

FROM PAGE A1

HOMELESS:

continued from page A1

a window while waiting at the stoplight and beckoned him to the vehicle to give him money, and Day quickly hurried over to collect before the light changed.

He thanked the driver, returned to his perch, sat down and rested his back against a crosswalk signal pole near his backpack, sleeping bag and a few other belongings, while his little dog lay on the ground at the end of a leash.

He began displaying the sign again and watching the cars to see if any of the occupants would respond to the message: “Down, out and hungry. Anything helps.”

DECADES OF HOMELESSNESS

Day said he is 42 and has been homeless “off and on” for the last 20 years. His life, he said, took a turn for the worse when his wife of five years died last year.

“People don’t realize depression can really take it out of you,” he said. “I’m just having a bad time. I’ve been having a real hard time.”

Day said he is mentally and physically disabled and that a doctor told him

he could not work. He said he has degenerative disc disease in his back and hepatitis C, which caused cirrhosis of the liver.

He hadn’t used drugs for seven years, he said, until his wife’s death, when he slipped back into the habit. He said he occasionally uses drugs now to stay awake because he has night terrors when he sleeps.

He said he has paranoid schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress disorder from being severely abused as a child and spending eight years in the Marines during Operation Desert Storm, but the special operations to which he was assigned remain classified, so he “can’t talk about it.”

“I don’t get my veteran benefits because of all the red tape,” he said.

Day said he does collect \$721 each month in Social Security benefits, and that money, plus what he collects panhandling, helps him and his dog survive life on the streets.

“Sometimes I make close to \$100 a day,” he said. “I appreciate everything that (passers-by) do.”

Most of the people he encounters are very nice, Day said, but he knows some people say bad things about him. He said he worked in demolitions

in the military and learned to read lips while experiencing hearing difficulties, so he knows what people are saying behind their vehicle windows.

“I’m a human being, too,” he said. “I have feelings. Since my wife died, I’m real sensitive.”

HOUSING DIFFICULTIES

Day said he lived with his wife in Pendleton after getting married in 2009 in the Tri-Cities, where he grew up. He said he had been living in an apartment with a man in Umatilla but moved out recently after the roommate stole his Social Security payments and tried to overcharge for rent.

He said his goal is to start saving money for housing, but it is difficult to find a place that will

allow him to live with his 6-year-old Chihuahua, Baby Girl, whom he has had since she was a puppy. He said she is his therapy dog, though not officially registered, and he couldn’t imagine life without her. Some people give him food for his dog, he said, but he believes more options should be available for people who are homeless.

“They need a shelter out here or a place that feeds the homeless,” he said.

Although a shelter would likely not accommodate his dog, Day admitted, he said it might help other people in his situation.

He said he knows about 10 other homeless people in Umatilla and estimated there might be as many as 20.

“They allow people to

camp out by the Umatilla River,” he said.

THE PANHANDLING POPULATION

Not all of the people who hold signs asking for money in Umatilla are homeless, however.

Day said his former roommate who stole from him is one of the regular panhandlers on Highway 730 near Crossroads Truck Stop, and that person still has the apartment.

“Umatilla doesn’t have an ordinance against it,” Day said.

Another panhandler, Kathy Wagner, rolled herself in a wheelchair to where Day was sitting Thursday and asked if he would let her display her sign. She said they take turns at the busy intersection.

Wagner said she will

get a permanent prosthetic leg next week, so she will no longer be confined to the wheelchair, but she plans to continue asking for money until she can get her Social Security benefits “back on track, probably in June.”

She said she is not homeless but enjoys the company of the other people asking for money at the intersection.

“I like coming out here because, if there’s other people out here, we just sit around and shoot the breeze out here,” she said. “It doesn’t give you a chance to be bored.”

Day said, if he couldn’t panhandle and collect money, he “wouldn’t be able to do anything” to get money, but he would try to figure something out.

“I would find a way to survive,” he said.



SEAN HART PHOTO

Kathy Wagner holds a sign asking for money in her wheelchair Thursday afternoon near the freeway offramp in Umatilla. Wagner said she is not homeless but enjoys the company of other panhandlers to prevent boredom. She said she will be getting a permanent prosthetic leg next week but plans to continue panhandling until she resolves issues with her Social Security benefits.

RESIDENTS:

continued from page A1

“What started getting me angry about it was they would come into the bar and gamble and buy drinks and then go back to panhandle,” she said. “... Unfortunately, we may not be able to do anything about it, but it would be nice if it were illegal. In my mind, it’s becoming an epidemic. It’s making it easier for those people to do their drugs and drink their alcohol.”

At the City Council meeting Tuesday, people shared similar concerns. Umatilla Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center Director Karen Hutchinson-Talaski said she knows of people who have even offered the panhandlers jobs, but they declined the offers.

