

Program's successes, setbacks 1 year in

HRAP aims to house the city's most vulnerable

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Homeless on-and-off for about three years, Cassandra DeBeck and her partner, Matthew Boyd, this summer moved back into the same Keizer apartment complex where they had lived before, thanks to Salem's Homeless Rental Assistance Program.

The couple is getting a second chance at the Fernwood Court Apartments they were evicted from after falling about \$2,800 behind on their rent.

When you're homeless, DeBeck said, "you can't even stock up on food because you can't afford food. You have nowhere to put it. You don't have a refrigerator unless it's the winter and things are just really cold anyway."

DeBeck and Boyd enrolled in the homeless rental assistance program in April. Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency representatives worked with the couple to get the balance with the apartment complex paid off.

In July, they moved back in the complex.

"Life is totally different," Boyd said.

'Housing first' in Salem

The rental assistance program is Salem's "housing first" program, which works by specifically attempting to house the city's most vulnerable homeless and then help them with issues they are facing.

Assistance can range from addressing mental health to addiction treatment to helping clients make medical appointments.

The most vulnerable homeless are described as those with serious mental, medical and behavioral issues that inhibit their ability to get into stable housing and stay there. They also may be dealing with drug addictions or past evictions.

Clients are assessed through the program's "coordinated entry" process to gauge whether they are vulnerable enough to qualify. Assessment criteria include substance abuse issues, language barriers and medical risks.

The program is Salem's first homeless project to use the coordinated entry model to house chronically homeless clients who might otherwise die, said Jimmy Jones, interim executive director of the non-profit Community Action Agency.

Mixed results in program's first year

By the end of June, the homeless

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rental assistance program housed 71 of the city's most vulnerable homeless. The goal was to house 100 in its first year, with clients ultimately becoming self-sufficient.

Experts say those aren't bad numbers for a program that launched so recently.

"To house 71 people in the very first year of a program that just started up, I think overall, that's pretty impressive," said Elizabeth Bowen, an assistant professor at the University at Buffalo School of Social Work.

Jones, too, is encouraged by early results but cautions it is too soon to tell how successful the program will be.

Since the rental assistance program's second year kicked off in July, the number of people who have been housed or have move-in dates scheduled through the program has risen to 84.

Another 68 were receiving some form of assistance through the rental assistance program but hadn't gotten into housing yet.

"Our goal of housing 100 individuals was very ambitious," said Kellie Battaglia, Salem's client services manager for the housing authority.

Within the program's first six months — July 1 to Dec. 31, 2017 — 21 people were housed.

One of the challenges was finding affordable one-bedroom units, Battaglia said.

Indeed, the apartment vacancy rate in the Salem-Keizer area late last year was 2.3 percent, according to Keizer-based SMI Commercial Real Estate.

"After the program was in full swing and we had hired another case manager, we were able to house 50 people in the last six months," Battaglia said.

But once in housing, clients aren't guaranteed to stay there. Seven HRAP tenants have been evicted, due mostly to having too many unauthorized guests, Battaglia said.

"Our folks struggle with going from having a sense of community when you're living on the streets and in camps to being isolated in a unit," Battaglia said.

Clients feel a sense of survivor's guilt, wondering why they get homes while others don't, she said. It's hard to tell people they knew on the streets to leave, that they are not allowed to stay the night or use the shower.

"Those are skills and boundaries that we hope to be teaching our clients," Battaglia said.

Still, if clients are evicted, they aren't necessarily out of the program.

"If they have barrier funds and rental assistance left



Matthew Boyd and Cassandra DeBeck sit in their Keizer home on Wednesday. The couple found a home with the help of Salem's Homeless Rental Assistance Program. MICHAELA ROMÁN/STATESMAN JOURNAL

they can be rehoused and remain in the program for the full 12 months," she said. Barrier funds used for security deposits and "basic need" purchases such as shampoo, soap and toilet paper.

Need exceeds funding

The Community Action Agency and Salem Housing Authority are the two main entities responsible for the Homeless Rental Assistance Program's day-to-day operations.

The rental assistance program costs about \$1.9 million annually, with the bulk coming from a 2017 Salem City Council-approved allocation of \$1.4 million. The council again allocated \$1.4 million to the program's second year.

The housing authority also earmarks about \$880,000 in Section 8 vouchers for clients who graduate from the program after a year, to keep them housed.

