

Matthew 25



August 2024

A journal on ministry and service to the margins in western Oregon

Catholic Charities

'We used to be your neighbors'

Formerly homeless women address misconceptions about people on the streets

Three Portland women who once were homeless have stepped forward to dispel myths about the difficult life.

"I never thought that I would end up homeless," said Sarah. "I never thought I would end up losing everything that I had. I started with a house and two cars, and I had a really great job... I thought I had everything managed."

Sarah and two other women explain that anyone could become homeless at any time.

One lost housing and job because of a surprise bout with mental illness. Another had a disabling fall. Sarah is a survivor of domestic violence who fled a comfortable life simply so she could survive.

"I gave up my life, my history, because I was afraid that if I stayed there, he'd kill me," Sarah said. "It can happen to anybody."

"Some circumstances are just out of our control in how we ended up here," said Lunette, who, like Sarah, lived in Catholic Charities Kenton Women's Village before working with case managers to find her own apartment. "People don't wake up one day and decide, 'I want to live on the sidewalk in downtown Portland.' We deserve to be seen as your neighbors."

Rosemarie, who also recently found an apartment after leaving Kenton Women's Village, voices



Pat Cronin of Holy Redeemer Church speaks with residents of Kenton Women's Village before serving lunch. The village welcomes homeless women as a first step toward healing from trauma and preparing for permanent housing.

the impression she sometimes gets from the wider public:

"Get 'em off the streets, but don't put 'em in my neighborhood!" Well, we used to be your neighbors," Rosemarie said.

A nasty fall on ice severely reinjured Rosemarie's back, and she was unable to work. She had savings, but those went fast without much income.

"Before Kenton Women's Village, life was tough and it was scary," said Rosemarie. "I never knew if I was going to be on someone's couch or if I was going to be in my car for the night."

All three women found Catholic Charities and said Kenton Women's Village offered them a safe place to heal, reassess and move forward.

Residents of pod groupings like Kenton Women's Village move into permanent housing at three times the rate of those living in more traditional homeless shelters, researchers from Portland State

University recently found.

That fulfillment is due to the close case management over a longer period plus supportive community at the village, said Rose Bak, chief program officer for Catholic Charities of Oregon.

"We find that personal attention and deep respect are what work best when accompanying people who are recovering from trauma," said Bak.

"Every day I am grateful for that village," said Rosemarie. "Even though it's my past, I wouldn't be here without that. Catholic Charities was the lifeline I needed and there at the time I needed it."

"I am most grateful," said Lunette, "for the opportunity to reimagine my life."

SEE THE VIDEO:





Collaboration praised

Catholic Charities was recognized at a recent Oregon Multifamily Strategic Energy Management event. The award came for spreading awareness of efforts to engage residents of affordable housing to save energy and stay safe and healthy.

The agency’s housing team organized both summer and winter weatherization workshops, and the communications team provided coverage and sent it out to the wider community.

Energy Trust of Oregon, which leads the Strategic Energy Management program, was impressed by the cross-team collaboration, and the video and blogposts that resulted from it.

Support from resident services staff was critical in making the workshops a success.

Address change

Catholic Charities of Oregon is the same steady helping organization you’ve known and loved for its 90-year history. And we’re still in the same place on Powell Boulevard.

The only thing that has changed lately is our P.O. Box.

Because we switched banks and our old bank owned our old P.O. Box, we had to shift. This is the new way to send correspondence and donations:

P.O. Box 3166

Portland, OR 97208-3166

We’ll make sure all our return envelopes have this new address. And don’t worry, if you send something to our old P.O. Box by mistake, the post office will make sure we get it – for a while.

Please make a note. We’d hate to lose touch with our friends.

Volunteers needed to assist artist

Artist Alicia Schultz will take up her paintbrush at Kenton Women’s Village Aug. 16-17 to add beauty and meaning to a new fence.

For security and privacy at the tiny home village, a team of volunteers from Tivnu, a Jewish gap year group, constructed a 10-foot-tall wooden wall at the village entrance. The planks are 120-square feet just calling to be made into art.



Artist Alicia Schultz will paint a mural at the entry of Kenton Women’s Village.



Val Peterson, program coordinator at Kenton Women’s Village, stands at the pre-painted entry wall.

Schultz is a Portland muralist and illustrator who created Vine & Thistle, a company that creates lettering, botanical art and illustrations for stationery, surface designs, murals and other surfaces. Learn more here: <https://www.vineandthistle.com/about>.

“In my work, I want to capture and inspire joy in everyday moments,” says Schultz, who is

married with two children. “The mural design will be botanicals -- colorful, bright flowers, creating a joyful welcome for the women who live there.”

Volunteers are needed for painting day to assist Schultz by painting her design at her direction, setting up and cleaning up. If you are interested, scan the QR code.



Film important for today

Carmel Communications allowed Catholic Charities of Oregon to preview a new film on Mother Cabrini, the Italian nun who founded hundreds of institutions for immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She had a special focus on the United States.



‘Cabrini’ tells a fascinating story we desperately need to hear today, a tale of one woman’s jaw-dropping determination to treat migrants with human dignity. The film is told with both grit and beauty; like an opera, even the scenes of great poverty and despair emerge in a glory of light and darkness that gives them universal meaning – to

people of any belief.

Any film’s worth comes from the way it shows characters, and Cabrini succeeds at this, from the steel-spined woman of the title, an absolute force of nature, to an Italian orphan who repeatedly suffers loss, to a prostitute whose life is forever changed by a chance encounter with the powerful nun.

Have a story about Catholics reaching out to those on the margins? Contact Ed Langlois, Catholic Charities communications director, elanglois@ccoregon.org or 503.539-6333.



To read the extended versions of these stories, visit: catholiccharitiesoregon.org