

George LeBlanc

Homeless News Site Blog for News Writing and Reporting- November 2023

Introduction

The following screenshots were taken from the final project for News Writing and Reporting MCOM 5131 at Middle Georgia State University for the semester ending November 2023.

The instructions for this assignment called for students to create a blog site that would feature unbiased news related to a subject of their choice. Each student was to locate and publish six articles related to their subject. I chose to write about the homeless crisis in Portland Oregon.

I'd only lived in Portland for four months and noticed the polarizing attitudes about that community, and what was being done to address the issue. Quite a bit of the articles I located seemed to strongly suggest that certain aspects had caused the situation, and suggested that those issues were exacerbated due to certain political affiliations in and around Portland.

The purpose of the assignment was for students to take a more analytical approach to news and to function much like an editor.

The design featured here utilized modified themes from Wix.com. I chose to use this service since the WordPress plugins I wanted to use all came with a cost. Wix, by comparison, was completely free to use.

For three of the articles published, I rewrote three original stories to gain more practice in writing this particular format. Those three articles are presented here to preserve them after the assignment is complete, and in case Wix eventually chooses to delete the site for lack of usage.

Site Pages 1 & 2



Figure 1- Site homepage with site menu.

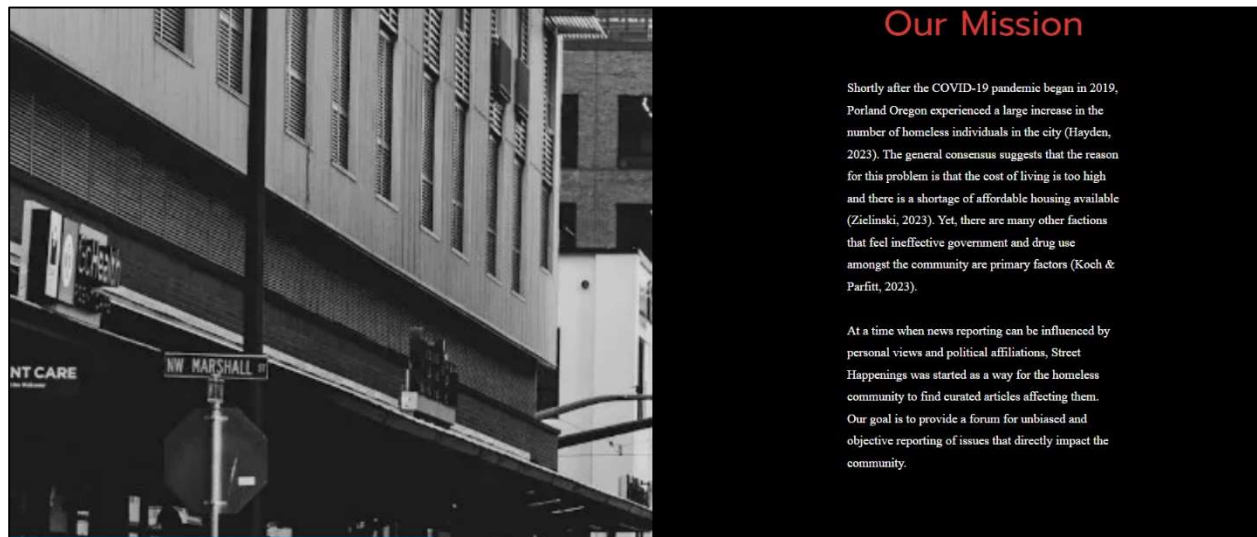


Figure 2- Site mission statement.

Article 1- Local Homeless Advocate Arrested for Misconduct and Theft



PORTLAND, Ore.

Homeless service provider Kevin Dahlgren was arrested by the Multnomah County Sheriff's office this week on 19 charges, including misconduct and theft. Dahlgren is known for his controversial social media postings regarding the homeless problems experienced in the region. Dahlgren was under contract with Deschutes County for homeless consultation services, but was recently terminated after coming under investigation.

Deputy John Plock of the Multnomah County Sheriff's office could not provide specifics regarding the charges, but has said that Dahlgren assumed the identities of several homeless individuals to defraud the city of Gresham. "This population that Mr. Dahlgren was supposed to be serving and advocating for is a really vulnerable population of people. It's really disheartening and it really chips away at our ability to assist and help these people," Plock said.

Two people Dahlgren purported to have helped, Brandon and Michelle Santiago, say that they were victimized by the accused. The couple were living out of a battered recreational vehicle near Bend earlier this year, when Dahlgren began raising money to help them relocate for a job in Alaska. While Dahlgren was able to help raise money for car parts and some \$900, the couple were unable to make it to Alaska. “At first, he seemed like a good dude. Now I’m hearing he’s done all of these things and I’m freaking out,” said Brandon Santiago. After sending the Santiagos \$100 in July, Dahlgren disappeared from their lives. The Santiagos tried to establish contact several times since then, with no reply.

