

Habitat *from A1*

with its Eugene-Springfield counterpart.

“That’s the primary reason why we’re here, is to get donations for Habitat,” Kahane said, “but we want to have a good time while we’re doing it.”

While not involved directly with Habitat in any other way, Kahane sees fundraising for the nonprofit as a shared benefit for the community.

“I like doing this because I think everybody wins,” he said. “It’s good for Habitat because we raise money for them and ... we also give them publicity. It’s good for the musicians because, anywhere you go in the world, and Cottage Grove is no exception — you’re going to find people who play music at home. And nobody ever gets to hear them except for their family and few friends. This is an opportunity for those people — home musicians, and a few professionals show up, too — to put what they do on stage in front a forgiving, friendly audience.”



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Standing from left: Performers Jimmy Schäper, Hank De Simas, Jon Lee, Dale Combes, Roger Kahane, Rachel Dyer, Sarah-Kate Sharkey, Nancine McDonald and volunteer Jason Kristiansen (front center) celebrated the 150th “month-iversary” of the benefit.

Kahane is also happy with the crowd it regularly draws.

“And then it’s good for the Axe & Fiddle,” he said. “So it’s a win-win-win all around. It’s good for Habitat, it’s good for the Axe & Fiddle and it’s good for the musicians.”

In terms of fundraising, the event sees wide monthly variations in the amounts it pulls in, but

there’s no questioning its impact if Kahane’s estimates are correct.

“We’re somewhere between 10 and 20 thousand dollars — I don’t know what the exact amount is,” he said. “We’ve had nights where we’ve gotten over \$1,000, but then we’ve had nights where we’ve been lucky to get 50. I would say we average a little under \$200 a typical month.”

and development there,” Sharkey said.

Though the nonprofit no longer has an office in Cottage Grove, Sharkey maintained that Habitat hasn’t forgotten about its rural communities.

“We intend to still be physically here in the community frequently,” she said.

Habitat for Humanity merged its Cottage Grove and Springfield-Eugene operations to create Habitat for Humanity of Central Lane in 2017. Concerns that the nonprofit wouldn’t be able to fulfill the needs of the Cottage Grove community naturally followed.

“We take those concerns very seriously and have come together as a board to intentionally maintain a strong presence here in Cottage Grove,” Sharkey said. “We feel that we can still do an excellent job serving the community even without an office here. We plan to be involved visiting here frequently, coming and being involved in the community groups and the events happening here, and staying in close contact with our volunteers and donors and supporters in

the area.”

The four units on 11th Street have yet to start construction, though Habitat has received a grant from the Oregon Association of Realtors for planning and has begun survey work at the site. As of yet, there are no estimates on when building might begin.

The nonprofit states that it has completed 14 homes in the Cottage Grove area, and a total of 72 houses in the greater Central Lane service area as well as 21 Cottage Grove home repairs through the small-scale repair program known as A Brush with Kindness.

The repair program will open applications for homeowners later this summer.

In the meantime, Kahane encourages attendance, as an audience member or performer, to his monthly fundraiser.

“If you live in the area and you play music at home, consider this an invitation,” he said.

Open mic events start at 7 p.m. and Kahane recommends musicians to arrive at 6:30 p.m. to sign up.

YAC *from A1*

communication link between city council and youth in the community, organized the event with the intent of gathering information and creating discussion around topics which pertain to youth in Cottage Grove.

The collective experience of the panel served to answer questions on the topics of YAC’s agenda including homelessness, mental health and addiction.

Through a session that lasted nearly two hours, questions came from an engaged audience of young people. Discourse soon broke from agenda topics and, as the evening pro-

gressed, a number of other youth issues were brought to the surface such as treatment for LGBTQ+ youth, the overuse of plastic in cafeterias, the difficulty in finding jobs and the struggles for youth to find direction and meaning through deeper connections with their community.

On academics, students voiced their preference for earlier introduction to health and sex education. On drugs, many panelists and youths agreed that education should be emphasized over prohibition. On climate change, youths expressed their desire for the city to better combat pollution.

Educational moments arose for both audience and panelists by the end of the town hall. Perhaps

most useful among them was Baas’ revelation and repeated urging of youth to petition their school board for the changes they’d like to see in their schools.

YAC member Fernando Soto-Cruz was impressed with the amount of topics discussed and hoped to touch on more issues in future town halls.

“For the first time doing it, I think it was a really good first trial,” he said. “Once we hit some topics people had a passion for, people started to ask more questions and that led to other questions. I think we could have gone a while longer.”

YAC member MJ Raade walked away with a better perspective on which issues her group can focus on.

“Mental health in our schools, there’s a lot more being done than I thought there was,” she said. “Plastics, I didn’t realize we were so passionate about that, but I got that we are.”

Youth turnout to the event was an impressive element in its own right, revealing an oft-overlooked energy within the community.

“It was surprising the youth that did show up that aren’t part of the advisory council,” Raade said. “It was good to see them being involved in that way, and seeing them not just in the school environment but in the community environment.”

Other youth in the audience felt the experience had given them a new tool to deal with obstacles.

“We now know what to do if an issue comes up,” said fifth-grader Nicole Wilhour, “and we can talk about and share our ideas.”

Panelist impressions from the evening were largely a mixture of celebration for youth involvement and an inclination to reflect on their own contri-

butions to the issues raised.

“In general, the engagement around really every topic like substance abuse, housing, how we can support our fellow students, was all just really impressive,” Hampton said. “It was rejuvenating in a way to be in a group of people that are passionate and excited and curious and inquisitive — how inspiring for adults to be in a room filled with that passion.”

As the youth town hall came to close, Buch addressed the young people in the audience.

“On the county level, we never see anybody under the age of 18 come into a meeting and talk about what’s important to you and I think that’s a huge shame,” she said. “We know that you’re going to be in our positions eventually and making important decisions for your own community.”

Buch encouraged youth to continue coming to council meetings and town halls to speak about issues pertinent to their generation.

“It reiterates in my mind

that we need to have something available at the county level for youth to give input, because that effects the way we make policy for our community,” she said.

Baas was also enthused with the youth involvement and encouraged YAC to articulate more of their thoughts into a plan for action.

“There’s a lot of loose ends that need to be tied up and a group like your group is ideally situated to start taking some steps,” he said.

Though the school year has come to a close, most current YAC members are likely to return to the group as seniors next year and many expressed interest in organizing other town halls. Many panelists, too, saw the utility in holding similar events again.

“Asking the questions and knowing who to ask the questions to is so important,” said Hampton. “[It was] absolutely an incredible opportunity for middle school and high school youth in Cottage Grove.”

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