

PRESS EDITORIAL

Tent City will be a learning opportunity

We are excited to know that Community Church of Issaquah will seek to host Tent City 4 for three months beginning in mid-August. The church is located a few blocks west of historic downtown Issaquah.

Church leaders are hosting a number of community meetings to help flush out any adverse reaction from neighbors. So far, comments have been mostly positive, but the church wants to address concerns up front. While the first meetings are by invitation only, the public will be invited to speak up once a permit request has been filed with the city.

Issaquah is a caring community, and one that has welcomed diversity. To our mind, homeless people represent another kind of diversity, one we don't often see and maybe would rather not. By inviting those who need a place to pitch their tent in a safe environment while they struggle to regain financial footing, Issaquah residents will have to look homelessness in the eye and come to grips with how we can reach out in new ways to help those who are trying to help themselves.

Issaquah should be a great place for Tent City residents, with the help of the church and its facilities. Nearby the residents will find our library with Internet access, bus routes, the Food and Clothing Bank if needed, recreation opportunities and free community events — the things that longtime Issaquah residents already appreciate.

There are many more questions to be answered before Tent City relocates here. How will they impact the free meals program, the food bank and other social services? Will volunteers be needed to help them get acquainted with their temporary city? How can groups other than the church reach out to help?

And after Tent City moves on, there will be the tougher questions, most of which will focus on our city's efforts to provide low-cost housing and human services.

The learning opportunity to help meet those challenges is what Tent City will do for Issaquah. It's all good.