

Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at DailyAstorian.com/forms/obits, by email at ewilson@dailyastorian.com, placed via the funeral home or in person at The Astorian office, 949 Exchange St. in Astoria.

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SEVEN-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
54 / 49 Rain; winds subsiding	53 / 47 Periods of rain	54 / 44 Mostly cloudy	52 / 43 A touch of rain	50 / 43 A chance of rain	52 / 45 Cloudy, rain possible	53 / 46 Cloudy, rain possible

ALMANAC

Astoria through Tuesday

Temperatures

High/low	51/44
Normal high/low	50/38
Record high	61 in 1981
Record low	14 in 1962
Precipitation	
Tuesday to date	0.81"
Month to date	9.93"
Normal month to date	7.21"
Year to date	9.93"
Normal year to date	7.21"

Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2020

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight's Sky: The Little Dipper stands in the north tonight and every night. The star at the tip of its handle is Polaris, the north star.

Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today 7:49 a.m.
Sunset tonight 5:06 p.m.
Moonrise today 7:12 a.m.
Moonset today 4:00 p.m.

	New	First	Full	Last
Jan 24	Feb 1	Feb 8	Feb 15	

TODAY'S TIDES

Astoria / Port Docks	Time	High (ft.)	Time	Low (ft.)
12:31 a.m.	7.4	5:54 a.m.	3.4	
11:40 a.m.	9.1	6:57 p.m.	-0.6	
Cape Disappointment				
12:24 a.m.	7.3	5:08 a.m.	3.9	
11:19 a.m.	9.2	6:08 p.m.	-0.6	
Hammond				
12:29 a.m.	7.5	5:30 a.m.	3.5	
11:30 a.m.	9.4	6:24 p.m.	-0.8	
Warrenton				
12:26 a.m.	7.8	5:38 a.m.	3.5	
11:35 a.m.	9.5	6:41 p.m.	-0.5	
Knappa				
1:08 a.m.	7.7	6:55 a.m.	3.0	
12:17 p.m.	9.3	7:58 p.m.	-0.5	
Depoe Bay				
10:34 a.m.	9.4	4:40 a.m.	4.0	
none		5:38 p.m.	-0.7	

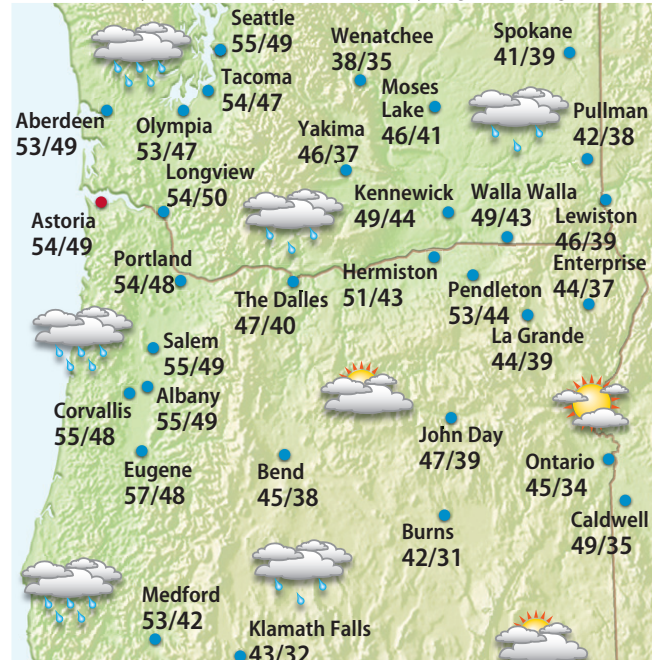
NATIONAL CITIES

City	Today	Fri.
	Hi/Lo/W	Hi/Lo/W
Atlanta	49/42/c	56/36/t
Boston	46/32/s	46/35/pc
Chicago	34/31/sn	37/33/c
Dallas	57/38/c	61/38/s
Denver	45/24/pc	52/26/s
Honolulu	81/67/s	83/69/pc
Houston	68/43/c	65/40/s
Los Angeles	73/53/s	73/52/s
Miami	77/64/pc	79/62/pc
New York City	46/33/pc	48/37/s
Phoenix	69/48/s	72/48/pc
San Francisco	59/48/pc	59/50/pc
Wash., DC	47/33/pc	50/41/pc
Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, l-ice.		

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REGIONAL FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



City	Today	Fri.	City	Today	Fri.
	Hi/Lo/W	Hi/Lo/W		Hi/Lo/W	Hi/Lo/W
Baker City	42/34/c	44/33/sf	North Bend	57/49/r	56/48/r
Brookings	53/47/r	54/49/sh	Roseburg	57/47/r	59/48/sh
Ilwaco	53/49/r	52/48/r	Seaside	54/48/r	53/48/r
Newberg	54/49/r	55/47/r	Springfield	58/49/r	58/47/r
Newport	54/49/r	53/47/r	Vancouver	54/49/r	55/47/r