

# Middlefield Oaks Senior Living 'was there' when local senior needed a home

Rebecca Higley never imagined she would be homeless at age 66. "When I was 20, I thought I'd be with my husband going through our golden years together. I never thought I'd be homeless," Higley said.

Higley raised three children and did not acquire the security that employment or a professional career might have provided to her for support as she aged.

"I was a housewife," Higley said. "I didn't think my life would end up this way. Becoming homeless didn't sneak up on me, it jumped up at me."

Nearly five years ago while traveling on a Greyhound bus to visit her daughter in Roseburg, Higley fell and broke her hip. She received treatment while hospitalized and planned to recover at her daughter's home.

Plans changed when conflict with her daughter's father prompted Higley to reach out to friends living in Cottage

Grove.

"They invited me to stay in their RV, and I was thankful to Mark Walker and Nancy Atkinson," Higley said. "We have been friends for 26 years, it showed true friendship when they offered to help."

Higley lived in her friends' RV for over three years until recently, when they all moved to a different property — at which point Higley found herself living in a tent.

"I lost everything. My COPD was getting worse, there was mud, and I couldn't get through the mud," Higley said.

She struggled to survive without proper hygiene and a warm place to sleep. Her health declined and her friends knew she needed help.

They drove her to the Emergency Room at PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Hospital.

"I couldn't breathe. If my friends hadn't taken me to the hospital, I probably wouldn't have made it through the win-



COURTESY PHOTO

**Rebecca Higley, once homeless, now in her new residence at Middlefield Oaks Senior Living.**

ter," Higley said.

Kat Rio, the RN Care Manager at PeaceHealth, spoke to Higley about her options and began reaching out to several community resources, including Senior & Disability Services, Middlefield Oaks Senior Living, and other long-term care facilities.

"Kat was gung-ho to get me into a place. She called lots of places and no one had a room for me," Higley said. "Then

Middlefield Oaks offered me an apartment. I wanted to cry when I saw my new home. It's beautiful, and it's huge! I have a key to my own front door, and I have my own bathroom, kitchen, full refrigerator and microwave."

Heather Arnason, Executive Director for Middlefield Oaks Senior Living, responded to Higley's need.

"When we heard Rebecca's story, we couldn't say no. She needed help,

and we could provide the level of care she needed," said Arnason. "Our mission is to provide safe, quality long-term care for seniors so they can live their lives to the fullest, and we were grateful to have an available apartment to offer Rebecca."

PeaceHealth Care Manager Elizabeth Sawyers remembers working on behalf of Higley years ago. "It's good to hear PeaceHealth and Senior & Disability were able to offer assistance, and Middlefield Oaks was there when she needed a safe home. I'm so happy she's finally living in a healthy, beautiful apartment with 24-hour care," Sawyers said.

Ruth Tracey, the Community Relations Director for Middlefield Oaks, credited the new trajectory of Higley's life as a heartfelt collaboration and community effort.

"It all came together beginning with Rebecca's friends who helped her, to PeaceHealth Hospital in Cottage Grove who

provided a continuum of care and communicating with Senior & Disability Services for multiple reasons, including acquiring a bed for Rebecca," Tracey said. "Then, watching the department heads at Middlefield Oaks gather items and furniture needed to set up Rebecca's apartment was truly service from the heart. It was a team effort, and it took every person involved to make this happen.

"To be able to serve this deep of a need in a person's life is an honor. It is the core of why I choose to be in this field."

Renowned civil rights leader Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The measure of a country's greatness should be based on how well it cares for its most vulnerable populations."

Higley said she appreciates the care and support she received.

"I'm so thankful to the hospital and everyone. Oregon has been kind to me. Oregon takes care of their people," she said.

# Crow-Applegate-Lorane School Board names superintendent/principal finalists

The Crow Applegate Lorane (CAL) School Board has announced three finalists for further consideration to be the next superintendent/principal for the Crow-Applegate-Lorane School District. The selected finalists are:

- Heidi Brown — Currently, Brown is the principal of the Harrison elementary school in the South Lane school district (SLSD, Cottage

Grove, OR).

Additionally, she is the co-facilitator for the SLSD Equity committee. Previously, she worked in the Triangle Lake school district for 11 years in a variety of roles, including athletic director and middle/high school teacher.

Brown received her master's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Oregon.

- Sandra Price — Price

has worked in the Salem-Keizer school system since 2012. First as the Director of Elementary Education and currently as the Director of School Improvement.

Prior to her current assignment, she worked for the Lane Education Service District as a School Improvement program administrator.

From 2004-2007, she was the Yoncalla Elementary/Middle school prin-

cipal.

Price earned her master's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Oregon.

- Wayne Reposa — Since 2018, Reposa has been the assistant professor for the Bushnell University (Northwest Christian University) in Eugene, Ore.

Previously, he was a middle school principal for eight years in the Lebanon (Ore.) Community

school district. He was an elementary teacher in Springfield for eight years prior to his work in Lebanon. Reposa has a master's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Oregon.

The CAL school board will begin background and reference checks for the finalists over the next few weeks. Each finalist will be invited for a "day in the district" on Wednesday, March 10.

At that time, staff and members of the community will have an opportunity to meet the candidates.

The staff and community "meet and greet" will be held from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. at the Applegate Elementary School. Comment cards will be provided for participants to share thoughts with the school board.

COVID-19 protocols will be strictly enforced.

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Nathan has worked at Brad's since 2008, he has 12 years experience diagnosing and repairing vehicles. Nathan is a graduate of Cottage Grove High School and a graduate of WYO Tech. Nathan is ASE Master Tech Certified. Nathan is a life long resident of Cottage Grove

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