

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1278
Sacramento, CA



HOMeward

Street Journal

Volume 9, No. 5 Member NASNA Sept / Oct, 2005
North American Street Newspaper Association

Man's Best Friend (and confidant, family, wingman, therapist...)

Released through Street News Service
www.streetnewsservice.org

COLD HOMECOMING

Street News Service
www.streetnewsservice.org

Page 2 Brazilian Deaths Anniversary
Page 3 Cold Homecoming Cont. Military Transfers
Page 4 Saving Petunias (cartoon)
Page 5 New Agency on Homelessness Pot of Beans
Page 6 Best Friend Cont.
Page 7 Back to the Streets Poem Obituary
Page 8 Homeless Resources Info

by Troy May

In a retelling of a story written by Rudyard Kipling in 1912, there may have been an agreement between the dog and the man, but it was sealed by the woman. "The Woman said, 'Wild thing out of the wild woods, help my man to hunt through the day and guard this cave at night, and I will give you as many roast bones as you need.'"

This still appears to be a valid contract. The differences being, the caves may be cardboard boxes, the hunt entails scavenging garbage cans, and the roast bone may be half of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. However, it is the phenomenon of unconditional love, the bonding of two different species, and the therapeutic effect this attachment has on homeless youth (who may otherwise suffer severe attachment disorders), and thus the community, that I hope to impress on those reading this article today.

My discipline is in theologies of compassion. These theologies – Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and the Sufis, to name but a few – seek to attain attitudes of tolerance as well as mindful awareness of our interdependence and interconnectivity. To love another as you love yourself is the fulcrum of a spiritual community. Like a seesaw, the standard of that self-love can be high or low, according to your life experiences. When self-love is turned into self-loathing through neglect and abuse, the scenario of loving another as yourself can be perplexing. Self-destructive behaviors and abusive relationships become the burdensome patterns that keep many good people down.

The absence of love is debilitating to the development of human beings. When a child is neglected and/or abused and runs away from the dangers of home, there begins an isolation from an accepted social order. Exposure

to drugs, sexual diseases, trauma relating to rape, hate crimes, initiation or retaliation from gangs, poor nutrition, standing for long periods of time (which causes finnea peds, better known as bot rot, an immobilizing foot ailment common in the homeless), having very limited resources for hygiene maintenance and going to the bathroom, are a few consequences of street life. Ironically, for those escaping the uncontrollable rages of guardians or the sexual degradation of incest, this kind of life, on the streets, is a chance at having some control. Many times it is the family dog that follows the runaway, becoming the friend, protector, and confidant in an otherwise detached world. The companion dog can be the one attachment that can spare the adolescent the burden of attachment disorder later in life.

Dogs are natural lovers. They are animals skilled in social structure. Evolved from the grey wolf, dogs have an innate sense about the alpha male, what could be called the leader of the pack. Once the role of leader is established, most dogs are known for their loyalty and obedience. This is translated in the streets as protection.

The streets of Portland have become home for many people and their companion dogs. The young, spirited and rebellious become the old, broken and cynical or hardened sages, keen observers of human nature. Their dogs are self-possessed, tails thumping out an exuberant nature, noses sniffing. What do they smell? Everything! The nose of a dog hosts 220 million olfactory receptors compared to man's measly 10 million at best. This ability can mean the difference between going hungry or finding food, as well as being able to sleep at night knowing that your dog literally can smell danger. Eating and sleeping provide the human brain with the ability to make decisions. Making healthy

see **Best Friend** page

by Cydney Gillis

A dirty little secret is finally out: While George W. Bush has been waging war in Afghanistan and Iraq, he's been cutting medical services for the veterans coming home.

Or, at least, grossly under-estimating how many veterans would need – and be entitled to – medical services from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Last week, in a major blooper for the Bush Administration, the VA revealed it had budgeted for serving 23,553 returning veterans in fiscal 2005 – far short of the 103,000 now expected.

The VA said the number was based on figures from 2002, when the U.S. was supposed to be out of Iraq in six months. It's an error that's put the VA's Health Administration \$1 billion short this year – with estimates it will be \$2.7 billion short in fiscal 2006.

Last week, led by Washington Democrat Patty Murray, the U.S. Senate voted an emergency supplement of \$1.5 billion for V.A. The House followed with a bill authorizing \$975 million. While the two bills wait to be reconciled – Congress is in recess this week – Sheila Sebron and the veterans she works with continue to wait for services.

