Organizing Showers & Hygiene Access for People Living Outside

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HRSA disclaimer

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Polls
Why we’re talking about this

• COVID will be with us for a long time
• Unsheltered homelessness was already on the rise, the pandemic (and related events like mass evictions) will make it spike.
• Day centers and other services remain closed in many communities, and shelters are decompressing
• People need to shower regardless of where they live.
Panelists

• Michael Sandell
• Sandra Comstock
• Portland, OR
C(3)PO Solar Showers

By Mike Sandell, former C(3)PO Camp Life Coordinator and Accessibility Coordinator
Mike Sandell

Camp Life Coordinator
- Intake
- Sanitation
- Food
- Villager engagement

Accessibility Coordinator
- Meal accommodations
- Mobility aids
- Mental health advocacy
- Solar showers
What is C(3)PO?

- Stands for Creating Conscious Communities with People Outside
- A coalition of nonprofits and government officials working together to provide services to our unhoused neighbors during COVID-19
- Includes toilets, food, electricity, showers, laundry, housing case management, some medical care, and hygiene supplies
What is C(3)PO? cont.

- Three camps: Old Town, Queer Affinity, BIPOC
- Run communally, according to the “Village Model”
- Residents make nearly all decisions regarding camp, including intake, making and enforcing rules, and doing jobs in exchange for their spot
The Village Model

- Mandatory weekly meetings where rules get created and enforced
- Votes are all consensus-based
- In stark contrast to traditional shelters, where residents have no say
- Fosters a sense of community and allows for more equity-based decision making
Two kinds of showers for each camp: a trailer and solar shower.

The solar shower is a vinyl bag that you fill with water and heat in the sun.

Trailers provided and serviced by Rapid Response.

City provides water from a hydrant and propane to heat it, RR pumps the gray water.
Showers at QA and BIPOC cont.

- The actual shower structure consisted of a 10x10 canopy with tarps for walls
- We set a 2x4 post in a bucket of concrete and hung the bag from an eyebolt
- We had a kiddie pool that folks would stand in while they showered to collect the gray water
Showers at Old Town

- Their solar shower worked exactly the same as the camps on the east side
- Much larger/more sophisticated shower trailer, provided by Cascadia Clusters
- Also included laundry
- Water from a spigot that drained directly into the sewers; no need to service
Shower trailers - pros and cons

Pros:
- Higher water pressure than solar shower
- Water drained automatically into the tank
- No waiting hours for water to heat
- Can be used any time of year
- Won’t blow away in strong wind

Cons:
- Confusing to maintain
- Extreme fluctuations in water temperature
- The ones we have aren’t ADA accessible
- When things went wrong, no one would be able to shower until someone came to fix them
Solar Showers - pros and cons

Pros:
- Wheelchair accessible
- Much easier to maintain
- Consistent water temperature
- Don’t have to rely on outside orgs to service

Cons:
- Very low water pressure
- We had to deal with the gray water ourselves
- If it’s cloudy or not very hot, the bag can take many hours to heat up
- Can’t be used in cold weather
- The privacy canopy can be destroyed in strong wind
Other Services

- Toilets- United Site Solutions (contracted by the city)
- Electricity- Hollywood Lights (contracted by city)
- Laundry cards for Eco Laundry funded by the city (BIPOC and QA only)
- Washer and dryer on site- provided by Cascadia Clusters (Old Town only)
- Housing case managment provided by JOIN
Other Services cont.

● Food- coordinated by the city and provided by local organizations (Blanchet house, Portland Rescue Mission, Free Hot Soup, Feed the Mass, Because People Matter, Snack Bloc)

● Hygiene supplies coordinated by the Old Town CLC (Jordanna MacIntyre)- mainly coming from Parkman Emergency Preparedness and Snack Bloc
Other Services - Medical Care

- Street medics/Portland Street Medicine provided wound care
- Referrals to ongoing medical care with Equi Institute
- Covid-specific action plan
- Referral to mental health services through Cascadia
Partnerships- shower trailers

- The City of Portland- water and propane
- Rapid Response- gray water disposal, maintenance, provided the trailers themselves
- Cascadia Clusters- built shower trailer at Old Town
Partnerships- solar showers

- City of Portland- gave permission to dump gray water on their lot and provided water from hydrant
- PDX Trans Housing and Pride Northwest- funded the solar showers with a grant of $2,000
Challenges

- Logistics of procuring materials
- Weather
- Finding skilled labor
- Grey water disposal
So you want to build a solar shower...

- Graywater- where will you dump the dirty water?
- Water access- where can you find clean water to shower with?
- Weather- is it consistently hot enough in your climate?
- Privacy- a trailer with real walls feels more secure than tarps
Conclusion

- Weigh pros and cons of solar shower vs trailer
- Accessible trailers
- Always consider disabled people’s needs first
- FOLLOW ADA!!!!
H4A: A Houseless Led Hospitality Hub Pilot Program

Website: h4apdx.org
Hours of Operation: 6 PM - 12 AM
Location: Southeast Portland

Services:
- Hygiene
- Safety
- Hospitality
- Sanitation
Since the Pandemic

4 of 7 shower programs have closed;

2000+ Portlanders living unsheltered

Must vie for shower time at facilities open a combined

32.5 hours per week
Hygiene Hub Site Plan
The Challenge

Inadequate hygiene & sanitation access for all Portlanders

Increased health risks for all Portlanders, especially during the pandemic

Increased discrimination, vilification, & exclusion for houseless Portlanders

Existing facilities & practices DO NOT meet the unique needs of Portland’s houseless residents
Organize within the houseless community to envision accessible public hygiene facilities

Develop leadership & practices to create a safe, self-run, harm reducing, trauma-informed space

Design & operate a hygiene area suited to the challenges, needs, & experiences of those living outside, including experiences of oppression and exclusion.

Coordinate with partner services such as laundry, waste pickup, books & first aid

Advocate for houseless-led strategies that reduce trauma & oppressive harm & empower houseless residents
Project Partners

**Training**
- Harm Reduction/ Logistics/ SOP
- Cascadia Health, Community Defense PDX
- Anti-Oppression & Non-violence
- Raphael House

**Finances**
- Fiscal Sponsor
- Charitable Partnership Fund
- Funding
  - Grants / Private Donations/
  - Collaborating Fundraisers / Government Funds

**Services**
- Data Collection
  - Neighbor2Neighbor & Partners
- Bedding/Laundry Exchange
  - Private Laundry /Metro funding
- Outreach
  - Neighborhood Associations, Businesses,
  - City Leaders
- First Aid
  - PSM & Old Town Clinic Doctors

**Infrastructure**
- Land
  - PBOT/ Multnomah County
- Infrastructure
  - City/County assistance w/ port-o-potties & shower trailers
  - CPID & City Repair - site design & build out
Hygiene4All

Connection

Dignity

Engagement
Thank you!

• COVID Resource Page
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