

HOUSING *from A1*

The idea for home sharing sprung from the Portland organization's own solution seeking and Home Share Oregon attained its official nonprofit status just this June.

The group's stated mission is to prevent housing instability, foreclosure, and homelessness through home sharing and to disrupt the housing crisis in Oregon by encouraging and incentivizing homeowners to participate in mitigating the problem.

By putting to work underutilized housing inventory, like spare bedrooms, Home Share Oregon intends to expand access to affordable housing through this strategy. "We like to say that we are trying to solve the housing crisis in Oregon, one spare room at a time," said Smith. "It's a lot more complicated than that, but that really sums it up. Our goal is to assist and facilitate homeowners who have a spare room in finding a safe, compatible, responsible person to rent that room to."

Currently, Home Share Oregon is running a campaign of education and advertising specific to Lane County and Jackson County.

This was partially made possible by a grant from the State of Oregon which stipulated using home sharing as a way to house people who are survivors of fires.

"I have found out recently there are over 200 family units that are still in hotels in Lane County because of the fires over a year ago," said Smith. "So, we want to help facilitate them finding more permanent housing even if it's just until their own homes are restored. So that's part of it, working with fire victims, but honestly we are available to work with anyone in the state."

**How Does it Work?**

Home Share Oregon uses online technology to help homeowners find roommates to share their home while partner organizations support renters and

homeowners with additional services for home sharing.

The nonprofit has partnered with Silvernest, an online platform which provides a secure matching process to help find compatible housemates.

"I like to say it's a cross between an Airbnb and a dating app," said Smith.

Though Silvernest is a for-profit company, Home Share Oregon pays up to six months of the fees for the service for its members, including the cost of criminal background checks.

On Silvernest, members build profiles and find matches based on their preferences. The business states that more than 100,000 people have so far joined the homesharing site.

Members can browse each other's profiles and choose to initiate conversation through the site.

"It's a little safer than, say, putting an ad on Craigslist," said Smith. "Our goal is compatibility — finding someone who is compatible and finding someone who is safe. And part of that safety is in asking people to complete criminal background checks."

Renters and owners are also encouraged to meet in person before moving forward to further ensure compatibility.

Should two parties find a match, Silvernest provides templates for rental agreements, which can be negotiated and personalized by renters and owners.

"There is also a clause that says should either party decide this isn't working, they can they can get out of it with a 30-day notice," said Smith. "It's about compatibility and describing in your profile what you're looking for. Some of it's tick-the-box — smoker/nonsmoker, pets/no pets — but you get to a point in your profile where you can be very specific."

Home Share Oregon helps facilitate the process by assisting people in creating profiles, providing landlords with tools and generally reducing barriers to people finding housing.

"If there's a homeowner that, let's say, wants to rent but the

door is broken to the room, if we need to help them find somebody to repair that, we can probably do that," said Smith, adding that potential renters looking for a place to live can also receive assistance.

The nonprofit has established four goals and the facilitation of the home sharing matches is just the first of these. It is also hoping, through its program, to shift the cultural norm to accept home sharing as a more standard practice. This shift could help solve some of the housing need in a ground-up process.

It may also play into the organization's third goal, which is working with organizations which deal with natural disasters. Smith described her firsthand accounts of a deeper need for aid in cases like the Holiday Farm Fire last year.

"I know this for a fact, because I was working for another nonprofit that helps people," she said. "Red Cross showed up and gave out hotel vouchers, but the hotel vouchers were only good for three days. And some of the hotels were 150 miles away because everything filled up so fast. So having a home owner Rapid Response Program to just to recruit and train homeowners who are willing to provide housing for families when they're displaced is part of it."

Lastly, the nonprofit has set a goal to engage in advocacy efforts with local and state government, helping to pass initiatives which are designed to reduce barriers to home sharing, possibly even creating incentivization for homeowners to rent out rooms.