Sebron is a volunteer advocate with the National Association of Black Veterans. During her service

in the Air Force between 1977 and 1984, she was injured in an auto accident – an event that left her knees permanently blown. When she's in pain, Sebron sometimes suffers flashbacks of the accident – a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder for which the mother of two says she had to fight the VA for treatment.

Like the Vietnam War, waves of combat vets are now returning home with PTSD, Sebron says – only to face long waits for help, if they can get any at all. At the Seattle VA, which is \$1.1 million in the hole this year, Sebron says there are currently 18,000 people enrolled. Her wait for an appointment can range from five months to one year, depending on their disability rating. The higher the rating, the quicker the service.

Sebron, who's lower on the list but suffering from depression in the wake of losing a loved one, has had an appointment for a mental consultation she needs bumped back twice in the past two months. And that's for a veteran with a disability rating. Sebron says anyone not currently in the system is out of luck. A current hiring freeze at the Seattle V.A., which is leaving vacant positions open for now, is only making the situation worse, she says.

see **Cold Homecoming** page 3

Brazil Nears Anniversary of Brutal Killings of Homeless

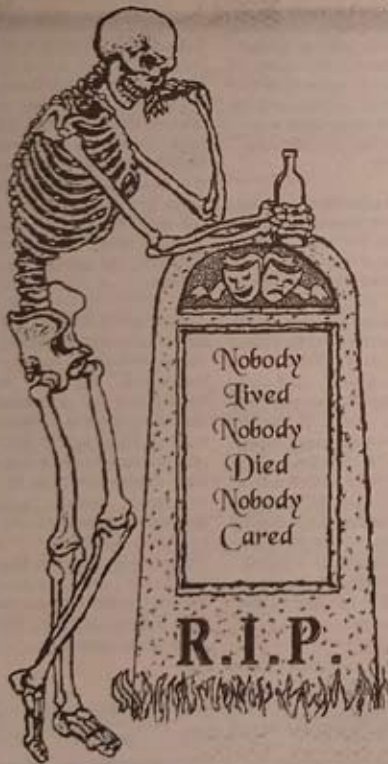
Released through Street News Service [www .streetnewsservice.org](http://www.streetnewsservice.org)

by Paula Mathieu

Nearly a year has passed since a brutal two-night spree of attacks on sleeping street people in Sao Paulo, Brazil, has left seven dead and eight more seriously wounded. Despite public outcry, mounting evidence of police involvement, and ongoing public demonstrations, no arrests have been made in the case.

It all began in the predawn hours of August 19, 2004. August is wintertime in Brazil, and although it's not frigid, nighttime temperatures hover at a chilly, damp 16 degrees Celsius. Of the estimated 10,000 homeless people in Sao Paulo, roughly 3,000 routinely sleep under bridges, in doorways, and subway entrances, rolled in cheap blankets from head to toe. When the sun came up that morning, panic hit the street inhabitants of the city center as word spread that 10 people had been hit in the head while sleeping. Two had died, four were seriously injured.

Several nights later, six more homeless people sleeping in the downtown area of Sao Paulo were attacked; and in the end a total of seven died as a result of their injuries. The victims were women as well as men, ranging in age from 28 to 71 years old. All were struck once in the head with a blunt instrument while asleep.



"The criminal was a professional; he used an instrument and beat their heads just once to kill them. He knew what he wanted," said Alderon Costa, director of Rede Rua, a non-governmental organization (NGO) that works with homeless people in Sao Paulo.

Medical examination of the victims supported this suspicion. Antonio Carlos Iron, of the Legal Medical Institute who performed the autopsies, described the attacks as "technically perfect," the work of someone who wanted to kill exactly.

These attacks occurred shortly before elections in Brazil, and politicians spoke out vigorously in the weeks following, calling for justice. The Mayor of Sao Paulo, Marta Suplicy, declared that she was "horrified" at the attacks and requested a public moment of silence to remember the victims. On September 1st, 2004, Patrus Ananias, the Minister for Social Development and Combating Hunger, promised to create a forum of ministers to discuss public policies concerning homelessness in Brazil.

