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**Ashlynn Jones: Tiny house homeless villages could benefit White County**

In cities all around the United States, communities are building tiny-house villages to house the homeless. The villages contain insulated homes, allowing for safe sleeping spaces, storage and a central toilet for all living in the micro-communities.

Since the tiny house villages have reduced the population of people without homes, could a tiny house village be a solution to help the homeless problem in White County?

The White County community falls below the national poverty line by 3 percent. Individuals who are unable to support themselves financially have some options for help, such as supportive housing (White County Domestic Violence for Women and Children), halfway housing (Jacob's Place) and low-income affordable housing (Beebe Arkansas Housing Authority).

Although these are all worthwhile options, none of them provides permanent housing or encourages independent living. Tiny-house villages would give the homeless an available solution for independent and affordable housing while regaining a sense of community.

The villages can be established anywhere, even behind a church. This past summer, I had the opportunity to spend time in Portland, Ore., and help the Portland Central Church of the Nazarene establish the Agape Village, a tiny-house village behind the church that provides free or very affordable housing for those in need.

When I interviewed the lead pastor of the church, Matt Huff, and asked him how he sees the village system being a solution to the homeless, he responded, "The villages are only part of the solution. They will not meet the needs for everyone; for example, those who have mental illnesses or cannot sustain themselves, but it is a solution for the homeless who are capable of independent living and are working toward becoming housed."

As mentioned earlier, White County already has options available for those who are incapable of independent living, so the villages would open up an alternate solution to aid a different sector of the homeless in our community.

Some might worry that crime rates might rise from housing the homeless in an isolated community, however, due to all of the social services and churches in the area, White County should not experience an increase in crime stemming from a tiny-house village.

*The Guardian Review*, a newspaper in the Northwest region, surveyed 11 homeless village sites in the Portland and Seattle, Wash., area and found only two that showed an increase in crime. In those two sites, there was isolation and lack of services such as community outreach programs and volunteer organizations in the area.

Huff claimed that he has found no increase in crime from implementing the homes behind the Nazarene church in Portland.

Implementing the villages would also give our community ways to get involved. If a church in White County were to donate land for the villages like the church in Portland, it would give their congregation as well as other members in the community a chance to come together.

The Nazarene Church also allows the community members living in Agape Village to use their restrooms. In addition, the church and the community assist them by paying fees for necessities such as licenses, bus passes, food and clothing. The extra assistance helps the homeless to incorporate themselves into society instead of receiving money to spend on whatever they wish.

Tiny-house villages cannot be the only solution for White County's increasing homeless situation, but it should be a part of a plan that will help a portion of the homeless sector practice independent living and gain resources to support themselves in the future.

Our community should continue to research the topic, look into what has already been done and find people willing to support the efforts to launch the villages. It will be through community support and involvement that we can house and help the homeless in White County.

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