

# UCAN News Articles – January 2019



*Monday, January 7, 2019*

## **Grants Pass warming shelter: "For the most part, we just need volunteers"**

With a site and community backing, the prospect of a warming shelter for the homeless in Grants Pass is warming up. Now comes the hard part — volunteers.

Over 50 people, including Mayor Roy Lindsay and members of the City Council, attended an organizing meeting on Saturday at Newman United Methodist Church to brainstorm the scope of the shelter, what it will need and how it will work.

Who will pay for operating costs remains a big question mark, but its location is all but set in stone now that Grants Pass Seventh-day Adventist Church has volunteered the use of its facilities on Northeast Ninth Street.

"Donations would be nice, but for the most part we just need volunteers," said Larry Sample, coordinator of the church's community services program.

"And we'll need a lot, 40 to 50, because you don't want to use the same people over and over — you need to be able to give people a week off or they get burned out."

Sample said the shelter will have a capacity of about 50 and already has many basic amenities, including showers, a kitchen, bathrooms and a variety of basic essentials paid for with funds from the church's thrift store.

The shelter will pop up when weather is particularly inclement — be it hot, cold, or smoky — then will discontinue operations once conditions improve.

It will employ a set of rules standard among warming shelters, including a zero-tolerance policy for disruptive behavior and no admittance for anyone seeming under the influence of drugs.

Efforts to drum up public support for a warming shelter were spearheaded by local volunteer and community activist Nancy Yonally. A Daily Courier story in November reported that Grants Pass is one of the few cities of its size in Oregon that doesn't offer any public shelters or warming centers for the homeless. The county has about 650 homeless people, the third-highest rate in Oregon after Clatsop and Tillamook counties, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

Yonally's efforts haven't gone unnoticed, as Yonally is now closely supported by the United Community Action Network.

UCAN Chief Operating Officer Kelly Wessels said was committed to supplying the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the extensive, and expensive, liability insurance such a shelter would require.

It also has a variety of materials, such as cots, available for donation and is open to incorporating the shelter into one of its nonprofits, which would expedite the shelter's formation.

Lastly, Wessels said UCAN may be able to provide funding for the shelter much like it does for a warming shelter in Roseburg.

"I receive annual funding which is directly designated to sheltering — of any means — and the only reason that money isn't being invested in this community, for the adult population, is because we didn't have community support," Wessels said.

"There is money out there. In fact the Governor's budget gave a double allotment for it this year and is going to continue to increase it because homeless numbers in Oregon are that serious."

Rural Oregon has the second highest rate of homelessness in the entire United States, second only to rural Texas, according to Wessels.

Yonally said a warming shelter is not possible without the support of the community and its institutions, starting with churches as well as local government and law enforcement.

"It really takes the whole village for something like this to be successful," she said. "But I think the will is there."

Those who would like to get involved in the planning process can attend next meeting at the AllCare conference room 1 p.m. this Sunday.

To volunteer, email [larrysample59@gmail.com](mailto:larrysample59@gmail.com).



*Wednesday, January 16, 2019*

## **WIC and SNAP benefits to continue through February despite shutdown**

Federally funded food assistance programs in Douglas County will continue through February in spite of the ongoing partial government shutdown, according to local officials.

Funds in state coffers are sufficient to keep programs such as Women, Infants, and Children and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program running short term.

Additionally, Oregon residents received February SNAP benefits Friday, two weeks earlier than usual, per instructions from the U.S. Department of Agriculture on Tuesday.

Local program officials said they've been reassuring participants they can continue using services. They're hopeful lawmakers and the White House will end the shutdown, which is well into its fourth week.

WIC officials across Oregon received an update from the state late Friday that their clinics can remain open, said Judy Cheek, WIC program coordinator with United Community Action Network. The program provides supplemental food and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children at nutritional risk.

“For now, we’re doing okay,” Cheek said. “WIC participants should use their e-WIC cards to continue to purchase healthy foods for their families and not miss any scheduled appointments.” She added the program can still register new applicants.

As of December, there were 3,046 WIC participants in Douglas County, according to Cheek. That number includes 591 women, 577 infants and 1,878 children.

“Our families truly count on the WIC foods that we provide and the nutrition education,” Cheek said. “I would hate to see a disruption in those benefits for those families.”

The only part of the program that won’t continue as usual is its updated food list, which tells participants what foods are available at grocery stores and other partner businesses, according to Cheek.

“They’re delaying the new food list because they don’t want to implement those changes that might increase our operating costs,” she said.

Funding still exists for vital program services because the state didn’t spend everything for last year’s budget, said Susan Woodbury, Oregon state WIC director.

She said that fewer people than expected are using the program because the economy has improved.

“Less people qualify and are using it so we’ve seen our numbers of people served decrease and naturally our costs have gone down,” Woodbury said.

As WIC officials continue to monitor funds, the USDA has asked states to issue February’s food stamp benefits early to support people affected by the shutdown.

Over 25,000 Douglas County SNAP recipients will see their benefits before Jan. 20.

“We want to be clear that these are not additional funds that SNAP recipients are receiving, but an early issuance of February benefits,” said Kim Fredlund, self-sufficiency director with the Department of Human Services, in a press release.

The department is also asking recipients to carefully budget their food benefits through February, because funds will run out if the government shutdown continues.



*Tuesday, January 29, 2019*

## **UCAN homeless count set for Wednesday**

United Community Action Network is conducting its annual count of Josephine County's homeless population on Wednesday.

Homeless people who show up at any one of a number of locations will be counted. Winter supplies will be distributed as an inducement.

The homeless include people sleeping in vehicles, living outdoors, staying in a shelter or "couch surfing."

Supplies to be handed out include tarps, sleeping bags and tents, along with sack lunches.

Service providers will be on hand at the following locations:

- 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Josephine County Fairgrounds in Grants Pass;
- 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Merlin Community Center, 100 Acorn St.;
- Noon to 3 p.m. at the Illinois Valley Family Coalition, 535 East River Street in Cave Junction;
- 10 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. at Rays Food Place parking lot in Selma;
- 12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m. at the end of Old Stage Road;
- 1:15 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Jubilee Park in Cave Junction;
- 3 to 3:30 p.m. at the Kerby Store.

The count is part of a statewide effort to determine the number of people who are homeless.

More information is available by calling 541-956-4079.