Once the elections came and went, however, media attention faded and few politicians followed through on their promises to investigate, said Luciano Rocco of Ocas, the street newspaper that gives employment and a media voice to the homeless in Sao Paulo. The Ministers forum was rescheduled several times, and soon politicians stopped discussing the issue entirely.

And despite police and governmental promises to seek justice in this case, evidence continues to increase suggesting that the police themselves might have been involved. In addition to the precise nature of the beatings, the attacks have all occurred downtown, an area once largely abandoned that is now slated for revitalization. This is an area usually patrolled heavily by police—one attack occurred just outside a police station—and security cameras record street events from several residential buildings nearby. In their investigation, the police have not requested any of the video recordings, and several individuals who live or work in nearby buildings have offered recordings to the police. No public statement about whether the police have viewed or even accepted the videos has been released.

One victim described his two attackers, which led to further suspicion of the police. According to local reports, on August 30, a policeman threatened one of the victims in his hospital room, pressing a gun against the victim during a discussion.

In October, two military policemen, Jayner Aurzilo Porfiro, Martins Landmarks Garcia, were taken into custody under suspicion in these attacks. A third military policeman, not directly involved in these cases was also detained. Despite the Sao Paulo police said that these men were commanders of private security and drug trafficking operations in the centre of the city, they were released after 30 days with no charges being filed.

While these attacks are unusual because of their

consistency, brutality and execution within a short timeframe, local NGOs and church groups point out that violence is a common routine in the lives of the many people who are homeless in Brazil. While no official census attempts to count the number of individuals without housing in Brazil, a local research foundation estimated that there were roughly 10,000 homeless people living in the streets of Sao Paulo in 2003. Rede Rua and Ocas believe the figure is much higher, perhaps double, and that violence is part of everyday life for many of these people. These crimes have a chilling similarity with Candelaria massacre of street kids by off-duty police in Rio de Janeiro in 1993. But even more recent events show the patten of violence:

One day before the attacks in Sao Paulo, a homeless person was beheaded in Sorocaba, in the countryside of Sao Paulo State. His head has not been found. A month earlier, six homeless people went to hospital after being poisoned, also in Sao Paulo. A homeless person was shot to death in Belo Horizonte (capital of Minas Gerais) on September 4.

In Rio de Janeiro, county guards systematically threaten homeless people. Policemen compel street dwellers to abandon wealthy neighborhoods and tourist sites by taking their few belongings and throwing them into trash collectors. Any resistance to this action meets with violence, according to Rocco. This policy, undertaken by the city's mayor, is officially named "Urban Control Operation."

Rocco believes that such widespread violence against the vulnerable and poor of Brazil results from a culture of fear and prejudice. "Most Brazilians see homeless people with prejudice, with a mixture of pity and fear. Many see homeless people as people who do not want to work or that are involved with some kind of illicit activity. Our mainstream media and governments contribute to this misperception," said Rocco.

Citizens of Sao Paulo have taken to the streets to show their sympathy and solidarity with the victims, sleeping in the street and holding monthly vigils. Despite this continued show of support, little of fiscal progress is being made.

"We fear that this issue has been forgotten, that nothing will be done, despite monthly protests and vigils in our country," said Rocco. "We have decided that on this anniversary, we need to internationalize these events, to inform people around the world about this miscarriage of justice. Citizens of foreign countries will help if they show their concern about the situation of homeless people in Brazil to public authorities, by writing to Brazilian embassies in their countries or to their own embassies in Brazil."

Rocco believes that international readers of street papers can apply necessary pressure to investigate—and hopefully end—such brutal attacks of vulnerable people in Brazil. He said, "Please encourage your readers to write to the Brazilian embassy in the US or to the US embassy in Brazil. We should not let these lives be forgotten or let the criminals to go unpunished."

COLD HOMECOMING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"This is catastrophic. This is why I'm willing to come forward," Sebron says. "When I have to wait two months for a mental-health appointment and I get bumped twice, there's a problem." Sebron makes herself available to hear veterans' problems or help them get the services they need. She says many of the Iraq veterans she has talked with are suffering from sleep disorder, uncontrollable memories, and severe depression over killing people.

"For many soldiers, even though it was a given they'd have to kill, it's a horrible thing," Sebron says. "The reality of an exploding body and the mistakes — that you intended to kill the bad guys and it turned out to be a family in a house. They didn't have time to process it."

