

The Challenge of Homelessness

Ever since 1776 this nation has had a propensity to tolerate the intolerable. Despite the elegant words penned by our founding Fathers, slavery continued until our tragic Civil War. Women were denied equality until the 20th century. The smoking of tobacco flourished until Surgeon General C Everett Koop and other experts recently proved the deadly consequences of its use. And the prestigious City Club of Portland denied women membership until a few decades ago.

But we continue to tolerate homelessness despite political handwringing and 10-year plans to eradicate it.

The January 2009 count of Portland's homeless was over 4000. This year's count is scheduled next Wednesday, January 27th. On September 18, 2009 State School Superintendent Susan Castillo announced that the number of homeless students in Oregon Public Schools during the 2008-2009 school year totaled 18,059.

This city has virtually institutionalized homelessness, with Street Roots newspaper, camp Dignity Village near the Portland Airport, with police and politicians looking the other way as people camp out under the Hawthorne Bridge, in the city park, in the portals of buildings, in alley ways, in empty warehouses and abandoned cars. Others loiter on street corners with nothing to do but ask for a handout-to the consternation of businesses such as Wentworth Chevrolet/ Subaru in inner Southeast Portland.

Isaiah, the great Hebrew prophet, gave God's answer to homelessness over 2700 years ago. It could not be more relevant to us in 2010. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity whose name is Holy....

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free and that ye break every yoke?

"For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it? (Isaiah 51 and 58) Since 1982 the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon has promoted the concept of Shared

Housing, which brings together homeowners with rooms to spare, and people in need of low-cost shelter. In over two decades of operation, hundreds have been provided shelter.

This program could be replicated a hundred fold with government assistance and promotion.

The homeless are particularly vulnerable to the elements (cold, heat, rain and wind) to infection and disease, to theft, to assault, to kidnapping, to rape and to murder.

They need to be screened as to the cause of their state, and plans developed for their rehabilitation and housing. The county-owned Wapato prison- now empty- is a ready and ideal venue to process these people.

Oregon has the highest per capita of homelessness of any state in the nation. For this reason, the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is planning a State Summit on Homelessness in early spring of this year to make proposals for the 2011 state Legislature. The time and place will be announced soon.

Homelessness like slavery should not be tolerated in a civilized society.

Charles E. Long

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Housing Protest Planned

Massive rally to honor King P. 76

Sixteen Portland organizations will honor Dr. Martin Luther King by taking part in a mass action to end homelessness.

The local housing and civil rights activist plan to converge with more than 1,500 housing advocates in San Francisco for two days of demonstrations and mass actions, Jan. 19 and Jan. 20 demanding change from the Obama administration on affordable housing.

Despite attempts to shut poor people out of the political process, organizers are continuing the plans for the protest, which coincides with the one year anniversary of the historic inauguration of Barack Obama.

The action is planned on this anniversary as a reminder to the administration that it's time to act on the promise of change. In a year of unprecedented profits for the banks that were bailed out by this administration, record unemployment and housing costs have created a new wave of mass homelessness and a growth in programs across the country aimed at penalizing those who are poor and un-housed. The main action on the 20th will be the presentation of a "people's bailout" with set of demands to end homelessness and stop the civil rights abuses

against the poor.

"The federal government's 30-year failure to provide enough affordable housing is appalling and the criminalization of people who are on the streets because of the lack of that housing is totally unacceptable," said Michael Anderson, Executive Director of the Oregon Opportunity Network which has signed on as endorser of the January events.

Organizers of the event are seeking a reversal of the federal funding trends of the last 30 years which have decreased spending on affordable housing, which directly correlates to the emergence of a new and massive episode of homelessness.

Other demands include the enactment of a moratorium on the demolition, conversion or destruction of any publicly funded units until federal law guarantees one for one replacement at existing affordability rates; ensuring adequate funding for operations of public housing to prevent unit loss, high vacancy rates, and substandard living conditions; Stopping police and business improvement zone programs that enforce "nuisance crimes" or "quality of life crimes"; and ensuring that the more than 914,000 homeless children in public schools are able to stay at their "home school" are fully integrated with their housed peers while being provided the support they need to learn and thrive.

Interfaith Summit will focus attention on dramatic increase in number of homeless children and families

On Sept. 18, 2009, State Superintendent of Schools, Susan Castillo, announced that the number of homeless students in Oregon public schools during the 2008-2009 school year had risen 14 percent from the previous year, and totaled 18,059 students who were homeless for some or all of the school year.

