

It is obvious and apparent that houselessness is an ever-growing problem in Gresham and beyond. Tents, roadside vehicles, and tarps have become "dwellings" for all too many people in our community. I realize the factors are many that lead to this lifestyle, but if we don't put some time, energy, and money into fixing this, it's just going to get worse. I now want to present to you a personal story about my 38-year-old son, Sam (not his real name). In 2005 he became eligible to receive SSID benefits for his bipolar illness. At that time his benefit was \$900 and rent for a one-bedroom apartment at a restricted income complex in Gresham was \$565. Because of the cyclical nature of his illness, sometimes he can work and other times he cannot. But his benefit at that time was adequate to meet his needs either way. Fast forward to 2021. He is now on the waiting list for a one-bedroom apartment at the same complex in Gresham. He is currently #1 on this list, after a year's wait. In the meantime, he is living at home, after a brief period of homelessness. His benefit from social security is now \$1,040. This apartment is now renting for \$950. To qualify he must provide proof that his income is double what the rent is, and fortunately for him, we will be that supplement. I researched one-bedroom apartment availability and was told by numerous renters that the availability is none. When I checked on 2-27-21, average rent in Gresham was \$1350 according to RentCafe. Waiting lists are closed for Section 8/Home Forward support, and I have exhausted other recommended agencies for locating affordable housing for Sam.

Even with his social security benefit, Sam cannot afford rent. If he did not have parents to supplement, he would be homeless. If he were homeless his illness would worsen. And it did when he spent two months on the street after an eviction caused by manic symptoms. Ambulance calls and hospital stays alone, I am sure, have and will cost the system, in the long and short-term, more than fixing the affordable rent issue. Treatment for mental health conditions is another subject for another time, but suffice it to say, this is one of those factors that also needs addressing. I am certain we could alleviate some of the houselessness with stable and affordable housing options.