

Services Measured for Equity

Evaluating changing social landscape

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A panel of city and county officials is getting a glimpse into what's working and not working with Portland's social services as well as the region's changing social landscape as it gets input on how to spend a large federal grant.

Residents' concerns on equitable access for social services in Portland, Gresham and Multnomah County were heard as part of the formulation of the Consolidated Plan, which will direct \$100 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development over the next five years.

During the session last Thursday at King School in northeast Portland, Barry Joe Stull told the panel that he had been evicted from non-profit housing and was now homeless.

"It kind of means: I got pushed under the bus, and since I'm under the bus I can look up and say, 'the wheel is about to fall off,'" said Stull, wearing a bushy beard and black knit cap, of his situation.

He said that he had trouble finding a place to sleep, and was often hassled under the city's anti-camping ordinance, which makes it illegal to sleep on public property.

Stull explained that he had been given flyers stating that transitional housing was available. However, when he inquired about it at Transitional Projects Inc., he discovered that the waiting list was 10-weeks long.

"This is insane," said an irate Stull.

Deborah Willoughby, an information referral specialist, said that she has a good sense of what needs are going unmet as people call in to inquire about social services, ranging from home foreclosures to getting badly needed medical services.

"What we're seeing right now, and it's no surprise to anyone working in social services, our call volume is really high," she said.

She recalled how a woman with diabetes called in whose teeth hurt so badly from untreated dental problems that she



PHOTO BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A busy Old Town sidewalk fronts the nonprofit Sisters of the Road café, a social services organization that provides vital services to the homeless and other disadvantaged populations. The café serves, hot, nutritious meals that can be purchased in a variety of ways, including with cash, food stamps, or in exchange for work.

couldn't eat. Willoughby also mentioned how a laid-off carpenter called in who needed serious medical attention from a broken wrist. Both had very limited resources, she said.

The meeting also revealed how gentrification has driven many residents from north and northeast Portland out to east Multnomah County, which complicates the work of social service providers.

Jim Buck, chair of the East County Caring Community, noted that none of the meetings on the Consolidated Plan were within five miles of Gresham, which poses a barrier for residents of East County in getting their voices heard.

"We've seen increased migration from gentrification in neighborhoods," said Buck, who drove 20 miles to attend the meeting. "I certainly ask that you look at that in terms of collecting information."

Pat Daniels, who works with the job training provider Constructing Hope, noted that her organization, which prepares African American men with criminal histories for construction jobs, has had its work complicated because of gentrification in north and northeast Portland.

The meeting also revealed what does work.

Brian Franz told the panel how he was once homeless and struggled with substance abuse, but with the help of Central City Concern, a large social services provider, he got clean, got a job,

and is now living a productive life. He stressed that funding for similar services was essential.

A number of individuals from local non-profits made an impassioned case for more funding for job training and micro loans for small entrepreneurs, arguing that both were essential to getting people who face often have trouble getting work from a lack of experience.

Andrew Mason, the director of Open Meadows, which operates an alternative school and job training program, hoped that the Consolidated Plan would include job training funding for young people who face often have trouble getting work from a lack of experience.

He brought along 20-year-old Jacqueline Seeley, who landed a job in an assisted living facility from her job training at Open Meadows.

"We can't get into good jobs without some sort of back story—without someone to really speak for us," said Seeley, who is now studying to be a nurse, of the barriers young people face in getting work.

The next meeting is on Wednesday, Nov. 4 at the United Way at 619 S.W. 11th Ave. from 2-4 p.m. The following day, another hearing will be held from 6-8 p.m. at New Columbia Community Center, 4605 N. Trenton St.

The plan needs to be approved by both Gresham and Portland city councils, as well as the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners.

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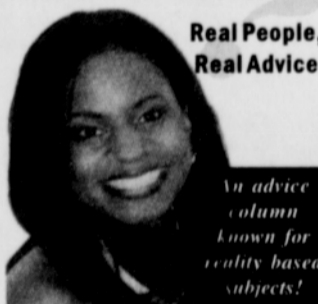
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Ask Deanna!



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Dear Deanna!

What do you do when your husband gets fat and out of shape? When we were married, he was in shape; he would go to the gym and kept things together. Now he's comfortable and has gained a lot of weight. It turns me off so bad that I can't be intimate. This is causing us to argue a lot and he tells me that I have to take him as he is because he's not changing. What can I do about this? --Lorraine; Jacksonville, Fla.

Dear Lorraine:

If you're responsible for the cooking, then perhaps you can transition to a healthier lifestyle. The key to supporting your husband's weight loss is encouragement instead of criticism. Highlight the health benefits and let him know that you're with him every step of the way. If not, I suggest you eat some snacks, put some junk in your trunk

and be fat and happy together.

Dear Deanna!

I made myself get out of an abusive relationship. I was beaten, verbally abused, raped and tormented on a daily basis for almost three years. I had convinced myself that I loved this man and his abuse was his way of showing affection. I'm at a point now where I feel as if I've moved on. However, my ex-boyfriend is now trying to come back and he's convinced me that he's changed. Should I give him another chance? --Rebecca; Buffalo, N.Y.

Dear Rebecca:

If you go back, be sure you have your funeral arrangements in order or get ready for a life of misery. This man treats you worse than a dog and has no respect, care or love for you. If you made it out of the situation, then you need to use your brains and stay out. No, you shouldn't give him another chance to assault you, insult your womanhood or risk killing you. The writing's on the wall—just make sure you read it and get counseling along the way.

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