Responding to the rising number of homeless children and families in Oregon, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) is launching a new project to focus public attention on the problem and generate new action by the religious community and by government to prevent and reduce childhood and family homelessness, as well as improve the education of homeless children and youth.

Initially, EMO is inviting religious organizations, clergy, congregations, and both faith-based and secular nonprofit agencies to join us in planning and cosponsoring an Interfaith Summit and Informational Hearing on Childhood and Family Homelessness. This summit and hearing would have three goals:

- ① generate media attention and increase public awareness of the problem.
- ② increase the involvement of the religious community in responding to this problem,
- ③ generate recommendations for funding and legislation that might be needed in time for the 2011 Session of the Oregon Legislature.

The increase of homeless children and youth is symptomatic of broader trends with

In the January 2009 one-night count, 17,122 people were identified as homeless. This was up 37 percent from the previous year, and 43 percent of those identified as homeless were in families with children.

regards to homelessness itself. Recent figures present a bleak picture of the impacts of the economic crisis on levels of homelessness in Oregon. Oregon is now ranked number one among states in the percentage of its population experiencing homelessness. In the January 2009 one-night count, 17,122 people were identified as homeless. This was up 37 percent from the previous year, and 43 percent of those identified as homeless were in families with children. More than 25 percent of those counted were children or youth less than 18 years of age.

Planning for the Interfaith Summit and Informational Hearing is in the initial stages, but it is expected to be held in the early spring of 2010 (check EMO's Web site for updates).

If you or your organization would like to get more information on this project or would like to join planning sessions or cosponsor this summit, please contact Kevin Finney, director of EMO's Public Policy Advocacy, at (503) 221-1054, ext. 204, or kfinney@emoregon.org.

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With homeless on the move, it's hard to make charges stick

P.B.-1/A Jan. 15, 2010

Crime | A Portland stabbing case shows how transient lifestyles can complicate cases

By **AIMEE GREEN**
THE OREGONIAN

High on meth, Dawn Rae Davenport walked naked through the Southeast Portland camp she'd been kicked out of just days before.

She encountered John Newbil, who happened to be up at 5 a.m. that day last August, and stabbed him in the chest and neck. The ruckus woke Robert Dean Thomas. When he poked his head out of his tent, Davenport stabbed him in the mouth, severing an artery near the back of his throat.

"He almost bled to death,"



Davenport
Pleaded guilty to a lesser charge

against her — first-degree assault — she would have faced a mandatory minimum 7½ years in prison. Instead, she pleaded to a lesser charge and was sentenced this week to 2½ years in prison.

That's because the case against Davenport was mired in problems that often make prosecuting crimes against the homeless especially challenging.

said deputy district attorney Brian Davidson, who prosecuted the case.

If Davenport had been convicted of the most serious charge

Police cleared out the camp south of the Springwater Corridor Trail and west of Interstate 205 at some point after the attacks, and that made it tough to track down witnesses.

"We had very spotty information on where we could find them," Davidson said.

What's more, all of the witnesses and the victims had criminal histories and at least one was wanted by police, which may have made them unwilling to cooperate and less credible on the witness stand.

"They just don't have fixed addresses, they don't have phone contacts and they're often leery of law enforcement," Davidson said. "These are very important cases that we want to prosecute. It's very frustrating as a prosecutor."

Please see **HOMELESS**, Page B4

Homeless: Lifestyles also leave people vulnerable

Continued from Page B1

A report released in August 2009 by the National Coalition for the Homeless found that reported attacks against the homeless have risen over the previous decade, just as more people have been pushed onto the streets by rough economic times. Among sexual assaults, beatings or other violent crimes, the study also documented 244 killings of the homeless across the nation over the past 10 years.

Among those difficult-to-prosecute cases was the killing of Kyle Edward Linhart, who died at a camp near a North Vancouver Avenue overpass in Portland. Another homeless man, William Crandle Bentley, stabbed Linhart 20 times in a dispute that began over a cigarette lighter. The only eye witness to the killing, Linhart's girlfriend, died of exposure to the cold last winter.

"We still had a case, but it was a much harder case," said prosecutor Kevin Demer.

Bentley, who had been charged with aggravated murder and faced at minimum a life sentence with the possibility of release after 30 years, pleaded to a lesser manslaughter charge last August. He agreed to 20 years in prison.

