

Portland's Homeless Crisis: Together we can Make a Difference

By Jessica Berg

The city of Portland has a lot going for it. We have a beautiful waterfront, thriving arts and music scenes and great food.

But when you don't look at Portland through rose-colored glasses, you will see a prevailing problem: homelessness. Portland has a consistent homeless problem and it's not getting any better. Economic standings should not determine one's ability to find shelter. Assistance is needed to help get people off the streets.

Unemployment, overwhelming life expenses, low wages – in addition to the rising rent prices in Portland – have contributed to the homeless crisis. According to Joinpdx.org, 4,177 Multnomah County residents experienced homelessness in 2017. Of that, 11% of these individuals were veterans.

This problem continues to worsen. With rent prices forecasted to increase by 14% between 2018-2022, residents experiencing homelessness would increase 4% for every 10,000 Multnomah County residents.

I see homeless people every day on my way to work. They live on the sidewalk outside businesses, schools and shopping centers. It's nearly impossible to go a block in Portland without seeing a homeless person. Sometimes I see them asleep in sleeping bags while sometimes they actively ask me for money. It's true that some will use the money to buy food for their family or pets, but many will unfortunately use the money to buy drugs.

The Pixie Project already supports homeless pet owners by offering free or low-cost veterinary services. Now, we want to expand to assisting homeless humans as well.

There are currently 21 active homeless shelters in Portland but it's still not enough. Shelters fill up quickly and don't have enough resources to accommodate everyone. However, there are a few simple ways that people can help. First and foremost, volunteering at shelters is a great way to make an impact. Shelters are always in need of volunteers, from mentoring the youth to helping out at a soup kitchen. Another way to help is by making care kits to give to homeless people on the streets. Instead of giving money, make a kit of toiletries and food.

The Pixie Project is committed to helping homeless people and shelters in Portland. A portion of the funds raised at our spring gala will be donated to shelters around the city. Join us in making an impact in our community.

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