

UCAN News Articles – February 2018



Thursday, February 1, 2018

Point in Time event counts homeless, helps those in need



MADELINE SHANNON/Daily Courier
Jason Mcky (left), his wife, Raelene Mcky (center) and their friend Nina Sanchez look at informational pamphlets on the Joe's Place table at the Josephine County Fairgrounds Wednesday. The three, who live in van together, were just three of the homeless who went to the Point in Time Homeless Count at the fairgrounds.

Married couple Raelene and Jason Mcky and their friend, Nina Sanchez, scanned the items on display at a vendor table at the Josephine County Fairgrounds, searching for information and resources that can help them.

"I'm here because I'm homeless," said Raelene. "I heard about being counted and I wanted to be counted, I guess, so Josephine County would know how bad it is. I'm hoping to find resources to get my family off the street."

Raelene and her family were among about 75 people who came to the fairgrounds for the Annual Point in Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness on Wednesday.

The Point in Time count acts not only as a census of the homeless but also connects those in need with local organizations, government agencies and other groups that can help people find housing, employment, health care and education for their children.

They could even get haircuts.

"It's a self-esteem thing," said Glen Lipp of his new

haircut. "It feels great that it's shorter."

Lipp, accompanied by his 4-year-old Australian cattle dog Mitsu, was focusing his search on housing resources.

"I'm really looking for housing right now," Lipp said. "It's a really hard situation here in Southern Oregon with housing, so I'm just trying to get it back on track and moving forward again."

The event is hosted every year by United Community Action Network. Official numbers of the homeless in Josephine County will be released in a few days.

"I think what's really good about this is that it's a very good, broad spectrum across our community," said Kelly Wessels, chief operating officer of UCAN. "It's not just about social services or one entity's agenda."

The fairgrounds wasn't the only local meeting spot.

Those closer to Cave Junction than Grants Pass congregated at Immanuel United Methodist Church in Cave Junction, where similar community groups in the Illinois Valley offered their services and resources.

In addition, mobile groups of UCAN staff and representatives of other local charitable organizations counted the homeless in other parts of the county.

"Our roving teams started very early this morning," Wessels said. "So they were out on the street counting people in different pockets of the community."

Last year, UCAN counted between 1,400 and 1,700 homeless people in Josephine County, although that number may not include those who couldn't make it to the fairgrounds or the Cave Junction site or weren't counted by mobile UCAN staff.

Information collected Wednesday is used by UCAN to determine how best to meet the needs of the county's homeless population.

The information is also submitted to government agencies that disperse funding to counties all over the country.

"It's really about coming together as a community and saying we want to fix the problem," Wessels said.

"There are lots of ways to get there, but the only way we're really going to get there is together."



Friday, February 2, 2018

Tax season brings out the helpers (RSVP)

By Rebecca de Greyt for the Daily Courier

Sponsored by the United Community Action Network, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program matches the talents of people 55 and older with nonprofit agencies and health care facilities throughout Josephine County.

TAX AIDE SERVICE NOW UNDERWAY. For over 40 years, February through April 15, the partnership of AARP Tax Aide and UCAN/RSVP has been providing free tax preparation to the community.

The AARP Tax Aide program serves low income, seniors, disabled and most families throughout Josephine County, utilizing senior volunteers who have been trained in IRS requirements, providing excellence in customer service.

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Grants Pass residents should call the RSVP message line at 541-956-4450. Tax site: UCAN-RSVP office, 125 N.E. Manzanita Ave. (corner of Seventh and Manzanita). Walk-in scheduling started Jan. 18. Visit joco-freetaxes.com for more information.

Illinois Valley residents should call 541-592-6139. Tax site: IV Family Coalition, 535 E. River St., Cave Junction.

Questions? Contact RSVP Manager Rebecca de Greyt at 541-956-4474.

A FRESH VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY. The Josephine County Food Bank is looking for drivers and other volunteers for the Fresh Alliance program.

Fresh Alliance volunteers go out in pairs or trios to pick up donated food from local grocery stores. Various shifts are available. The teams go out on weekdays from 8 to 10:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Volunteer for one shift, or more if you are so inclined.

If you are ready to volunteer or would like to have more information, please contact the Food Bank's volunteer coordinator, Gabrielle Rysula, at 541-479-5556.