Calvin Dean Stubblefield's case also posed challenges for Multnomah County prosecutors. Stubblefield stabbed to death another man, Dean Charles Crosson, at his camp near the Broadway Bridge in 2007. He claimed that Crosson burst into his tent and wrapped his hands around his throat. With no witnesses to the stabbing, the original murder charge was reduced to second-degree manslaughter. Stubblefield pleaded guilty except for insanity and was sentenced last year to up to 10 years at the state mental hospital.

One big reason the homeless fall victim, according to the National Coalition for the Homeless: They are more vulnerable because they live out in the open.

As for Davenport, who entered the Southeast Portland homeless camp naked and

swinging a knife, papers filed with the court said she'd been told to leave the camp, but she had no trouble wandering back in days later.

Portland police had little trouble identifying Davenport once they spotted her because she was still naked and carrying the knife. She was uncooperative, and after stunning her with a Taser and a struggle, police were able to take her into custody, the prosecutor said.

Defense attorney Tom MacNair said she'd used drugs before but never reacted in such a way. He believes Davenport was having a drug-induced psychotic episode.

"She appeared to be completely out of her head and deranged," MacNair said.

Davenport, 37, declined to make a statement when given the opportunity, but as Judge Cheryl Albrecht was sentencing her, she told the judge she has a 6-year-old child and was eager to earn time off her sentence for good behavior. With so-called "good time" and credit for time she's already served, she'll be out in a little more than 1½ years.

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ANDY PARKER

COMMENTARY

Serving the least, the last and the lost

As the last light of day creases the horizon in orange, the long, cold night begins and they start to appear.

The old and frail, recently displaced families, middle-aged addicts. They slip past the warm glow seeping from the condos and apartments lining the streets of Orenco Station to one of the few homeless shelters in the suburbs of Portland.

On foot and on bikes, in cars and trucks, they ease across the parking lot and slowly tread toward the smell of beef and potatoes that slips into the night every time the front door of Sonrise Church swings open.

A battered old Ford pickup lurches up to the curb, its dashboard cluttered with daily living: half a loaf of bread, a jar of peanut butter, a can of WD-40 and a towel.

An old gentleman with a stubbly gray beard and a belt notched tight around his rail-thin waist, creeps up to the church and peers inside before carefully reaching for the door.

"Hi, how are you tonight?" beams Heather Brown, extending a hand to touch the man's arm.

"Fine," he nods. "Where do we go?"

For Brown, having an answer to that question is a personal dream come true.

Last week, the shelter at Sonrise opened for what Brown pledges will be 90 straight days of meals, showers and beds for up to 25 people a night.

Across ever-urbanizing Washington and Clackamas counties, where special taxing districts take care of everything from water and sewer to parks and fire protection, the needs of those seeking shelter, whether it's a night out of the cold or for lack of affordable housing, are left to a patchwork of churches and nonprofit groups.

More and more, when night falls, many of the thousands of people in the Portland area with no homes head to the burbs to find a place to hunker down, says Martha McLennan, executive director of Northwest Housing Alternatives in Milwaukie.

What they find when they get there is often a safe suburban street on which to park, but a splintered, invisible network of services.

Last December, when the shelter at Sonrise first opened its doors, it was struggling, first to find a way to connect with the homeless, then to find enough volunteers to serve them every night.

"We just got worn out," Brown said.

In those early days, the shelter opened only on nights when the temperature dropped below freezing. "Or when Heather's heart broke," said Sandy McFerran, a volunteer from Hillsboro Presbyterian, one of nine churches staffing the shelter this year.

With her tuft of gray hair and purple parka, Brown hustles around the shelter wearing a smile that embraces complete strangers as if they were long-lost siblings.

But Brown is intimately familiar with heartbreak and hard times.

When her husband lost his mobility to multiple sclerosis in 1987, she took a part-time job as a custodian at Sonrise so every couple of hours she could drive back home to turn him to prevent bed sores. For six years she cared for him.

In February 1999 he died at age 50. Just 72 days later, her 27-year-old daughter died of complications from diabetes.

"The Lord helped me, and somehow I made it through."

She started teaching a class in grief-sharing and spent more and more time volunteering with the church's outreach programs.