Broadly, Oregon's housing issues can be approached through a multitude of angles, including addressing the presence of homelessness. But while debates continue at the state and local level about the right approach, Home Share Oregon is providing a solution to just a specific subsection of that population.

"We're not necessarily excluding people that are unhoused, but that's not who we're targeting either," said Smith. "And I'm not advocating that we shouldn't help the unhoused — of course we should. And there's no rea-

son why an unhoused person couldn't apply. But what we're focused on is compatibility."

The service was created with renters who already have a degree of stability in mind, but Smith said there is room for growth in the nonprofit's vision.

"And I anticipate, as we get bigger and as we build out and we have more inventory for houses, we have a vision for doing things like placing youth that have aged out of the foster care system," she forecasted.

Home Share Oregon's clientele tend to consist of people who either need help making mortgage payments or are looking for something more affordable.

"Maybe 50 percent of the people I talked to are older folks with a large home, they want to stay in their home and they need a little more income to do that," Smith said. "This is a great way to allow seniors to age in place. But there are also people who are struggling to meet their mortgage payments. And if they have a spare room and they can make this work, this gives them income to help reduce that mortgage burden."

The kind of rental agreements can be diverse as well. Smith shared that she has seen a homeowner who needed help doing chores and would negotiate lower rent for work and another who simply wanted temporary help due to a disability.

Based on U.S. Census data, the Home Share Oregon estimates there are some one and half million spare rooms in Oregon sitting vacant.

"And if we were able to rent just two percent of those rooms, we could house 30,000 people. That's something worth looking at," said Smith. "It is a unique solution that will work for some people. It's not going to work for everyone, but here's the real beauty: every time you find someone and help that match to happen between the homeowner and the renter, that's another person housed, which opens up resources for maybe people that aren't as stable."

For more information, visit [homeshareoregon.org](http://homeshareoregon.org) or call 503-862-3296.

## Gamesquall annual 'convention' this weekend

From noon on Dec. 31 to 2 a.m. on Jan. 1, Gamesquall's annual "gaming convention" will be held at the Odd Fellows Lodge at 317 E. Main St.

Only a "convention" in the loosest sense of the term, participants can enjoy playing board, card, miniature, and role-playing games from the extensive Gamesquall library. There's no scheduling system, gift bags or dealer's room, but there's plenty of free parking and admission is only zero dollars.

Guests can also bring their own games to share with others at this free event.

More info can be found at [gamesquall.com](http://gamesquall.com).

## Magnolia Gardens holds Cold Weather Coat Drive

From Dec. 10 to Jan. 10, Magnolia Gardens Senior Living is holding a Cold Weather Coat Drive to warm the lives of those in need in the community.

The senior living center is accepting not only coats, but other warm items such as wraps, hats, gloves, scarves, socks and blankets, which will be used to benefit Cottage Grove Community Sharing.

Donations can be made by drive-through or drop-off between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. each day at the facility at 1425 Daugherty Avenue. Items should be clean and in new or like new condition. All sizes are needed.

For more information, call Ruth Tracey at 541-942-0054.

# Winter

# SUBSCRIPTION special

**All-Access  
Print & Digital Delivery  
Only 67¢ per week  
introductory rate**

\*Offer good through 1.31.22. Mention this ad, or use code Winter21 at checkout. This offer is not transferable and the offer is available those who have not subscribed in the last 31 days. Special introductory offers are limited to no more than two special subscriptions in a twelve month period and must be paid in advance to qualify for special rate. Once the above discounted period ends, you will be billed at the regular subscription rates.

**Subscribe Today for:**

Local News | Area Business Updates | School Information | Events & Activities | Shopping & Coupon Offers | School Sports | Jobs & Real Estate | Local Opinions | & So Much More

Your subscription helps ensure the future of local newspapers. Thank you for your support!

Cottage Grove  
**Sentinel**



Print & Online Local News • Call or subscribe online:  
541.942.3325 • [www.cgsentinel.com](http://www.cgsentinel.com)