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR MEDICARE? Are you turning 65 between December and April? To help educate and prepare you, our SHIBA volunteers will present a MEDICARE 101 introductory class on Feb. 23 from 10 a.m. to noon at UCAN, 125 N.E. Manzanita Ave. (corner of 7th and Manzanita).

They will review plans and compare coverages for Medicare part A, B, and D plans. They will inform you how to prevent medicare fraud and the next steps to take in the process. Seating is limited and participants need to call to sign up for the training. Please call UCAN-RSVP at 541-956-4472.



Friday, February 9, 2018

Red Cross could use some volunteers for its mobile unit (RSVP)

By Rebecca de Greyt for the Daily Courier

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BE A PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER. Volunteers are the backbone of the American Red Cross, and without their help the Red Cross would not be able to provide relief to victims of disaster and help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies.

Josephine County has a mobile unit that goes to different locations and has a variety of positions that they need volunteers to assist with, such as check-in desk, scheduler, etc. Contact the RSVP reception desk at 541-956-4472 if you have any questions, or come into our office and apply.

YOU ARE INVITED. This Sunday at the Grants Pass High School Performing Arts Center from 2-5 p.m. is a new event called Count Her In: Empowering Women & Girls Right Here at Home!

It's a unique opportunity to discover the strengths and challenges for women and girls in Josephine County.

If you have any questions about how to participate in any way, you can contact Carolyn Kohn at carolynkohn@gmail.com.

SHIBA MEDICARE VOLUNTEERS. The success of SHIBA (Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance) is built on a statewide network of trained volunteer counselors.

Counselors help people in their community understand their Medicare insurance choices and their rights through individual counseling, education, and referrals. Volunteers report to a volunteer coordinator at UCAN.

If you are dependable, understanding, patient, and compassionate, communicate well, have computer skills or are willing to learn, we would love to have you on our team. Contact the RSVP reception desk at 541-956-4472 if you have any questions, or come into our office and apply.

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Saturday, February 10, 2018

Volunteer opportunities for February

ADA DUNCAN Feb 10, 2018

In spite of the bad press the Roseburg VA Medical Center continues to have, our veterans are still in need of compassionate care. Many are cared for at the hospital's hospice wing, and it is there that volunteers are most needed.

The first of four training classes is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Feb. 20 at the medical center. Volunteers need to complete the course and not be currently grieving over a family loss. For more information, call the VA at 541-440-1000, ext. 40238.

Mercy Medical Center is looking for three volunteer gift shop associates. Requirements include operating the cash register, ability to give directions to visitors and work on a fixed schedule. Prior sales experience is recommended. For further information, call at 541-677-4465.

Douglas County Meal Program needs volunteers as follows:

Winston, Glide, Sutherlin and Yoncalla dining sites need two meals-on-wheels drivers from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. Meal and mileage reimbursement is provided.

Reedsport dining site also needs two back-up drivers three times a week.

Glendale needs one back-up driver on Thursday and Friday.

All of the dining sites need kitchen helpers from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

The Roseburg Senior Services office needs a volunteer to update the database. Training is provided, days and times are flexible.

The new Senior Services information kiosk at the Douglas County Courthouse is recruiting four volunteer greeters. Training is provided and hours are flexible. For more details on any of these needs, call 541-440-3677.

Senior Companion Volunteer Program is looking for individuals to share their compassion, friendship and a helping hand to homebound seniors or handicapped people. Volunteers receive a tax-free stipend, mileage and meal reimbursement. If you are 55 or older and want to help and serve others, call the Senior Companion Program manager at 541-492-3520.

Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance Program is seeking individuals to assist area seniors with their Medicare benefits. All training is free and done in a group collaborative setting with mentoring by experienced volunteers. Volunteers age 18 and older are welcome. Call 541-492-3917 for details.

Head Start and Early Head Start are in need of volunteers to help in the kitchen, front office and the classroom. They also need a special project coordinator. All volunteer positions are open to anyone 14 years of age and older. For more information or to apply, contact the health service program manager, at 541-673-6306, ext. 120 or the volunteer hot line, 541-492-3526.

Retired Senior Volunteer Program offers a variety of opportunities to anyone who wants to be of service to the community.

RSVP is seeking a volunteer to help with administrative duties four to six hours a week, one day a week. Duties include data entry, critical for grant writing and volunteer recognition. Call the hot line, 541-492-3526 to get more information and to sign up.