The flashbacks, Sebron says, are like having images of memories superimposed over events happening in the here and now — something she describes as surreal. So were the Bush Administration's original estimates for how many veterans would need medical services, says Skip Dreps, government relations director for the Northwest

chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America. PVA is one of the veterans' services organizations that has been demanding more funding, most recently in April, when Sen. Murray tried to get \$1.2 billion for the VA tacked onto an \$82 billion bill to continue funding the occupation in Iraq.

"As of May 17, we've had 360,674 [soldiers] come out of Iraq and Afghanistan," Dreps says. "Twenty-four percent, or 85,857, have sought VA care. The administration figured two percent. You can see the differences."

Of those, Dreps adds, 24 percent have sought mental health care, with the most prominent problems being adjustment disorder, psychosis and depressive reaction.

"As we model this out, it may represent a 50 percent casualty figure," Dreps says. "That may mean one out of every two who serve will end up needing care."

With Vietnam, Dreps says, it was one out of every 10. "We thought that was bad," he says. "That's why Vietnam

veterans like myself and World War II veterans are outraged."

The war in Iraq, Dreps says, "is the equivalent to the first two minutes of [the movie] Saving Private Ryan over and over and over again with no relief. We expect that everyone going through that would be a casualty."

Despite the reports of long waits, Megan Streight, a spokeswoman for VA's Northwest Health Network (which includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska) says facilities in the region have actually had a drop in demand over the past few months — and that the VA is mostly meeting its guidelines of providing all eligible veterans with an appointment in 30 days.

Dreps warns, however, that the Bush Administration plans to drop the number of eligible veterans. Today, he says, six million of the nation's 25 million veterans receive medical services, but the VA only budgeted for four million — and has stated it wants to pare that down to 2.2 million.

"They need to re-examine how they modeled [the numbers]," Dreps says.

"Until they do that, they're doing a disservice to the country and veterans."

Reprinted from Real Change News © Street News Service: www.streetpapers.org



Military Transfers

Released through Street News Service www.streetnewsservice.org

by Breeana Laughlin

After a life of imposed discipline, veterans coming home from war have a tough time making a smooth transition. Take Kimberly Lane, for example, who was in the Navy from 1990 to '95.

"I had a good five years in the military. Even to this day, I still talk about it," she says. "I don't think I'm 100 percent out of it. Once you're in the military, you're always in the military."

Lane had trouble finding housing after leaving the service. She moved often and faced the same obstacle each time. Even with money for rent, landlords would refuse to let her move in unless she already had a job. It was hard to finding a job without a permanent address.

"It's a Catch-22," she says.

Brooke Tolin was in the military for three years. After leaving, she found it difficult to switch back into the daily way of life. "Being in it was structured," she says. "When you leave you don't have anybody telling you what to do."

Some women are more at risk for home-

lessness as a result of their experiences in the military. While some report that the military was one of the best times of their lives, others have dealt with sexual assaults and unfair treatment from their male counterparts.

Women veterans who have a painful and shocking experience are vulnerable to post-traumatic stress disorder. The risks of developing PTSD from sexual trauma in the military seem to be decreasing, but more women are involved in combat and may be more likely to develop the disorder from war zone stress.

Even though many women veterans experience problems after leaving the military, most do not seek help from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Some, like Tolin, were never told they could come to the VA for services. She didn't find out about VA programs until years after her experience in the military. A woman told Lane about VA services during her last stint with homelessness. They helped her find housing and have provided assistance. She recently gave birth to her first child.

"I'm going to do my best not to travel anymore," Lane says. "I've always moved

every year or so. I plan on staying and making a life for my child in one home." These women were helped by the VA's Homeless Women Veterans Program in Seattle/Tacoma. It was one of 11 nationally selected programs chosen to provide services for homeless female veterans. It began with a three-year research study with 230 women. Over half of those who participated in the study are now in permanent housing. The study is over, but the program continues to serve women on a case-by-case basis. Unfortunately, a cut in funding for Veterans Affairs services and Seattle's housing shortage has affected case workers' ability to provide support ("Cold Homecoming" above).

"It wasn't originally designed to be a long-term case management program, but there have been women who need a lot of support and services," says Kathy Gerard, who works with homeless women at the VA.

