

Oregon FFA and Les Schwab 'Drive Away Hunger'

Oregon FFA and Les Schwab Tires Centers recognize the great need to help fight hunger.

Those affected by food insecurity are in need year-round, especially now as the holidays are fast approaching.

Since 2013, Les Schwab Tire Centers of Oregon has partnered with Oregon FFA in a Drive Away Hunger Initiative to help raise as much food and awareness as possible. The initiative will take place the entire month of October.

The public is urged to join in the effort to drive away hunger by dropping non-perishable food donations at any Oregon Les Schwab Tire Center, Wilco, or Grange Co-op store through Oct. 31.

The timing of this initiative is important to help local food banks and pantries gear up for the upcoming holiday demands.

This special partnership allows FFA members to live out their motto of "learning to do, doing to learn, earning to live and living to

serve."

FFA members follow in the footsteps set by the employees at Les Schwab Tire Centers as they generously giving back to their local communities daily. Over the past eight years, this effort has raised nearly three million meals for those in need.

The Oregon FFA is part of the National FFA Organization, formerly known as the Future Farmers of America. It is a national youth organization of 760,113 student members,

all preparing for leadership and careers in the science, business, and technology of agriculture.

There are 8,817 local FFA chapters in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Oregon FFA is made up of more than 11,000 members in 109 chapters throughout the state. The FFA mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultur-

al education.

To learn more, visit online at the Oregon FFA Facebook page, #ORF-

FADriveAwayHunger, and www.leschwab.com/drive-away-hunger.

CRISIS from AI

assistance Helping Out On The Streets) program in Eugene. The program has established itself nationally as a trailblazer in the field of crisis response.

White Bird Clinic launched CAHOOTS as a community policing initiative in 1989. CAHOOTS workers are not trained in law enforcement, but rather work as an alternative to police responses to non-violent crises.

The program mobilizes two-person teams consisting of a medic (a nurse, paramedic or EMT) and a crisis worker who has substantial training and experience in the mental health field. Law enforcement and community members alike have praised the program's success in de-escalating situations and finding positive outcomes.

White Bird has also stated that it saves the City of Eugene millions of dollars each year. It also cuts down on ambulance rides and emergency room visits by offering preventive services.

The effort to support rural mobile crisis response elsewhere in the region began in Florence three years ago, a model which has also achieved notable success.

The West Lane MCR, a team of 10 people, has been praised for establishing a strong partnership with law enforcement.

While initially only covering the Florence area, the program has been able to reach out into county area and work with the Lane County Sheriff's Office as well.

The service is 24/7 and includes support for people with suicide ideation, acute mental health crises, family conflicts, unhoused needs, drug and alcohol issues, and requests for welfare checks.

Kidnapping and drowning events have even been addressed by the team.

Lori Severance, a licensed clinical social worker with the West Lane team, said responders are often out on calls for two or three hours at a time.

"We stay as long as we're needed and then we provide referrals," she said.

The program owes part

of its success to building strong community collaboration and support, said Severance, including regular meetings with other stakeholders.

This has allowed clients to be connected with services more quickly and better coordinated between community resources.

Some notable lessons from the West Lane project, though, are areas which Cottage Grove may be keen to learn from.

Organizers pointed out that law enforcement may not always have the ability to provide assistance on non-criminal mobile crisis calls, which could be a potential safety issue for MCR workers.

Determining the best way to provide case management services is also a concern. For example, it should be decided whether to contract out these services to a local agency or manage them within the MCR program itself.

The scarcity of resources rural communities possess may alone be somewhat of an issue in this, too.

Senior Program Services Coordinator at Lane County Debbie Heeszal said the West Lane project had made it clear a "one size fits all" approach would be the wrong strategy and recommended a nuanced application to South Lane.

Currently, there are several services for dealing

with mental health crises in Cottage Grove.

South Lane Mental Health, a key player in this project, has offered walk-in and call-in services since the 1990s and provides crisis lines and mobile responses to its clients.

The Cottage Grove Community Medical Center keeps a South Lane Mental Health crisis worker staffed in its emergency room, though in-person responses have been suspended since June 2021 due to staffing shortages.


CGPD also responds to crisis calls in the community and will often assist in transporting a person in crisis to an appropriate service.

Nonprofit services like Community Sharing and Family Relief Nursery provide aid as well.

Still, attendees of last month's virtual meeting noted a laundry list of needs and strategies for the community.

One question posed to the group asked: If South Lane had sufficient access to behavioral health services, what would it look like and how could progress be measured?

Answers were numerous and included needs to address youth concerns, define the boundaries of the service, secure adequate funding, diminish the stigma around behavioral health and track progress




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