

Press Release | Sheds of Hope

Sheds of Hope developed in Lane County following the Holiday Farm Fire as a One Hope collaboration. As of April 10th, 61 new sheds stand on properties that lost homes in the fire, and a total of 120 property owners have applied. One Hope brings together pastors, leaders, and churches to collaboratively serve Lane County. To date, 22 churches, five community groups, nine businesses/foundations, four college groups, and five public high schools have partnered to build sheds. Approximately \$180,000 has been donated to the effort.

Here's how the Sheds of Hope story developed.

The Sheds of Hope Story

The Holiday Farm Fire erupted in September 2020, racing through Blue River, Vida and beyond.

Evacuees streamed into Springfield. Thousands were displaced - in the middle of a pandemic. No one knew how many acres, structures, or lives would be taken. Volunteers flooded the evacuation center, upending their schedules and braving toxic air, with meals and piles of donations in hand. **Despite the smoke and uncertainty in the air, our community showed up.**

The ash settled, revealing that more than 400 homes were lost, and one single fatality. **Recovery would begin, and it would be a long journey.**

Recover Together

With a decade of serving schools and vulnerable families together, the question was not *if* churches would respond together, *but how*. How would leaders best use our pooled resources to make an effective and collaborative impact? How would the community in Eugene and Springfield come alongside local residents, to be friends and servants on their journey to recovery? One Hope convened leaders, and they took one posture: **standing ready** and discerning how best to help fire victims together.

Pastors in Eugene and Springfield worked hand-in-hand with Pastor Doug, the leader of Blue River's Living Water Family Fellowship. His church burned, as did his home. Dozens of his church members faced the same loss. In the days following the fire, he began to see **a family of churches standing with him**, as they discussed how to collaborate and serve together.

An opportunity presented itself in a community meeting with local volunteers, Lane County leaders, and FEMA. A local volunteer **Margaret Beilharz suggested that new sheds gifted to fire victims** would provide a small, but significant, first step on the rebuilding journey.

A few weeks later in a community meeting, **Pastor Doug volunteered to be the "Shed Guy,"** knowing the support of his pastor-friends down river. **It was clear the recovery effort One Hope partners would focus their collaboration on would be Sheds of Hope.**

A team went to work experimenting with plans, and fine tuning them so any group could build a shed. Retired friends at Camp Harlow went first, then Kaminski Construction joined the effort. Soon after, we hosted three build days for teams to learn to build sheds themselves. **6 Sheds | November 27**

Builders then took the plans back to their churches. One church planned to build twenty sheds, but raised funds to construct 26 sheds. Another church shared funds with other churches, so they could build as well. By December 2020, momentum was building toward 2021.

Property owners started applying for sheds and spreading the word with growing anticipation. *"Four walls & a roof! Happy Tears! Who would've thought a little shed could mean so much!?!"*
22 Sheds | February 20

Sheds of Hope began to take on a life of its own, spreading hope in the hearts of men and women, springing up along the McKenzie Highway. Often local residents, and even shed recipients, joined with the teams installing sheds on properties.

"I cannot describe the feeling of seeing my shed from the driveway. From the bottom of our hearts, Thank You!"
35 Sheds | March 20

When Spring Break came around, ten youth, college and community groups focused their usual spring break service projects on their own county.

"I truly can't even describe how amazing it feels to have somewhere safe and secure to keep my things..."
50 Sheds | March 26

"Safe and Secure: A feeling I haven't felt in six months."

As of April 10th, 61 sheds now stand on property, and 25+ are still in the works. And it doesn't stop there.

From the beginning of the recovery effort, **Lee Kounovsky, Lead CTE Construction Specialist for Lane County high schools**, was dreaming about sheds too.

By late Winter, he had gathered all the necessary parties, and Lane County high schools (Lane CTE programs) set their building plans in motion. In partnership with Sheds of Hope, they will build more than 20 sheds, recruiting community members and construction companies to mentor students as they build. As high school students give back, they'll gain hands-on trade skills and job experience, build relationships with positive role models, and receive math and elective credits for high school.

Sheds of Hope is a small, first step toward recovery. Yet its impact on those who give and those who receive will stand long after the final shed is complete. For years to come, those who drive along the McKenzie River will see Sheds of Hope lining the highway: monuments to a community that **stands together**.

*Website: onehopenetwork.org/sheds

**The Lane County Sheds of Hope initiative was adapted from the national Sheds of Hope model and building plans. shedssofhope.com

***There have been 120 applicants, of which 50 property owners are waiting to be served. The application is currently closed, so volunteers and resources can catch up with the demand. Interested property owners who lost homes in the Holiday Farm Fire may request to be on a waiting list. We hope to open the application in the fall, as more groups and resources partner in Sheds of Hope.