"A lot of my time is spent consulting with other housing programs," she says. "The Section 8 housing has dried up."

Another program geared toward homeless women veterans has also struggled with a lack of funding. The state Department

of Veterans Affairs' Homeless Women Veterans Reintegration Program offered services for two years, helping provide employment to hundreds of women veterans, before losing funding in 2004.

"When they lost their funding, it was a blow to our program," says Gerard, who worked closely with them. Gerard reports that the program received renewed funding on July 1, and will reinstate their services.

Veronica Reilly, retired USMC, says women are encouraged to seek treatment at the VA, but not many do.

"Various facilities throughout the country are not woman-friendly. I don't know how many times I've been called Mr. Reilly," she says.

The military's face is changing. Women currently make up 15 percent of the active-duty force and approximately 23 percent of the reserve force. By the year 2010, the VA projects that women veterans will comprise well over 10 percent of the total veteran population.

Reprinted from Real Change News © Street News Service: www.streetpapers.org

Saving Petunias



It's so cool in the shade! Think I'll rest a minute.



Oh! No!
He's sitting by my petunias! He might sit on them!
What am I going to do? He's going to crush my precious petunias!

KNOCK KNOCK

Who could be at my back door?



Officer Wolf of Absolute Security, ma'am. I saw that ruffian out front and wondered if you needed any assistance.



Oh, yes, please! He's going to crush my petunias!

Well, I'll take care of him for you, if you'll just sign this here contract

I hereby give up everything and will obey Absolute Security completely.

Anything to save my petunias!



Hey, peon - Stop scrubbing, get me a beer and slop the pigs; then you can water your stupid petunia.



99

A Small Expensive Step in the Right Direction

"Every Californian deserves a place to call home" Governor Schwarzenegger said at an August 31 event where he announced the creation of The California Initiative to End Long-Term Homelessness. The initiative is a package of state and private funding for new supportive housing and the creation of a State Interagency Council on Homelessness.

The goals of the initiative are to leverage \$40 million in Proposition 46 funds with tax credits and locality funds, to build 400 to 500 new units of permanent supportive housing, using Proposition 63 funding for services. \$10 million will be contributed by the California Housing Finance Agency for community organizations that lend to

affordable housing developers. Proposition 63 funds and state general funds will be help with pre-development costs and for the interagency council. There will be coordination of federal, state, local, non-profit and private sector efforts.

California has just become the 48th state to partner with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness in the creation of the California Interagency Council on Homelessness. The council will be comprised of state, federal and local agencies and departments; local elected officials; homeless service providers and advocates; and philanthropic members.

Its about time!

Just a reminder

Everybody needs to have their TB Clearance card up to date.

All shelters and food service organizations will not provide full services without a valid card.

Your card can be renewed at the Friendship Park office, which is in the trailer to the right of the main gate. Office hours are every week day, 7 am until closing, but skin tests are not done on Thursdays.

New people must have a chest x-ray on file at the county clinic.

Get it done before the bad weather arrives and you are stuck outside waiting for your results!

A POT OF BEANS

by Lillian

It was a hot summer day, a lazy day like only Sacramento can have and Don Wilcox had invited me to his camp for dinner. When I arrived, there he was sitting by the river with the "boys" watching a big pot of beans and meat he had been cooking since morning. With a wry smile, he said to me, "Lillian, I hope these dogs don't beat me to these beans, I've been slaving over them all morning, and it wouldn't be the first time that the dogs have beaten me to the food, this time they're not going to." With this, he glanced at the dogs sitting around the camp, their great big eyes just staring at those beans. They weren't his dogs but belonged to one of his friends who was visiting Don. Don felt further lead to tell me, "And watch your backpack, their puppies like to tear up things." Sure enough, he pointed to the puppies a ways off, busy playing with somebody else's belongings, growling and snapping at each other, they were really adorable and at the same time terribly destructive. "I've been warning everyone at camp to stash their stuff so the puppies don't tear it apart," he went on.

Dave offered Don a cold beer and Don turned it down saying, "I don't want to get drunk. I'm really hungry and want these beans." The afternoon wore on. We sat in our chairs, under the shade of the trees, sipping our cold beers, enjoying the beautiful hot summer day watching the river

flowing and catching a nice Delta breeze every now and then. Dave was there and Charlie, