

Pallet from A7

Beds for Freezing Nights Board President Ruth Linoz pointed out in an October Cottage Grove City Council meeting that the group's criterion for activation at 29 degrees or below encourages priority use of Eugene's Egan Warming Center and thus reduces the shelter-seeking traffic from outside areas.

The city council had previously voted to purchase the shelters from Lane County using the city's federal coronavirus relief funds. However, it later came to light that because the county had already purchased the shelters using CARES Act funds, Cottage Grove could not use the same funds to procure them from the county.

Currently the county retains ownership of the shelters and is lending the facilities to other cities such as Florence and Oakridge as well.

Meyers said that despite not owning the shelters out-

right, he was confident the county would allow them to remain in the city long-term.

"I've already got a number of people that are saying, 'That makes a lot of sense for you just to store them and keep them,'" he said. "Because then if there's an emergency or some situation, it's easier for [the city] to keep them rather than [the county] bring them all the way down to Eugene and bring them back."

Instead of using the federal relief funding to purchase the shelters, Meyers said the city has found other COVID-related uses for the money.

Site preparation and infrastructure setup for the shelters themselves came out to around \$100,000, he said, while other relief funds were used for projects like upgrading the air purification systems in city buildings.

The funding must be used by the end of the year or it will be returned to the coun-

ty, said Meyers.

The shelter's season runs from Nov. 1 to March 31. At the end of the season, the Pallet Shelters will be housed with the city and the site will be opened up to other possible uses during the off-season.

Meanwhile, the shelter structures will be standing by in case a need for them arises.

"These are going to be available if there's a wildfire or there's some kind of emergency," said Meyers.

Though transitional housing has been addressed as a need in Cottage Grove, Meyers said he envisions more solid structures for that purpose.

"I'd want to build an actual stick building with better insulation which is more durable," he said. "So you can have transitional housing that's the more permanent stuff that people can move into and live in until they are ready ... and move into a tiny home or something."

The Community Sharing

Warming Shelter also satisfies a standard established by a circuit court decision a year ago.

On Dec. 16, 2019, a Supreme Court decision to deny a petition to review *Martin v. City of Boise* finalized a significant holding by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals which protects the right for homeless people to sleep in public spaces without reprisal.

The circuit court ruling held that if a homeless person has no option of sleeping indoors, a city cannot cite or punish him or her for violating an ordinance disallowing sleeping outside in a public space.

With the establishment of the Community Sharing Warming Shelter, Meyers said local police could now use the site as a tool in directing the city's homeless population to a safe and warm place.

Providing Community Sharing's training schedule for new staff stays on target, the warming shelter may be



PHOTO BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Curious community members turned out for the Community Sharing Warming Shelter open house event on Tuesday.

ready to open for freezing nights as early as Jan. 7.

Making sure there are enough volunteers and staff on hand when a freezing night comes around has been a persistent challenge for warming shelters, however.

"When I talked to Beds for Freezing Nights, they had a volunteer pool of about 80 volunteers," said Community Sharing's Site Coordinator DeForest Rolnick-Wihtol. "And even with that large of a pool, they often struggle to get enough volunteers to

open."

Like any nonprofit, Community Sharing is welcoming of more volunteers and is still looking for people to fill paid staff positions.

"We would love volunteers," said Community Sharing Executive Director Mike Fleck. "We would also love for community groups, if they wanted, to bring food in to give folks."

Check online at communitysharing.org to view the warming shelter's activation status or find more information about volunteering.

BECAUSE SAFETY IS KEY, PLEASE DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE!



It probably comes as no surprise that **more traffic fatalities due to drunk driving occur at the New Year than any other time**, but of course, you should never drink and drive. With your safety in mind, these community sponsors urge you to review these important tips for hosting or attending a safe celebration!

A New Year is coming bringing much celebration, With good friends and good times and free-flowing libation -- So party on hearty, but leave driving alone, Because we want to see you get safely home!

WITH BEST WISHES TO EVERYONE FOR A SAFE & HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Starfire Lumber Company

Ray's Towing

Lane Electric

Brad's Cottage Grove Chevrolet

Fountain Gutters

Lane County Sheriff's Office

South Lane Wheels

Dave's Pump & Construction

Hitch Pro & Tow

Homestead Furniture

Boyce & Son's

Landscaping & Building Materials

State Farm Insurance

- Matt Bjornn

The UPS Store

King Estate Winery

South Lane County

Fire & Rescue

White Water Well

Drilling

Gabriele Wellness

Center

"Key" Strategies For A Safe New Year's Celebration:

- **Plan an alcohol-free celebration** – Host a fondue or "make your own" ice cream sundae party as a fresh alternative. Add some fun party games to keep guests entertained without drinking!
- **Check your keys with the host** – This is an effective strategy for giving the host some control over inebriated guests.
- **Keep the number of a taxi company handy** – A good tip for both party guests and hosts alike.
- **Offer to drive a guest home** – Start the New Year off right by performing a good deed and help keep drunk drivers off the road.
- **Appoint a designated driver** – Use the buddy system and you can return the favor next time.
- **Provide lots of snacks to party guests** – Drinking on an empty-stomach rapidly increases alcohol's debilitating effects.
- **Post transportation info on party invites** – Include information for public transportation, car pools and taxi company phone numbers.
- **Don't let a friend drive drunk** – Take the car keys away or use one of the strategies above to see your friends safely home.