United Community Action Network/RSVP Vet Team is looking for veterans, male and female, to help the case management team find housing for homeless veterans in our county and assist homeless veterans in the house program to fill out paperwork, take them to look at property possibilities, help them prepare for interviews or with computer research and mentor them as needed. For more information or to apply, call the volunteer hot line at 541-492-3526.



Friday, February 16, 2018

Free tax preparation available for low-income locals (RSVP)

By Rebecca de Greyt for the Daily Courier

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Saturday, February 17, 2018

Some locals think boxed food for SNAP recipients not the way to go

President Donald Trump’s proposal to replace some food stamp benefits with pre-packaged “harvest boxes” seems like a step backward to United Community Action Network Director Mike Fieldman and FISH Food Pantry Board President John Sloan.

Trump’s proposal would replace half the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits for most recipients with a box full of foods like peanut butter, canned fruits and vegetables, shelf stable milk, pasta and cereal.

Fieldman and Sloan said most food banks and pantries around the country used to deliver food to low-income residents in boxes, too. Over time, they learned it worked better to let people pick out their own food. These days, the FISH Food Pantry offers its clients a variety of food kiosks, with a selection of items in a layout that looks something like a grocery store.

“It’s portrayed as a new idea,” Sloan said of the harvest box, “but it kind of comes across to me as an old idea of the kind of prepackaged food box that most food pantries and the current SNAP program have moved away from years ago.”

The harvest box idea was floated Monday as part of Trump’s budget proposal. It may never become law, since the annual release of the presidential budget proposal has always been more suggestion than anything else. It’s Congress that puts together the actual budget. Still,

presidential budget ideas can be influential, and that has some who work with low-income families, as well as some in the grocery business worried.

More than 40 million people nationwide receive benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Close to half — 44 percent — are children. Two-thirds are either children, seniors or disabled. Most of the adults are women.

Actual “food stamps” are no longer given out. Instead, the modern Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, gives its low-income recipients a card that can be swiped at the grocery store.

The card can’t be used to pay for everything the store sells. It only works on foods meant to be eaten at home, not in the store. Produce at the local farmer’s market can be purchased with the card, but so can some junk food items like soda and cake. Non-food items like alcohol, cigarettes and toiletries don’t qualify.

Critics say the “harvest box” descriptions suggest they’d leave out healthy foods like fresh vegetables. Some of the food in the boxes would be unhealthy for people with special food needs, from diabetics to people who don’t digest milk or gluten well, to kids with peanut allergies.

Sloan said if SNAP recipients wind up with harvest boxes that don’t fit their families’ needs, they may wind up at FISH and other food pantries and kitchens.

Grocery stores aren’t excited about the plan, either.

Sherm’s Thunderbird Manager John Robertson said his store does 40 percent of its business in the first 10 days of every month, and that’s largely due to that being the time when SNAP benefits come out. The harvest box would cut into that business at his and other local stores.

“I wouldn’t expect them to close, but if you start doing a lot less business, you would be cutting labor for sure. You need less people to run things if you are not going to get as much money coming through your store,” he said.

He said the change would impact the economy in a lot of areas, but especially in areas with more poor people.

Sherm's has committed to promoting healthy foods as part of the local Blue Zones project. Blue Zones is based on lessons learned from areas around the globe where more people live to be 100.

Robertson said the kind of processed and pre-packaged foods that have been mentioned as being included in the harvest boxes would be less healthy than the foods his store is promoting, and that would lead to more health problems for local low-income people.

That's a concern Fieldman has as well. He said UCAN has been working toward increasing the amount of fresh food available to people in need by, for example, taking grocery stores' leftover produce and offering it through the food bank. In the long run, that means its clients are less likely to be obese and more likely to be healthy. The harvest box could reverse that.

One of the biggest problems with the harvest box idea, in Fieldman's view, is that "logistically, it's very hard to understand how it could possibly work."

"It's an idea that I think somebody had that sounded good on paper but I'm not sure how it would actually work in practice," he said.

Sloan also thinks the harvest box concept seems fuzzy and needs more thought. It's not clear, for example, how all those government food boxes would get delivered.

"I guess we shouldn't get overly excited about it, and we need to be a little bit patient and see what happens, but I think it just needs more thought and more people providing input. It takes a lot of ideas to get a few good ones. This may not be one of the good ones, I'm not sure," Sloan said.



Friday, February 23, 2018

Volunteers are the key to success for many area agencies (RSVP)

By Rebecca de Greyt for the Daily Courier

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