

# CARRY IT FORWARD

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR UNHOUSED PEOPLE



### **Introduction**

Founded in 2015 and receiving 501(c)3 status in 2017, Carry It Forward is a non-profit organization that serves unhoused people in Lane County, Oregon, with primary concentration of services in Springfield, Eugene, and East-Lane rural communities. We are approved vendors for Lane County, and the Cities of Springfield and Eugene, and currently have contracts with Lane County and the City of Springfield. In all the communities we serve, we seek to partner and collaborate with local government, organizations and businesses that share common goals of eradicating homelessness.

The name "Carry It Forward" is meant to highlight the mutual benefits of direct service to our unhoused neighbors. Initially, our services focused on outreach and delivery of survival goods. All of our programs are actively informed by the population we serve, and approximately 65% of employees are unhoused or have lived experience with homelessness.

Our PAVE Program (Personally Assessed Vocational Engagement) consists of unhoused workers who receive wrap-around support to overcome barriers and accomplish personal goals, while working in projects that benefit the entire community.

In 2019, we first started developing our model for running microsites that incorporate our services and vocational programming. Our longest-running microsite is at our county-provided site on HWY99 called our "sandbox" camp, in which we pilot service concepts and target unique populations in cohorts up to 6 individuals at a time. This is also a training site for PAVE and outreach workers.

In 2020, during the first three months of COVID-19, we ran a 24/7 respite shelter in collaboration with Lane County and the City of Springfield, managed four temporary respite camps in collaboration with the City of Eugene and White Bird, and provided laundry services for the Wheeler COVID shelter run by Occupy Medical and Lane County. We also provided laundry services to Sponsors for post-release individuals in quarantine. Our workers and guests are well-trained in CDC guidelines for reducing the spread of COVID-19. In all of these projects we incorporated our unique employment model, utilizing strengths-based empowerment strategies to help employees and residents engage, build skills, and accomplish steps toward their own goals. Toward the end of 2020, we opened the "Garden SPOT" Shelter, a 10-bed emergency shelter designed to serve individuals who are at highest risk for death from COVID-19 (if contracted.)

In 2021, we continued operating the Garden Shelter, and to date, we believe we are the only congregate singles shelter in the area that has not had a COVID outbreak among its clients.

Over 80% of individuals exiting our shelter have gone on to longer-term housing. This year, we

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<http://www.carryitforward.net/>

<https://www.facebook.com/carryitforwardcommunity/>

managed and provided services to a small microsite funded by “Out Of The Cold” (OOTC) dollars for Lane County, with direct referrals from local law enforcement and community providers. We also established solid relationships with two churches that are hosting our car-camping sites, in contract with the City of Springfield.

### **Our Team**

#### **Kris McAlister**

Executive Director, Carry it Forward

Department Director, Field Engagement and Response Department

Chair, Lane County Poverty and Homelessness Board (PHB)

Chair, PHB Executive Committee

Vice-Chair, PHB sub-committee LEAGUE (Lived Experience Advisory Group for Unhoused Engagement)

Member, PHB RFP/HMIS/Evaluation sub-committee

Co-Chair, PHB Shelter Stakeholders sub-committee

Steering Committee Member, PHB Healthcare sub-committee

Member, PHB Employment sub-committee

Chair, Springfield Utility Board Budget Committee

Member, Square One Villages Board of Directors

Member, Springfield Housing Code Update Technical Advisory Committee

Member, Occupy Medical Advisory Council

Member, Escudo Latino Board of Directors

**Background:** has lived experience with homelessness as a youth, has served 22 years in social justice and service-oriented boards and organizations focused on homelessness issues, medical access, poverty intervention, disability, and youth.

#### **Arwen Maas-DeSpain, LMFT, QMHP**

Founder and Executive Assistant Director, Carry It Forward

Director, Administration, Educational, and Vocational Department

Clinical Supervisor, FAIR program at OSLC Developments, Inc.

Registered Supervisor, Oregon Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists

**Background:** has served 30 years service-oriented non-profit organizations focused on underserved populations.

#### **Garden SPOT Support and PAVE staff**

Carry It Forward staff represent a wide range of background and experience working with our target population. Our seasoned shift leads have dedicated many years at Egan Warming Centers and other organizations that serve unhoused people, have training in peer support, and excel at “barrier busting.” Additional support staff assigned to this project were vetted and trained at our temporary COVID shelter in Springfield. Some have lived experience with homelessness, some identify as Black or LatinX, five speak Spanish, and all are dedicated to serving the community. We have three PAVE workers currently planning to engage in this project



**Community Partners and Network**

South Lane Mental Health  
Community Sharing (Cottage Grove)  
ShelterCare  
ODI/FAIR program  
Escudo Latino  
CALC, Shelter Rights Alliance  
G.Street Oasis, Springfield  
Catholic Community Services  
White Bird / CAHOOTS  
The Alliance  
Chrysalis/NEST  
Occupy Medical  
Looking Glass  
CORE (Community Outreach Through Radical Empowerment)  
Laurel Hill  
St. Vincent dePaul  
Eugene Mission  
SquareOne Villages  
Black Thistle  
Herbalists without Borders  
Volunteers in Medicine  
Community Supported Shelters  
Nightingale Hosted Shelters  
Food for Lane County  
Lane County Health and Human Services  
City of Eugene  
City of Springfield  
Veterans Affairs HUD-VASH program  
PacificSource (OHP) and PacificSource Foundation  
Trillium (OHP)  
PeaceHealth  
Mckenzie-Willamette

