



From the Desk of Our Executive Director

Dear OHRA Community,

This month I wanted to dig deeper into the work we are doing with neighbors and city leaders to address the impacts of the unhoused in our communities.

As you know, our work at OHRA touches every aspect of the unhoused in Ashland. We shelter over 70 individuals every night; we provide storage space to Night Lawn Campers, and we hand out over 50 meals to OHRA Center visitors each day.

Yet, we know this is not enough; people remain unhoused, and housed neighbors are feeling the impact of this in our public spaces. As a community, we are not alone in these challenges. Almost every city in the US is experiencing this. But this is no reason to despair.

Here in Ashland, we are not “every city,” but a city of “firsts.” Ashland developed the first nationally recognized Shakespeare Festival; Ashland was the first in Oregon to formally preserve its “downtown,” and Ashland was the first in Oregon to receive the state’s “Project Turnkey” funds to open the OHRA Center, which is now one of the only drop-in Resource Centers in the Rogue Valley.

So... why shouldn’t we be the first to create a new and creative approach to addressing the needs of the unhoused? We are a community of artists, business owners, retired professionals from major cities across the US, and a community that is caring and eager to support new ideas. I believe this is a community recipe for solutions rather than complacency and despair.

As recent frustrations were bubbling up around the Night Lawn and Garfield Park, our team at OHRA has been meeting with neighbors, city council members, city managers, and nonprofit partners to test ideas, share information, and create new partnerships and collaborations. While I don’t have concrete actions to share today, I am confident they are on the way.

In the meantime, here are some concrete activities we hope you will join:

- This Saturday, April 18th, we hope you can make it to OHRA at 9 am for our Neighborhood Clean-up event. More info is below.

- Gregg Colburn lecture May 13th – Gregg is Nationally Recognized for his book titled “Homelessness is a Housing Problem.” OHRA is hosting this event, please come and RSVP at the link in the newsletter below.

We are also working to create employment opportunities for our chronically unhoused community. More information is forthcoming.

Very Sincerely,



Dan Cano

Dan Cano, Executive Director

 (541) 631-2235 ext. 303

 danc@ohrahelps.org

 OHRAhelps.org

Upcoming Events!

Neighborhood Cleanup

Born from a desire to be good neighbors, OHRA will be hosting its first ever Neighborhood Cleanup this Saturday, April 18th from 9 AM - 1 PM. Volunteers will gather at the OHRA Center coffee and treats before splitting off into groups to pick up litter in an allotted area around Ashland.

After the event, there will be a BBQ held at the OHRA Center to celebrate.

Individual and group volunteers are welcome! We hope you will join us to celebrate Earth Day and steward the community that connects us all. To sign-up, click the button below. We can't wait to see you!

[Sign Up Here](#)

Author Talk with Gregg Colburn: On May 13th at SOU in the Rogue River Room, OHRA, along with the Rogue Valley Metaphysical Library, is honored to host Gregg Colburn, co-author of *Homelessness Is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns*. This influential book has shaped housing policy and legislation nationwide. Gregg Colburn is a sought-after speaker who explains these complex dynamics and challenges with clarity.

Two identical community lectures will be offered at 11:00 AM and 6:30 PM—please plan to attend whichever time works best for you. At either session, Gregg Colburn will share his research on how housing market conditions—particularly the cost and availability of rental housing—drive rates of homelessness in a given city.

Guest Highlight: Tyler and Sundara

Tyler and Sundara shared their experience working with OHRA to secure permanent housing;

"Martha and Yesenia were both very compassionate and helpful. They assisted with acquiring all the required information and provided us with reassurance. We received assistance with a deposit and we able to get into an apartment with peace of mind."

Such incredibly important work and such a wonderful result! Congratulations to Tyler and Sundara as they enjoy their new home!

Volunteer Highlight: Coffee Friends

This month we're thrilled to highlight an incredible volunteer group: Coffee Friends (formerly known as Laundry Love).

In 2015, Ashland's UCC Church launched the local Laundry Love project. For seven years, volunteers raised funds to support neighbors facing hard times by providing quarters for washers and dryers at a local laundromat—along with coffee, snacks, and friendly conversation.



In 2022, OHRA's Executive Director at the time, Cass Sinclair, invited the groups to serve at OHRA's laundry and shower trailer. Since then, Coffee Friends has continued their work on-site, offering laundry support alongside fresh coffee generously gifted from Noble Roasting Co. and a mix of homemade and store-bought snacks.

Volunteer David Runkel shares, "I come away from three hours feeling better than when I arrived, and I hope that those I'm serving do so as well."

Martha Inglis adds, "I love working with Coffee Friends because of the smiles I'm greeted with, the sense of acceptance I feel, and the opportunity to do small, meaningful things for everyone there. I'm also grateful that Coffee Friends offers something so fundamental--clean clothes and hot showers--things I know I often take for granted, but which are true gifts to those who receive them."

Alex Reid, a key leader of the group, reflects on the relationships built; "We meet some wonderful people and get to know them as friends. We help create a strong community, providing one another with mutual support including empathy and kindness. We are able to take time to listen to their stories. That's sometimes more important than coffee."

Thank you, Coffee Friends, and Noble Coffee, for being an incredible part of OHRA and for all that you do!



Staff Highlight: Colton Ort

Colton Ort is a data analyst at OHRA, where he works behind the scenes to capture and organize the impact of our navigators, outreach team, and shelter staff. His role ensures that the data we collect tells a clear, cohesive story—one we can share with our community and with those who may support our mission in the future.

Colton says, “I’ve been with OHRA for four years now. My favorite thing about working for OHRA is the orientation towards community. You get to see how what you do affects the whole picture. That cohesive feeling also translates to relationships with coworkers. We are not just showing up to work, we are working together.”

When Colton is not at OHRA, he gets to spend time being with his family, reading, and playing music.

OHRA is lucky to have Colton helping us help the community!



Development Corner

Brandy MacDonald
brandym@ohrahelps.org
541-631-2235 ext 316



Development Corner: Getting Engaged!

In philanthropy work, we often talk about “engagement” as if it’s a formula—events attended, emails opened, gifts made. But at OHRA, engagement looks and feels different. At its core, this organization is a small, deeply connected network of people—mostly neighbors—who care about making our community stronger, more stable, and more humane.

As the Development Director of OHRA, and a community member in Southern Oregon, I don’t want our relationships to be transactional or prescribed. I want to know the people who are drawn to this work—what motivates you, what you care about, and how you want to show up in this community.

There isn’t a single “right” way to engage here. For some, it’s volunteering or attending events. For others, it’s offering financial support that allows us to respond quickly and with flexibility to needs as they arise. And for many, it’s simply staying connected, informed, and invested in the well-being of our neighbors.

My hope is that you feel invited to engage with OHRA in whatever way feels most natural and meaningful to you. And if you're open to it, I would truly welcome a conversation—about your interests, your ideas, or anything at all. Building this community is relational work, and I would love to know you better. Let's talk. Send me an email brandym@ohrahelps.org.

Warmly,

Brandy MacDonald
Development Director



Come Visit Us...Tour the Center!

We love showing people where their support does its magic. Call or [email](#) us anytime to schedule a personal or group tour!

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