

# Beds for Freezing Nights marks its 6th year

By Cindy Weeldreyer  
For The Sentinel

Beds for Freezing Nights is a godsend for those who don't have a warm place to sleep on a freezing cold night. The all-volunteer nonprofit organization traces its roots back to December 16, 2008, when 60-year-old Maj. Thomas Egan tragically froze to death in Eugene on a night when the temperature plunged to 15 degrees. His death sparked the formation of the Eugene-Springfield warming centers that now bear his name.

In 2009, representatives from local social service agencies, church leaders, government officials and public-minded individuals vowed to do something that would prevent a similar tragic death here in Cottage Grove. The Beds for Freezing Nights (BFN) Coalition mobilized to establish an all-volunteer nonprofit group to offer an emergency warming center to serve the unhoused on the coldest winter nights.

Now completing its sixth year of operations, BFN has served hundreds of individuals needing a warm, friendly place to come in from the cold on frigid winter nights. A core group of leaders and faithful volunteers and donors is the reason for the organization's success. Lutheran Pastor James Markus has been a strong BFN supporter and has served five years on the board of directors.

"We had a historic year in the number of guests we served

this winter," Markus said. "A few times we were pushing 20 guests and nearing our capacity. We served 47 unduplicated guests and averaged 11 guests during our activations this winter."

Since its first operational season in 2010-11, BFN has served 587 guests and has had 117 activations. The organization has a \$6,200 annual budget that includes a hefty liability insurance policy. It currently has 34 volunteers.

BFN has two city-certified emergency warming center locations: Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church and First Presbyterian Church. OLPH is the larger of the two facilities and serves as the group's primary site. When weather forecasts predict an overnight low of 29 degrees, BFN prepares to activate a shelter. The Volunteer Coordinator Christine Moats sends out an email poll to a cadre of committed volunteers. Sleeping rooms are segregated so six men and six women are needed to staff the shelter's three shifts between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Moats said through her volunteer work with Community Sharing she became familiar with the homeless clients it served. When she saw the BFN Call to Action requesting volunteers she thought it would be another way she could serve her community.

"We are deeply grateful for the dedicated BFN volunteers who leave the warmth and safety of their homes on cold, icy nights to ensure there is a warm

safe place for those who need it," Moats said. "We do need more volunteers. Right now during long activations our volunteers need to work multiple days to keep the shelter open."

Logistics Coordinator Steve Thoreson is completing his sixth year in this important position. He began helping his predecessor Tom Gutmann set up for activations by moving supplies and equipment to and from Gutmann's garage.

"It required a considerable amount of effort, Thoreson said. "Tom still continues to help with logistics but we no longer have to store supplies in his garage, we can store them at OLPH. Both OLPH and First Presbyterian are generous in offering their facilities for shelter from the cold."

South Lane Wheels Executive Director Ruth Linoz joined the board seven years ago and became board president in 2016. South Lane Wheels was one of the founding organizations of BFN. She remained on the board because she enjoys the opportunity to meet and serve with her neighbors who all share a deep compassion and dedication to help people access a safe, warm place to stay on freezing nights.

"I'm impressed and very thankful for the growing network of generous donors, volunteers, host churches, and local officials that make this humanitarian mission possible each year," she said.

The current board officers and coordinators are: President

Ruth Linoz, Vice President Lise Colgan, Secretary James Markus, Treasurer Janice Gutmann, Logistics Coordinator Steve Thoreson, Volunteer Coordinator Christine Moats, and Weather Watcher Don Strahan. Other board members are Bonnie Boone and Adam Creighton. After eight years of leadership, Fred Colgan is stepping down from the board. Other departing board members are Tom Gutmann and his wife Janice, who has served as BFN's treasurer. Lise Colgan, is now the last of the original board members from 2009 still serving on the board of directors. All the original board members remain passionate about the importance of the organization and most continue to serve as shelter volunteers.

"BFN has become a self-sustaining and important part of Cottage Grove's outreach to vulnerable people," Lise Colgan said. "I'm very happy to see new people coming on board to make sure that it continues its crucial mission."

BFN's success is fueled by the compassion of its volunteers and the community it serves. Its reputation for treating each guest with dignity and respect, its high level of organization, its unblemished safety record and its commitment to hosting everyone who abides by its guest rules, all contribute to the fulfillment of its purpose "to ensure shelter is available for those who need and want it between November 15 and March 31."

# Local resident turns 100



Hazel Vaught celebrated her 100th birthday on May 31. The Cottage Grove resident moved to the city in the '90s after owning property for several years. Vaught was born in 1917 and married Lamar Vaught in 1936. The two share two children, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



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## NEWS FROM OUTSIDE THE GROVE

**Lorane:** CAL School Board meets on June 15 at Applegate Elementary at 7 p.m. Eighth grade Recognition is June 16 at 7 p.m. in the CHS gym. Everyone welcome to come. School is out for the CAL School District on June 19 after an all district trip to Wildlife Safari. Enjoy your summer. Wishing all you fathers a very Happy Father's Day.

**Drain:** Drain City Wide Yard Sale: August 12, 7:00 a.m., sponsored by North Douglas Middle School Volleyball, Bas-

ketball, and Track. Ms. Emily Reed, has saved the day. Spaces in the park will be \$10.00.

Surveys about the future of the Drain Library are now available at Drain City Hall.

**Yoncalla:** A chance at a \$500 scholarship is still available for young girls who register to be part of Queen's Court at the Douglas State Fair. Details can be found at <https://ndcountyfair.wixsite.com/fair/princesses>.

**Creswell:** Summer Lunch Program Starts June 19th at Holt Park. For more information contact Stefani Roybal, Summer Food Program Assistant Manager at 541-343-2822 x351.

Holt Park Restrooms Temporary Closure while Public Works puts a fresh coat of paint on the restroom walls at Holt Memorial Park the week of Monday, June 12th through Friday, June 16th, 2017.

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