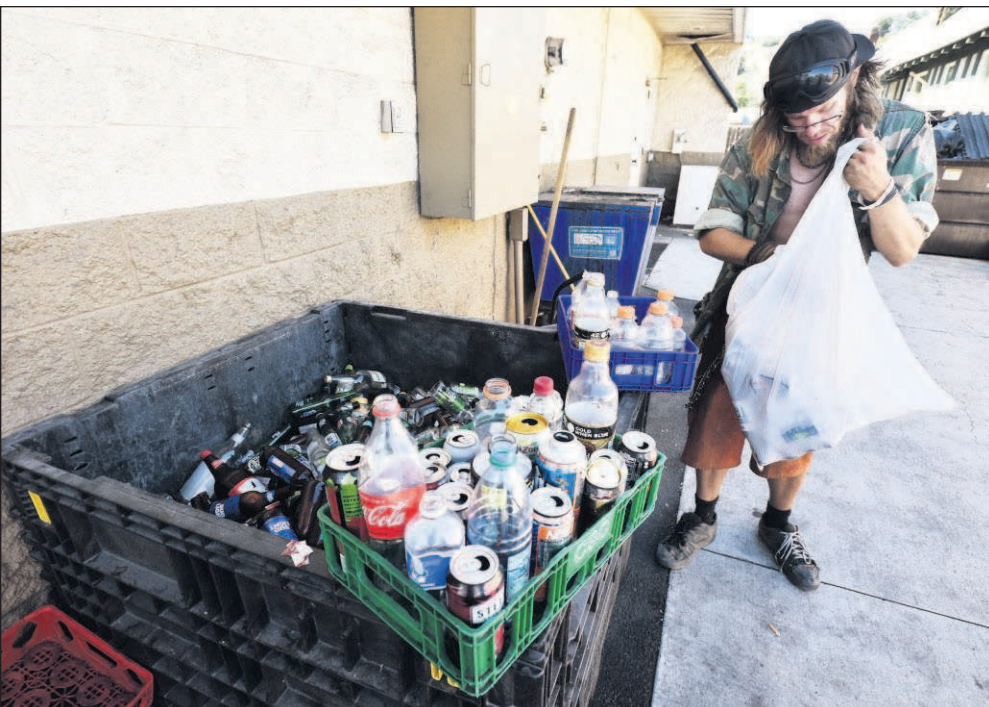




Left: Gregg Carter talks with Jack Miller while hanging out under the shelter at Stillman Park on Thursday in Pendleton. Right: Bryan Miller reaches into a plastic bag filled with recyclable bottles and cans he collected while returning them for their deposit at Circle K on Friday in Pendleton. Miller walks more than 10 miles per day collecting bottles and cans.

HOMELESS: ‘In a small town ... you’re not going to be totally wanted’

Continued from 1A

Homeless by choice
“I know you’re supposed to smoke pot in your living room, but this is my living room,” said Gregg Carter, brandishing a cigarette and gesturing to the nearby Stillman Park.
The 56-year-old arrived to town in 2016 and found it to be a safe and neighborly place, so he stayed.
For Carter, being homeless is a choice he made eight years ago, and he doesn’t plan on going back. When the economy took a downturn in 2008 and he lost his job — then his house two years later — he decided to live without the things most people con-

sider necessities.
No stranger to a life of nomadic minimalism, he said settling into homelessness was a smooth transition. When he got out of the Marine Corps in 1983, he said he resolved to hitchhike from San Diego to the East Coast. He then spent the next four years traveling back and forth to opposite sides of the United States and working odd jobs wherever he stopped.
Carter is aware of the stigma of homelessness and the criticisms that accompany it. Because he actively chooses to be homeless, he operates on a mentality that he should live modestly. “If you’re not going to con-

tribute, minimize what you take,” he said. He prides himself on being “non-criminal homeless.”
He strives to live inconspicuously and encourages other people to do the same. Portions of his personality reveal just how much he likes to blend in to his surroundings. He wears a camouflage jacket with the sleeves rolled up and carries all of his possessions in a tan and gray backpack. And although he maintains that he doesn’t have a favorite color, shades of green and other earth tones top the list.
When he needs a spot to rest his head, he finds a shady place near the Umatilla River underneath a canopy of trees.

