

SignalViewpoints

Homeless services, navigation center ahead in Seaside

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



In July, the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners entered into a memorandum of understanding that establishes the Clatsop Behavioral Health Resource Network.

Other signatories were the county's Public Health Department, Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, Clatsop Community Action, Helping Hands Reentry Outreach Centers, Providence Seaside Hospital Foundation, Iron Tribe Network and Morrison Child & Family Services. All of the services for which each of the seven agencies have received funding are for countywide services. While some projects may be located in certain areas, the various services being provided are for all county residents.

Of the \$6.2 million allocated for services in Clatsop County through the Behavioral Health Resource Network and funded through Measure 110, which decriminalized drugs in the state, the total amount Helping Hands will receive is \$1.8 million.

The money will go toward housing, harm reduction, drug and alcohol treatment, overdose prevention, employment support and other services that address addiction in the community.

Helping Hands Reentry Outreach Centers, Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, Clatsop Community Action and Iron Tribe Network provide flexible and low-barrier housing for individuals who use substances that cause harm or have a substance use disorder.

Founder and CEO Alan Evans of Helping Hands is teaming with Seaside and Clatsop Community Action for a shelter at 1530 S. Roosevelt Dr. In 2002, Evans opened an eight-bed center for the homeless in Seaside. Helping Hands operates 11 facilities in Oregon, providing over 350 beds per night for the homeless in Clatsop, Lincoln, Multnomah, Tillamook and Yamhill counties.

Q: Tell us about what's happening in Seaside.

Evans: Helping Hands has applied for some grants and we're aware we've got funding for a navigation and drop-in center in Seaside. This is going to be a full navigation center: drop-in center, navigation center, emergency shelter and a warming center.

Q: Where does it stand now?

Evans: A deal is in place. We've been working on it for months and we are going to be adding bed space for emergency shelter at that location. There's access to state money and federal dollars to enhance assistance for people with substance abuse disorders, mental health disorders and homelessness in general.

It's going to give us the ability to offer basic services to our homeless community, our homeless population in the city of Seaside. It's going to allow us to assist people in navigating resources and services that are provided, plus allow us to collect the data we need to make good, logical decisions based on what we know.

Right now, we don't have that in place in this county.

People will be able to come over or receive services and meals for the day. It'll allow us to work together with Clatsop Community Action, our homeless liaisons and Clatsop Behavioral Health to make sure that people can reach the resources. We'll all work together to make sure that they can navigate that system.

While we collect information through the Homeless Management Information System, which is a point-in-time count once a year, we don't always know what people's needs are and how we're going to connect them to services. That's why a navigation center is so important.



The building at 1530 N. Roosevelt serves as a seasonal warming center.

R.J. Marx



Helping Hands

Alan Evans, founder and CEO of Helping Hands Reentry Outreach Centers.

'WE'RE CONFIDENT IN THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT WE'VE BUILT WITH THE STATE, COUNTY AND CITY. THE CITY'S INVESTED IN THIS PROJECT!'

Alan Evans, founder and CEO of Helping Hands Reentry Outreach Centers

And that's why we've been working really hard to make sure we can get to a point where we can collect the right information based on the needs of the people who are on our streets. And then when we can get that information then we can navigate this problem and we have a chance.

Q: You'll have a 24/7 place that people can utilize. Is this a high-barrier or

low-barrier type of shelter?

Evans: We want to make sure that people can access services and we can find out the needs of the population that historically Helping Hands hasn't been capable of serving because what they're going through in their life doesn't meet the criteria of staying in a higher-barrier facility. This will allow us to engage with people and work together as a network to make sure that we can find out exactly what the needs are and how we can best serve that population.

We provide meals, a laundry facility and a structured, low-barrier environment. There will be rules in place for behavioral issues, because the last thing we want to do is open something that's going to be unsafe to our public. We want to be able to provide public safety to our community, and that's why our community involvement is so important in this.

It's not going to open the doors and let people do drugs. But it's going to be able to provide the basic necessities to help a person that finds themselves in any situation, to the services they need so they can have the best chance of sustainability and community they can.

Q: How will it work?

Evans: What we're doing in other communities right now is a referral process. Our organization took over a project for Jordan Schnitzer in Portland (Bybee Lakes Hope Center).

We took a 155,000-square-foot building and we created an outreach program based off of referring partners. So anybody who finds somebody who's homeless, or shelterless can refer them to the services. This gives us the ability to do an evaluation to navigate the system, to find out what holes are in the system, and for people to be able to get help and as much information as we can provide.

