

# Housing Opportunities Action Council

## Lead Administrator: Summary Report

Benton County and the City of Corvallis have contracted with United Way of Benton & Lincoln Counties to serve as the backbone organization, and host the position of Lead Administrator (aka, Program Manager) for HOAC from November 1, 2016 through June 30, 2019. Shawn Collins began serving in this role November 1, 2016.

Following is a summary report of the activities of the Program Manager, August-September 2018.

### Project Updates

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**Community engagement:** Members of SORT (Street Outreach and Response Team) recently accompanied Corvallis Police on both the initial posting, and clearing of camps in the Orleans Natural Area. This area is largely between the Van Buren Bridge, and the Bypass, on the east side of the Willamette. I was able to join the clearing of the camps, on September 11. About 40 campsites were cleared by CPD and Parks & Recreation staff. Most of those camping in the area had moved prior to the clean-up, due in part to the regular outreach done in this area by both CPD and SORT to remind people of the clean-up date, and reinforce that “this is really happening.” While the clearing was a “success” – with only one camper receiving a citation, and most campers moving out before the clean-up – many of those I spoke with who participated in the process agree that the costly effort does very little to help, and may actually be counterproductive. There seems to be a growing interest in alternative models that would provide greater safety and stability, reduce costs, and increase the odds of those in the camps moving to housing.

The Homeless Vulnerable Patients meetings continue to demonstrate the power of having the right people, with access to the right information in the room and focused on resolving specific housing challenges. A recent meeting of the group was attended by HOAC Co-Chair/Mayor Traber, and featured a review of current cases and challenges. The "Delivery Systems Transformation" (DST) grant proposal to create a “Homeless Resource Team” at Samaritan, was initially generated from this group, and had been approved for funding. This project will include creating targeted case management services at Samaritan for patients experiencing homelessness, and will build stronger connections between the hospital and local social service providers.

The Corvallis Sustainability Coalition Housing Team continues to pursue development of a “village” to create transitional housing in Corvallis. Public presentation of the model and discussion of how this might take shape in Corvallis is being scheduled for November 1, in Dennis Hall at the First Presbyterian Church (114 SW 8th St). I continue to engage with this group as a liaison to HOAC.

The Corvallis Lions Club invited me to speak with the group on September 19. Attendance was light, but that allowed a more informal presentation, and time to address many questions about housing, poverty and homelessness in Benton County. My presentation will be followed in a future meeting by Kelly Volkman of the Benton County Health Department, which will offer another perspective on the challenges faced by our community, and what the Health Department is doing to address them.

**Cold Weather Shelter:** Work to return the Men’s Shelter to the Hanson Tire Factory for another season has commenced. While the building is largely ready to return to Shelter service, some additional electrical work and roof repair is needed to improve conditions. A discussion with the Co-op General Manager, South store manager, and Board President was held recently to discuss any needed mitigations to improve relations between the Shelter and the Co-op. It was a very friendly and productive meeting, and I expect the Shelter will be able to operate this season with less disruption to the Co-op. Efforts to hire staff are underway, with the expectation that all staff will be hired by mid-October, to allow time for training. Harry Reich has agreed to serve a second year as Shelter Manager, and is working with Jill McAllister of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis to review staffing and operations, and prepare for a November 1 opening.