In response to the outcry to resolve the issue and rid Umatilla of panhandlers, Mayor Dave Trott said the city cannot simply ban the practice because it is legally protected, but city officials are trying to address the issue.

“We are attempting to discuss within the city measures we can take to alleviate the situation,” he said. “... We’re trying to do something. It’s not an easy fix.”

The City Council members assured the audience they were aware of the sit-

uation and agreed officials needed to resolve the matter.

Councilwoman Mary Dedrick said the city must proceed methodically to ensure the solution was viable.

“Whatever we do, we’re going to make sure it’s done properly,” she said.

Dedrick recommended residents stop giving money to the panhandlers to discourage the behavior.

After the meeting, Umatilla Police Chief Darla Huxel said officers have cited the panhandlers for offensive littering in the past, but the locations they frequent are public property, so officers have little recourse.

“As far as them actually being there, they have a right to be there,” she said. “Basically, if people don’t want them there, then people shouldn’t encourage that activity. ... We can’t go down there and tell them they can’t be there.”

Huxel said, however, city officials are exploring options that may alleviate some of the problems.

“What we are looking at is the safety aspect of it, and we can address some things based on the safety aspect of it, as well as the state law regarding motor vehicles,” she said. “... We’re vetting it through our legal department, and, hopefully, we’ll be able to come up with something for the next City Council meeting.”



Get the new Samsung Galaxy S® 6. And then some.

Trade in for the Samsung Galaxy S® 6 or Galaxy S® 6 Edge and get \$50 on top of your old device’s value. Plus, we’ll pay off your old contract up to \$350 per line.

A better value than Verizon and AT&T

Lines	U.S. Cellular®	Verizon	AT&T
2	\$100*/8GB	\$115*/8GB	\$130*/10GB
4	\$120*/8GB	\$145*/8GB	\$160*/10GB

*Per month. Valid as of 3/24/15.



SAMSUNG Galaxy S6 SAMSUNG Galaxy S6 edge

\$0 DOWN
Retail Installment Contract, Shared Connect Plan and \$25 act. fee required. 0% APR; 20 mo. payments of \$34 for Galaxy S® 6 or \$39.50 for Galaxy S® 6 Edge.

See more plans at uscellular.com/payoff

Things we want you to know: New Retail Installment Contracts, Shared Connect Plan and \$25 device act. fees required. Credit approval required. Regulatory Cost Recovery Fee applies (currently \$1.82/line/month); this is not a tax or gmt. required charge. Add. fees, taxes and terms apply and vary by svc. and eqmt. Offers valid in-store at participating locations only, may be fulfilled through direct fulfillment and cannot be combined. **Contract Payoff Promo:** Offer valid on up to 6 consumer lines or 25 business lines. Must port in current number to U.S. Cellular and purchase new Smartphone or tablet through a Retail Installment Contract on a Shared Connect Plan with Device Protection+. Enrollment in Device Protection+ required. The monthly charge for Device Protection+ is \$8.99 for Smartphones. A deductible per approved claim applies. Federal Warranty Service Corporation is the Provider of the Device Protection+ ESC benefits, except in CA and OK. Submit final bill identifying Early Termination Fee (ETF) charged by carrier within 60 days of activation date to www.uscellular.com/contractpayoff or via mail to U.S. Cellular Contract Payoff Program 5591-61; PO Box 752257; El Paso, TX 88575-2257. Customer will be reimbursed for the ETF reflected on final bill up to \$350/line. Reimbursement in form of a U.S. Cellular Prepaid Card is issued by MetaBank.® Member FDIC; additional offers are not sponsored or endorsed by MetaBank. This card does not have cash access and can be used at any merchant location that accepts MasterCard® Debit Cards within the U.S. only. Card valid through expiration date shown on front of card. Allow 12-14 weeks for processing. To be eligible, customer must register for My Account. **Retail Installment Contract:** Retail Installment Contract (Contract) and monthly payments according to the Payment Schedule in the Contract required. If you are in default or terminate your Contract, we may require you to immediately pay the entire unpaid Amount Financed as well as our collection costs, attorneys’ fees and court costs related to enforcing your obligations under the Contract. **Trade-In:** Requires activation of new line of service with any Smartphone. Requires trade-in of Smartphone in fully functional, working condition without any liquid damage or broken components, including, but not limited to, a cracked display or housing. Smartphone must power on and cannot be pin locked. **\$50 U.S. Cellular Promotional Card:** Enrollment in Device Protection+ required. **Kansas Customers:** In areas in which U.S. Cellular receives support from the Federal Universal Service Fund, all reasonable requests for service must be met. Unresolved questions concerning services availability can be directed to the Kansas Corporation Commission Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection at 1-800-662-0027. Limited-time offer. Trademarks and trade names are the property of their respective owners. Additional terms apply. See store or uscellular.com for details. ©2015 U.S. Cellular