Dahlgren’s work to provide help to the homeless population has come under scrutiny before. Much of his social media content focused on drug use in the homeless community, an approach that many service providers feel overemphasizes the role of addiction as a component of the epidemic. Other detractors feel that right-leaning political comments were a sign of non-objective approaches to the issue. James Cook, a service provider in Redmond, tells of misinformation, lack of proof, and the overall unprofessional content of a report Deschutes County contracted Dahlgren to produce as a study of homelessness in that community. “It’s a total fraud in my opinion,” Cook said “The report itself easily shows that he’s unfamiliar with Central Oregon and hasn’t really done the research. That’s not a scientific report and it’s not worth \$18,000.”

Dahlgren is being represented by a court-appointed attorney and has been released from jail, pending trial.

Story by George LeBlanc

Original story written by Joni Auden Land on November 4, 2023. Photograph by Sean Meagher.
<https://www.opb.org/article/2023/11/04/kevin-dahlgren-homelessness-service-provider-theft-misconduct-charges/>

Article 2- Portland Camping Ban Ordinance Blocked by Injunction



PORTLAND, Ore.

Judge Rima Ghandour has ordered a temporary stop to the Portland day-camping ban introduced in June after finding in favor of a recent injunction opposed to the ordinance. The ruling was announced at The Multnomah County Circuit Court this morning. The ordinance, set to begin on November 13, would have stopped homeless people from camping on public property between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Oregon Law Center attorney Ed Johnson said, "Plaintiffs will suffer irreparable harm and widespread trauma simply trying to comply with this ordinance." Johnson, representing five homeless individuals, argued that the ordinance was further traumatizing a destabilized population, with many homeless individuals forced to publicly sleep during the day for fear of theft or injury otherwise. Johnson also pointed out that the city did not provide maps of where camps were allowed for the displaced.

With public spaces becoming increasingly crowded due to the rise of homelessness in Portland, the city ordinance was intended to limit obstructions along public pathways. The ordinance would have prohibited temporary shelters on public property during hours where foot traffic was busiest. It also placed restrictions on camping in specific areas during other times and prohibited selling bicycles and using gas heaters on public property after dark. Violators would be warned twice and then would face fines up to \$100 or 30 days in jail on the third violation.

In court, Deputy City Attorney Naomi Sheffield stated that the camping ban only prohibits people from setting up structures intended as temporary places to live, and that people could still legally lie under blankets in public spaces.

Mayor Ted Wheeler commented that, “The city will abide by the court’s preliminary order while continuing to fight in court for the city’s right to adopt reasonable regulations on unsanctioned camping.”

Story by George LeBlanc

Original story written by Alex Zielinski on November 9, 2023. Photograph by Paula Bronstein.
<https://www.opb.org/article/2023/11/09/portland-city-camping-ban-court-decision/>

Article 3- City Efforts Dealing with Homelessness Cause Controversy



PORTLAND, Ore.

Aistheta Gleason came from Colorado and ended up building a shelter on the streets of Portland. Last fall they were arrested for trespassing and resisting arrest after a confrontation with police over a walking stick escalated. Gleason watched from a patrol car as her shelter was dismantled by city workers. Now Gleason is forced to move daily, and sleeps with their dog wrapped in a sleeping bag and tarp.

Like Gleason, unhoused people throughout one of the country's most progressive cities are beginning to feel pressure as new policies are being created to take a more hands-on approach to the current homeless epidemic in Portland.

Following the ouster of former city commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty in 2022, new commissioner Rene Gonzalez adopted a more "hands on" approach, arguing that limited involvement is neither humane nor compassionate. Where his predecessor opposed legislation limiting where and how unhoused people could shelter, Gonzalez is taking action by enforcing ordinances banning where homeless people can shelter. Alongside efforts to increase shelter capacities, Mayor Ted Wheeler has started initiatives to create more shelter, and increase mental health and addictions services.

Some, like Jessie Burke of Old Town, feel that the new initiatives are a step in the right direction. Burke tells me, "This is what should be normal" in reference to the few tents lining the streets outside of his hotel on 3rd Avenue. Others, like Scott Kerman, director for homeless shelter Blanchet House, feel that sweeps designed to uproot camping sites are merely a "band aid." Monta Knudsen, director of social services organization Bridges to Change says, "Sweeps just shuffle people from one place to the next," and that "We're just making homelessness more invisible again."

As the city continues to try new approaches toward helping the unhoused, many feel that the balance is difficult to find. Perhaps the best example is a recent lawsuit filed under the Americans with Disabilities Act, introduced by 10 citizens that feel homeless encampments have illegally blocked access to sidewalks. The solution may help one community, but hurt another. Angela Martin, executive director of non-profit agency HereTogether sums it up perfectly, "...the solution to homelessness is binary, a competition between two approaches, that's what's dooming our efforts."

