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For a free handbook, "Legal Issues for Older Adults," published by the Oregon State Bar, call: **503-945-6237** (available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, or Chinese).

ADRC 1-855-ORE-ADRC (673-2372)
Aging and Disability Resource Connection of OREGON
www.ADRCoforegon.org
ADRC operates through the Oregon Department of Human Services

Siuslaw News **garage sale GUIDE**

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Living from 1A

In 2016, SOS gave out 2,636 emergency vouchers to Siuslaw residents.

The low-skill, low-wage jobs held by a younger workforce are vital for a retirement community, according to Teter.

"Right now, 72 percent of the population is above the age of 55," he said. "Economically, a community cannot sustain on

that. You need a younger generation workforce to sustain things."

To maintain the retirement community that the Siuslaw region has become known as, with its multiple amenities including dining, entertainment and a large medical facility, a younger generation must lead the workforce.

However, that workforce has to remain in the immediate vicinity. Because of the area's isolation from major metropolitan areas,

young workers cannot simply commute during the busy months, particularly when they work for such low wages. To keep that workforce available, people must live in and around the city.

That's where the crux of the crisis comes into play, with the Siuslaw region's housing shortage forcing higher rents that outpace what workers earn.

"The average rent is about \$750 a month for a two-bedroom apartment," Teter said. "The rents are steadily going up and it's not uncommon for us to see an apartment that's \$950 a month."

Teter said he has seen an 18 percent rise in rent over this past year alone.

Online real estate website Trulia showed only seven properties available for rent in the Florence area at press time.

Of those, only three were under \$1,000, with only one below \$750.

Teter listed a variety of reasons for the high rates.

"It's rising utility costs," he said. "It's people skipping out on rent and so (landlords) want to cover those things. Or maybe they need to make repairs so this is how they're going to pay for repairs."

While low income housing does exist in Florence, Teter said that many have shut down their application process because the wait list is estimated at two years.

"We encourage our clients just to drive around and see if they see a 'for rent' sign in a yard," Huenergardt said. "We have a housing list that we give them where they can put their name. We encourage them to get their name on it, but sometimes the way they find houses is by driving around."

There's such a shortage of housing, she said, that many property managers don't even need to advertise online or in the newspaper. They simply put a "for rent" sign in the yard and the properties are gone the same day.

"One of the things we've seen in the last year is new teachers who can't find housing," Teter said. "They're doubling up with other teachers for a while. I know one of the teachers at the high school just finally found a place to move in to. They've been

sleeping on another teacher's couch while the rest of their family stayed 200 miles away until they could find something."

Even if a worker is able to find a place, affording the upfront costs can be daunting.

"Most landlords require first month's rent, deposit, last month's rent — and then you have all the utility hook ups," Teter said. "So even for an apartment that's \$750 a month, it's not uncommon to have to come up with \$3,000 just to move in."

Then, once a tenant does move in, sustaining monthly payments can be a problem.

If a single person works 40 hours a week at the average \$10 an hour Teter is seeing, then they would take home \$1,200 a month after taxes — excluding retirement or health insurance.

With utilities averaging \$200 a month, coupled with a rent of \$750, that full time worker will only have \$250 to live on.

"A lot of times you'll see these cars parked at [grocery stores] late at night," Teter said. "The people have jobs, but they just don't have a home to go to. I was just made aware there's a group that's parking behind [a store] and living out of their cars because they can't find a place to rent. Or at least one that they can afford, any way. And they're working. They have income of some kind."

And, as Teter points out, it's expensive to live on the street.

"You can't cook for yourself and you have to eat out all the time," he said. "And that gets expensive. It's almost costlier to live on the street than it is to be in a home."

Sometimes, when workers are able to remain in a home, the conditions can be dangerous.

"You've got private landlords that are going into property management who really don't know what they're getting into, thinking it's quick, easy money. Real property management is never quick and easy money," Teter said.

While Teter stated there are more good landlords than bad, he has heard his fair share of "nightmare" stories.

"There's one situation that comes to mind where the landlord passed away," Teter said. "It then became the son's property. He didn't know how to take care of a place. There's a hole in the roof. Somebody fell through the kitchen floor. He said he didn't have the money for repairs, so he said they were on their own, refusing to pay anything. Then the tenants had to find another place.

"A lot of times they don't know their rights and are afraid to even go to court and have an eviction on their record."

Tenants may feel the need to move, but with the housing shortage they find they have nowhere to go — unless they live in cars or tents.

One of the most common issues with properties on the coast is mold.

"It's a huge problem around here," Teter said. "A lot of the homes aren't set up to deal with it. We don't want kids ending up in the hospital with respiratory issues."

Teter points out that a tenant can buy a dehumidifier to help ease the problem, and that most landlords work hard to alleviate the mold, "But we do have those landlords that just say, 'Eh, that's the coast.'"

For working families, the stress of low wages, dangerous homes and the fear of eviction can be detrimental to their health.

"A lot of people are intimidated by their landlords," Teter added. "They're afraid of losing their homes. They're afraid of standing up for their rights."

"It's devastating on the kids. If the kid doesn't know if they're going to be homeless in the next month, that has a developmental impact. How can they concentrate in school? They start developing anxiety. They don't know where their next meal is coming from. There are a lot of kids that are living that way."

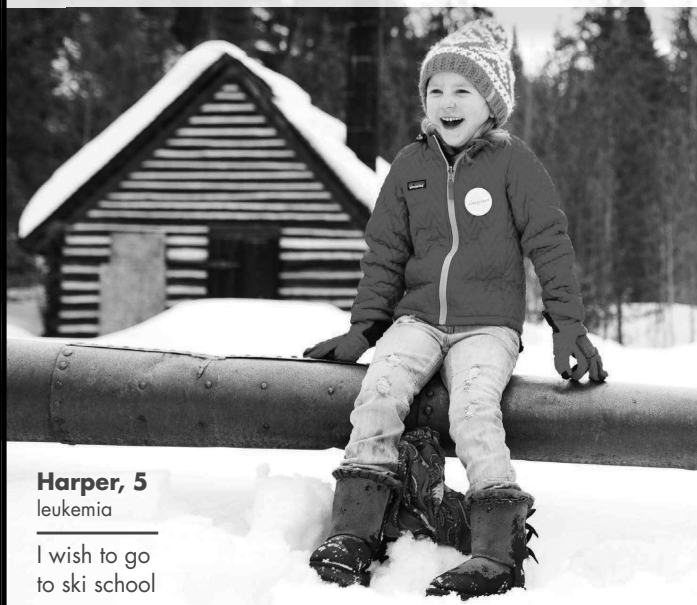
According to the Lane County Poverty and Homelessness Board, 92 students between the Siuslaw and Mapleton School Districts go to class, participate in school activities and finish the day without a permanent home to go to.

As it stands, 4.3 percent of Siuslaw's student body is homeless, compared to the statewide average of 3.7 percent.

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