He uses the term “in the shadows” to describe his preferred state of being.
“If you’re going to be homeless in a small town — anywhere,” he corrected, “You’re not going to be totally wanted.”
‘Not all bums’
When Oregon upped its recycling deposit from 5 cents to 10 cents in 2017, Bryan Miller called it a “homeless raise.”
Miller estimates he walks 8-10 miles per day scouring Pendleton for bottles, cans, and other items that could be redeemed for a cash refund. On a good night, he brings in about \$30.
One of the main tools of Miller’s trade is a modified

broom handle, which he uses to carry as many as six bags at a time on his wiry frame.
Miller was acting as a groundskeeper for a marijuana grow in Walla Walla when the main residents of the property suddenly moved out and abandoned it.
Without a place to live, Miller decided to move to Pendleton to be close to his nine-year-old daughter.
While he originally intended to find another permanent home, Miller has grown to like the freedom of being homeless.
“It’s definitely been (a part of) an upswing in my life,” he said.
Many of Pendleton’s poor and homeless collect recy-

clables, but Miller delineates himself from the group of collectors who jump into a backyards or tear apart a trashcan looking for bottles and cans.
“Not all homeless people are bums,” he said.
Miller was recently joined by his father, who relocated to Pendleton after the homeless ministry he was staying at in Southern California shut down.
Although both men are now homeless, Miller said it’s been “cool” to reconnect with his dad after not seeing him for three years.
Miller also saw it as a positive development for his daughter, who has only seen her grandfather a handful of times over her lifetime.

“I know you’re supposed to smoke pot in your living room, but this is my living room.”
— Gregg Carter

SERVICES: The program is still in the early planning stages

Continued from 1A

Roberts said members of the public often get irate and call his department looking for law enforcement to bring the “hammer” on homeless people who are trespassing or shoplifting. Police follow through in many of these situations, he said, but the problem remains on where to how to handle these people in the longterm, especially in a city with a dearth of homeless services.
Options for care
Neighbor 2 Neighbor provides one of those services, operating a warming station during the winter.
The nonprofit recently expanded to include a summer day center with shower access, but board chairman Dwight Johnson said its resources only allow it stay open for three hours every two weeks.
CAPECO is looking to add to those services. The organization is eying the for-

mer Blue Cross Blue Shield building on the corner of S.E. Second St. and Frazer Ave. to implement a day program that would serve the homeless community. It could provide basic needs such as a place to charge cell phones, eat a meal and potentially take a shower. James Rinehart, a case manager with CAPECO, said he has met with City Manager Robb Corbett and a committee to explore the plan.
“They liked the idea, they support the idea. The biggest thing that we’re finding is getting the funding to either purchase the building or to have someone donate a building that we can get into,” Rinehart said.
The former insurance building would be a great location because it would take little work to get it running, said Rinehart. One downside is that it may not be suitable for showers, since they would be expensive to install.

The program is still in early planning stages, with the biggest challenge being the financial burden of purchasing a building and funding the operations. Rinehart said the ideal solution would be to have someone step up with \$100,000 to sponsor the program to get it going.
“We really need the community’s help in meeting this need,” he said. “This isn’t just our agency’s responsibility, or certain agencies, this is a community issue.”
Johnson, a sergeant for the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office, said many of the facility’s users have substance abuse problems, a mental illness or both.
He said the state’s laws surrounding these issues need reform, but in the meantime, Neighbor 2 Neighbor is dedicated to breaking the “cycle of dysfunction” that often follows homeless people instead of enabling them.
“We don’t want to be a toxic charity,” he said.

Although Roberts said there was a criminal element in the homeless population, most homeless people are looking to deflect attention rather than attract it.
Bolstering homeless services might be a better use of public resources than using law enforcement and the court system to police the homeless, he added.
“You’re going to spend this money, one way or another,” he said.

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- Turn right toward York Rd (i.e. continue driving South after crossing the railroad)
- Follow York Rd for 2 miles
- Turn right onto County 674 Rd/ Staggs Rd
- End at 52145 Staggs Rd – Can’t miss the event!

FROM PENDLETON

- Follow OR-11 N to Exit Weston
- At the end of the ramp turn right followed by a left turn right after the overbuilt onto Johnson Road
- Turn next right onto York Road
- At the end turn right onto Watts Road followed immediately by a left turn onto York Road
- After 1 mile turn left onto County 674 Rd/Staggs Rd
- End at 52145 Staggs Rd – Can’t miss the event!

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Dr. Libby is originally from Hilton Head, South Carolina and graduated from Furman University in Greenville, SC. She attended medical school at the University Of South Carolina School Of Medicine, and completed her residency in Family Medicine at the University of Alabama, Huntsville. She then spent three years at Western Family Care/Lander Medical Clinic in Riverton, Wyoming. Dr. Libby is Board Certified, American Board of Family Medicine. She has a passion for rural medicine and looks forward to living in Pendleton with her husband Brandon and daughter Sophie Belle.



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