Story by George LeBlanc

Original story written by Winston Ross on May 26th, 2023. Photograph by Julie Sabatier.
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/may/26/portland-oregon-homelessness-policy-change>

Site Pages 4 & 5

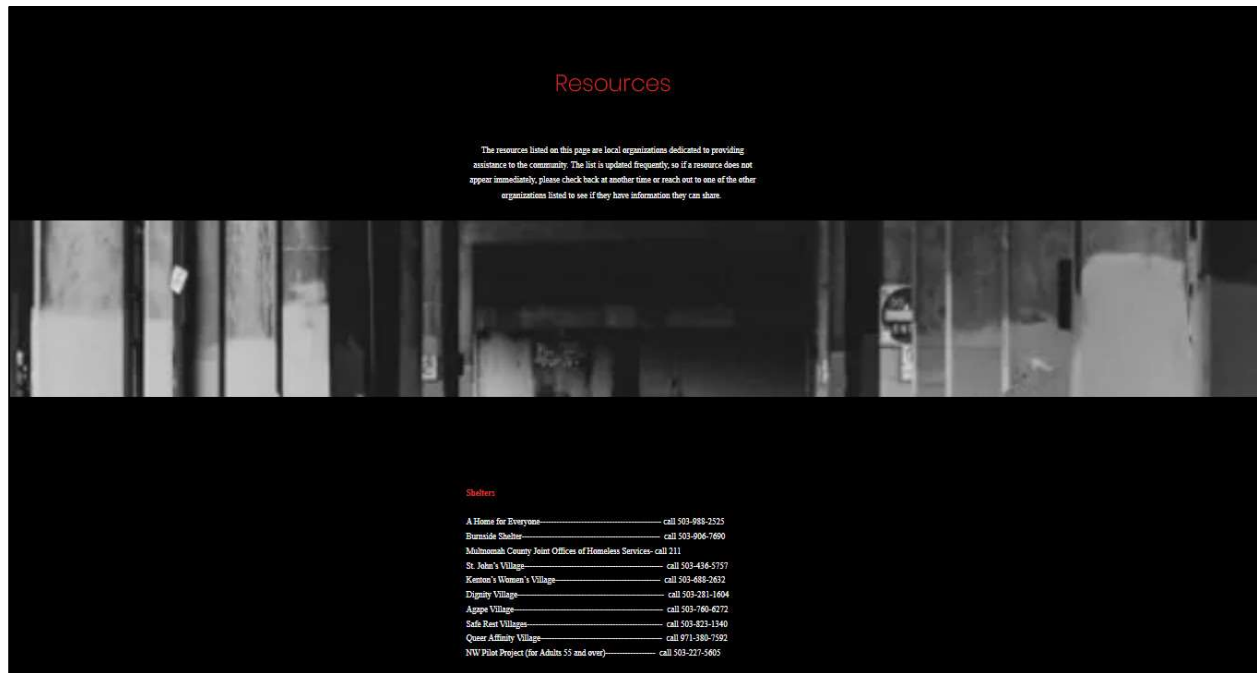


Figure 3- Site resources page.

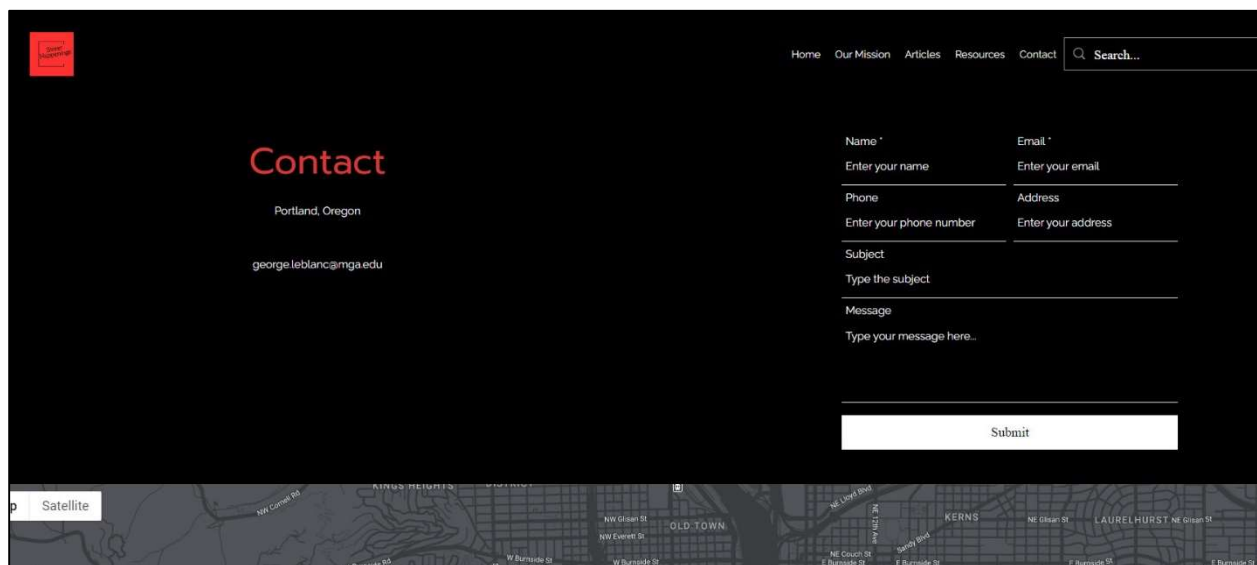


Figure 4- Site contact page.