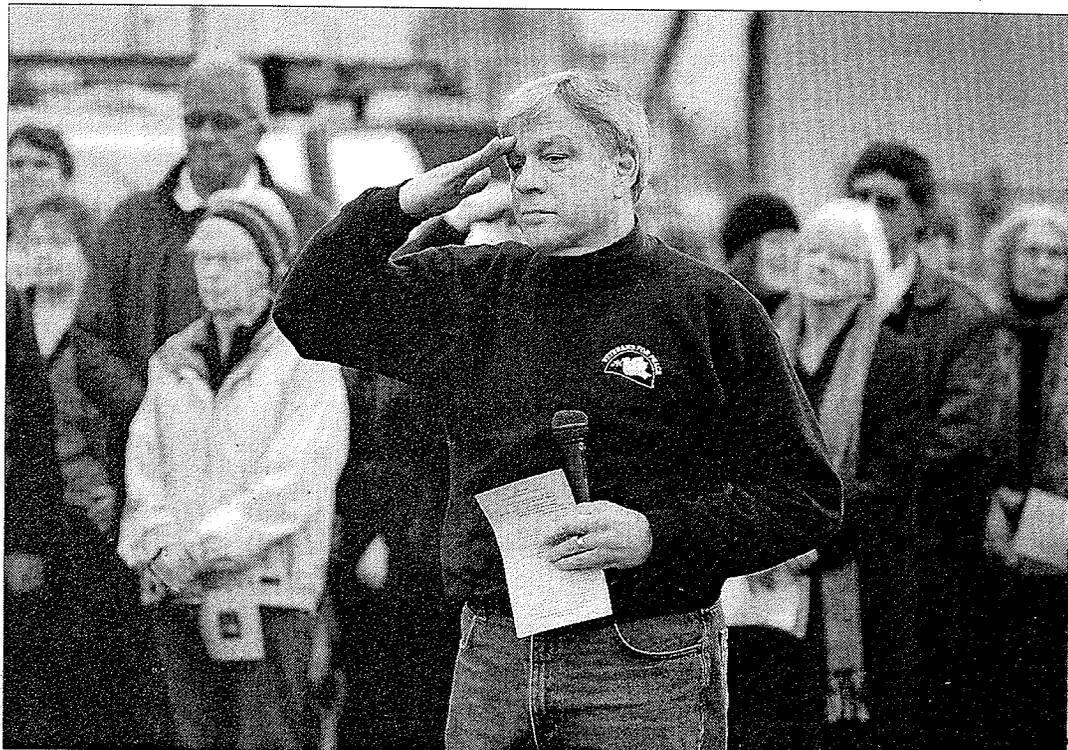
Last year, Sonrise hired her to coordinate those "mercy" programs.

"I'd give my eyeteeth to have my family back. But then I wouldn't be doing this. I am humbled by the grace of God.

"It's an honor to be in this position. I tell everyone that at 67, I've finally arrived.

"I'm finally doing what we're all supposed to be doing — serving the least, the last and the lost."

Andy Parker: 503-294-5945;
daparker@news.oregonian.com



BRIAN DAVIES/THE REGISTER-GUARD

Jim Schmidt from Veterans for Peace salutes the memory of Maj. Thomas Egan during a ceremony Friday. Egan's frozen body was found a year ago, prompting efforts to open shelters so no one else would die on Eugene's streets because of cold weather.

Year after vet's death, advocates renew pledge to help homeless

Shelter | Eugene remembers retired Maj. Thomas Egan, who was found dead in the cold

By GREG BOLT
THE REGISTER-GUARD

EUGENE — The day was not as cold as it was a year ago, but for some, the grief was just as fresh.

It was a year ago Friday that the body of retired Maj. Thomas Egan, a homeless veteran who struggled with alcoholism, was found on a weedy strip of hard ground by the railroad tracks in west Eugene.

His death, frozen and solitary, was a shock to fellow veterans and homeless advocates, but it gave life to a pledge that no one else would die on the street on a cold night for want of shelter.

About 50 people gathered Friday at the spot to remember Egan, reflect on what has happened because of his death and renew that pledge. The remembrance came in the middle of a month in which 371 people found shelter in what are now known collectively as the Egan Warming Center.

"This is a sad and lonely place to die," Mayor Kitty Piercy said

before laying a wreath against the concrete barriers that hid but did not shelter Egan's body. "But because of him, our community has said never again will someone freeze to death on our streets."

Before last winter ended, a coalition of churches, agencies and volunteers set up the first Egan Warming Center in the former National Guard armory. With that site no longer available, the group this year set up centers in four churches and trained 280 volunteers to assist patrons.