An initiative that began earlier this year to attract private sponsorships for the rental assistance program has so far brought in less than \$1,000, according to Battaglia.

Twenty-one landlords in Salem and Keizer have agreed to house the formerly homeless. "They've given our clients second chances," she said.

The housing authority pays rent directly to landlords, Battaglia said. "Clients do not have access to rental assistance funds."

Clients start with \$4,000 in barrier funds to pay for items such as utilities and security deposits, but the housing authority also manages that money.

"We do work with them at every visit on budgeting, using a budgeting worksheet so they can see their funds decrease over time, so they can learn how to manage a household budget," Battaglia said. "But they do not have access to any money except money they earn or benefits they receive."

The city of Salem is facing budget constraints that have fueled an estimated \$4 million gap between local revenues and expenses. Still, some say the homeless program should get more money from the city.

"One of the biggest challenges we face is despite how much money the city has put into this, this investment frankly needs to be doubled," Jones said.

Jones said in total, nearly 200 homeless have been referred to the program through September.

Even so, some face such large barriers that they cannot convince landlords to overlook their past.

Recent criminal records often are deal-breakers, he said. And convicted sex offenders cannot participate in the program because Section 8 vouchers are involved.

Hopeful new start

DeBeck and Boyd are getting their lives back on track.

DeBeck said she had previously graduated from the Institute of Technology, pursuing work as a medical assistant.

"The only thing I didn't do was go up to Portland and get my certification test done, so that I could actually work as a medical assistant," she said.

That's one thing the housing-first program will help her do, though she might have to complete a refresher course. "You don't want to be rusty on your skills, like doing injections and blood pressure and immunizations," she said.

DeBeck's goal is to take the certification test and find a job with a clinic.

Their property manager, Cody Freshour, called the earlier eviction "heartbreaking."

He said as soon as he heard about the rental assistance program, he wanted to know how to get more involved.

After Boyd and DeBeck moved back in, Freshour said he drove by the apartments and saw them smiling and laughing. He almost stopped.

"I had never seen that before," he said. "Just a sense of hope and pride and unity together and just being happy to be around was just, it was incredible to see."

Obituaries

David A. McKaughan

SALEM - David Alfred McKaughan passed away at home September 26, 2018 in Salem, Oregon. He was born August 23, 1935 in Asheville, North Carolina. David was raised in North Carolina & Virginia. He was a Veteran of the U.S. Navy where he served in the Korean War. After the war he settled in Big Bear, CA, prior to moving to Salem, Oregon in 1970. He owned Sunflower Homes where he was a building contractor. David square danced for many years and loved his "yellow rocks". Dad was very proud of his family and will always be remembered for his witty personality. He is survived by his wife of 30 years, Sherilynn McKaughan, step-son Dan & Tamie Green & step-daughter, Jamie Green. His previous wife, Elaine White and their daughters & husbands, Debbie & Bill Martin, Donna & Dave Hunt, and Dianna & Charles Lawrence. Nine grandchildren & nine great grandchildren. Services will be Tuesday, October 2, 2018, 10:30 am at Willamette National Cemetery, 11800 SE Mt Scott Blvd, Portland, OR 97086. In lieu of flowers, donate to American Heart Association, 1200 Naito Parkway, Ste. 220, Portland, OR. 97209, in David's name. Assisting



Jeanne Ann Page

SALEM - Jeanne Ann Page was born to John and Agnes Buor on August 9, 1926 in Boise Idaho. She passed away September 24th in Salem, Oregon. At age ten, Jeanne moved to Burley, Idaho and graduated from Burley High School in 1944. She met her future husband, Emerson B. Page at an officer's ball, and immediately fell in love. They were married on June 14th, 1947 and had three daughters. They eventually moved to Salem in 1955. Jeanne was fortunate to have many lifelong friends. For over 50 years, she was an active member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Salem. She was preceded in death by her husband in 2003 and by her oldest daughter, Connie in 2009. She is survived by her two daughters, Cynthia (Dennis) Berger and Sylvia (Richard) Weiner, her grandchildren, Nicole Price, Gabe (Angela) DeBay, Cameron (Sonali) DeBay, Matthew Weiner, and Edward Weiner, and her six great grandchildren, Luca and Lexi DeBay, Melina and Siyona DeBay, Mattison Weiner Rumpca and Dylan Weiner. A memorial service is scheduled for Monday, October 1st at 10:30 AM at St. John's Lutheran Church in Salem. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to St.

