



Peter Gould rests inside the home he displayed Monday. ADRIAN LAM, TIMES COLONIST

Be it ever so humble ...

Tiny homes on wheels could shelter homeless, builder of prototype says to enthusiastic response

SARAH PETRESCU
Times Colonist

Peter Gould wants to help Victoria's homeless, one shopping-cart sized tiny house at a time.

"I struggled with housing, in shelters for a few years. Now that I have a place, I want to give back," said Gould, 60, a former shipyard and iron worker on disability assistance.

The hobby woodworker brought his first effort — a 12-square-foot wooden home on wheels — to the Our Place Society courtyard Monday, where a stream of people came to check it out and ask if he had more.

"I see people come here every morning after sleeping outside. They're not just cold or wet, they get sick. I just talked to one woman who lost her toes," said Gould, who visits the homeless hub for meals every day.

He was inspired to make the trailer by a young woman who suffers from social anxiety and won't use the shelters.

"It's a place to keep people warm, dry and their stuff safe," he said.

Gould built the tiny house on wheels in less than a month, using the woodshop at Anawim House in Victoria for the building and Choices Transitional Home in View Royal for the painting.

"Everyone has been very supportive and helpful. It's a feel-good project," he said. He received \$100 from a homeless advocacy group for supplies and used his own money for the rest.

"I probably spent about \$600 but I know I could bring that down," said Gould, wearing red suspenders, a Mickey Mouse fanny pack and a T-shirt emblazoned with "Jesus is King."

He gave a short tour of the two-foot-wide and six-foot-long house.

"Some people say it has a retro look, like '60s or '50s," Gould said in front of the trailer that does look like a mini-

vintage camper with an oval shape and turquoise-green exterior.

Gould said he used wood and glue to build the 80-pound structure on wheels. It is about three feet high, with a window made from picture-frame glass, an extendable bed for someone up to six-foot-one, a small shelf, eight square feet of storage and a candle heater.

"It seemed a lot safer than gas," said Gould, who slept in the trailer under a tree on Harris Green a few nights back. "I didn't wake up once."

The trailer can be secured with a padlock and has a handle to move or lock it. Gould said his next prototype will include a bike hitch.

"I want to build more and give them to people for free," he said. "I'm always looking for ways to help our brothers and sisters, and this seems to be one a lot of people are interested in."

Grant McKenzie, communications director for Our Place Society, said there has been a lot of interest in tiny homes or shelters to help address the problem of street homelessness and poverty in Victoria.

"There's potential to set up a social enterprise here and address an important issue. Plus, it's a really cool idea," said McKenzie, noting people are turned away every night from shelters in the city and others are barred from certain places.

McKenzie said a group of residents at Choices, which was set up to house former tent city homeless until next year, and students from Camosun College have built a tiny-house prototype as well.

"We presented it to B.C. Housing but nothing came of it," he said. He'd like to see homeless people with tiny houses park in church lots overnight, "like Oregon is doing."

The City of Victoria has pledged to look into microhousing options, including the idea of a tiny-house village. spetrescu@timescolonist.com

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