Piercy noted that of the 371 people who have stayed one or more nights in the centers, 200 had no real shelter the night before they arrived. The shelters saw their peak use this month when temperatures dipped to the single digits.

On the night before Egan's body was found, the temperature had dropped to 28 degrees. But an autopsy found he had died at least 36 hours earlier, and the two previous nights saw lows of 10 degrees.

Now, the warming centers open between Nov. 15 and March 31 when temperatures are forecast to drop to 28 degrees or lower.

On Friday, a final salute from veterans, a rendition of "Amazing Grace" on the bagpipes and

the lighting of eight votive candles marked the anniversary of Egan's death.

Egan, 60, had two college degrees and several service medals and ribbons. He had been eligible for monthly retirement benefits that could have provided him with a home. He had no family in Oregon, and it wasn't clear when he had slipped into alcoholism and homelessness.

His fellow veterans still struggle with the loss. Jim Schmidt of Veterans for Peace said it hurts to think that a fellow serviceman died that way.

"We left him behind," he said. "He was one of us; he was a veteran, a human being. He was a man who, no matter what his difficulties in life, didn't deserve to die alone. He deserved more dignity than he got."

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1/20/10
Charles Long

and to hit with wicked fist.
Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be
heard on high.

⁵Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a man to humble himself?
Is it to bow down his head like a
rush,
and to spread sackcloth and ashes
under him?
Will you call this a fast,
and a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶“Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷Is it not to share your bread with the
hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into
your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your
own flesh?

⁸Then shall your light break forth
like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up
speedily;
your righteousness shall go before
you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your
rear guard.

⁹Then you shall call, and the LORD
will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say,
Here I am.

“If you take away from the midst
of you the yoke,
the pointing of the finger, and
speaking wickedness,
¹⁰if you pour yourself out for the
hungry

you shall raise
of many generations
you shall be called
breach,
the restorer

¹³“If you turn back
sabbath,
from doing
holy day,
and call the sabbath
and the holy day
honorable;
if you honor it
ways,
or seeking
or talking
¹⁴then you shall
LORD,
and I will mount
heights of
I will feed you
Jacob your
for the mouth
spoken.”

59 Behold, the
shortened
or his ear due
²but your iniquity
separation
between you
and your sins
you
so that he do
³For your hands
and your feet
your lips have
your tongue
⁴No one enters

⁹Or pursue your own business
¹⁰The meaning of the Hebrew
¹¹Or business ¹²Or pursue
58.6: Acts 8.23.

PORTLAND CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNICATION REQUEST
Wednesday Council Meeting 9:30 AM

RECEIVED

2009 DEC 16 A 9:14

CITY AUDITOR OFFICE
CITY OF PORTLAND, OR.

Council Meeting Date: January 20, 2010

Today's Date 12-16-09

Name CHARLES E. LONG

BY _____

Address 420 N.E. MASON ST. (APT. 307)

Telephone (503) 546-9467 Email _____

Reason for the request:

The challenge of homelessness.

Charles E. Long
(signed)

- Give your request to the Council Clerk's office by Thursday at 5:00 pm to sign up for the following Wednesday Meeting. Holiday deadline schedule is Wednesday at 5:00 pm. (See contact information below.)
- You will be placed on the Wednesday Agenda as a "Communication." Communications are the first item on the Agenda and are taken promptly at 9:30 a.m. A total of five Communications may be scheduled. Individuals must schedule their own Communication.
- You will have 3 minutes to speak and may also submit written testimony before or at the meeting.

Thank you for being an active participant in your City government.

Contact Information:

Karla Moore-Love, City Council Clerk
1221 SW 4th Ave, Room 140
Portland, OR 97204-1900
(503) 823-4086 Fax (503) 823-4571
email: kmoore-love@ci.portland.or.us

Sue Parsons, Council Clerk Assistant
1221 SW 4th Ave., Room 140
Portland, OR 97204-1900
(503) 823-4085 Fax (503) 823-4571
email: sparsons@ci.portland.or.us

Request of Charles E. Long to address Council regarding the challenge of homelessness (Communication)

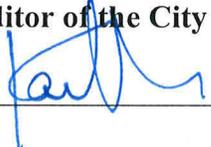
JAN 20 2010

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JAN 14 2010

Filed _____

LaVonne Griffin-Valade
Auditor of the City of Portland

By  _____

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Leonard		
Adams		