We'll begin to start reaching more people because, right now, we don't truly know what their needs are. We only see the problem of homelessness transient issues, which is causing havoc all over our state. Are we providing the services properly in the community so they're reachable by everybody?

That can't be done without data.

Q: Can you talk about the kind of data you are looking for?

Evans: Our organization is a person-centered, trauma-informed, data-driven organization. We do a full evaluation of every single person who comes to us for a resource. Everybody's story is different.

You know, we don't realize in our community today that the fastest growing population of homeless are senior citizens, and the second fastest are mothers with children.

So if you do an evaluation of people to find out their demographics, their basic needs, and then the obstacles they face to reenter society, we look at what services are provided in our community to bridge that gap. Then we can start coming up with solutions to how we can make sure the services reach the people in need. Data will be extremely valuable to changing how our homeless are perceived in a community and how we can better serve them.

Q: What kind of staff will you be using?

Evans: Like all of our facilities, we'll have a facility director. We'll have resident advisers and case managers on-site. We'll be partnering with Clatsop Community Action and partnering with Clatsop Behavioral Health Care for people with mental health issues. It'll be a full wraparound service navigation center.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add about this particular endeavor?

Evans: We're fairly confident that we're moving in the right direction financially. It's always important to make sure that it's a fully funded operation to pull off this kind of work, because you don't want to ever open something that you're at risk of not having enough money to keep open.

We're confident in the relationships that we've built with the state, county and city. The city's invested in this project. They've invested \$50,000 this year; \$25,000 of it we've already received. We already have the property. We don't own it yet. But hopefully someday we will and we've got a plan in place.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Boone urges vote for Gray

I am writing in support of Rick Gray, non-affiliated candidate for House District 32. I met Rick after he filed to run for what is my former legislative seat. We met for coffee and he told me about his history and experience in politics. He asked for my input and advice on the district.

I found him to be thoughtful and intelligent. He has a lot of varied experience including having served in Virginia as what we call Secretary of State here in Oregon. He drafted legislation with his father, a state representative and senator for 18 years, and he understands the legislative process. He has done his research and has met many of those who either serve or direct in local district businesses, agencies and services.

He's a big thinker with big ideas. He looks at the issues from a long-term viewpoint, somewhat of a rarity these days. The fact that he is nonpartisan allows him the freedom to be independent and pursue his agenda as such.

I believe that of all three candidates Rick is the most experienced and that is important to me.

I hope you will join me in supporting Rick Gray for House District 32.

**Deborah Boone
Cannon Beach**

Consider all citizens

To: Clatsop County Commissioners and Administrative Staff

Perhaps the commissioners can think back in time to their high school U.S. history class when they studied the Declaration of Independence.

Remember those all-important words "right to the pursuit of happiness"? It did not read pursuit of profit by the operators of short-term rentals, nor did it read pursuit of profit by the county's collection of \$700,00 in transient taxes. So why are commissioners Kujala, Toyooka, Wev, Bangs and Thompson desirous of disallowing the right

to the pursuit of happiness for a minority group of residents of Clatsop County by allowing short-term rental operations in the coastal residential zone and other residential zones in the rural land areas of Clatsop County?

County employees and the commissioners that reside in Astoria, Warrenton, Gearhart and other municipalities within the county, which restrict short term rentals (for good reason, their citizens did not want them in their neighborhoods) experience no degradation in the quality of their life by living next door to mini motels.

Commissioners Mark Kujala, John Toyooka, Pamela Wev, Courtney Bangs and Lianne Thompson are, in fact, violating the civil rights of a minority of citizens residing in select unincorporated residential neighborhoods within Clatsop County. Egregious actions to say the least and must and will be stopped.

**Jim Aalberg
Warrenton**

PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY, AUG. 30

Gearhart City Council, work session, 6:30 p.m., cityofgearhart.com.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 1

Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 6

Seaside Community Center Commission, 10 a.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A.

Seaside Library Board, 4:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway.

Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 7

Seaside Improvement Commission, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., www.cityof-gearhart.com.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 8

Seaside Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., 415 First Ave., Seaside.



PUBLISHER
Kari Borgen

EDITOR
R.J. Marx

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Samantha Stinnett

ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER
Sarah Silver-Tecza

PRODUCTION MANAGER
John D. Bruijn

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Skyler Archibald
Joshua Heineman
Katherine Lacaze

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Jeff TerHar

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Subscriptions

Annually: \$51.00, monthly autopay is \$4.25
E-Edition only: \$4 a month

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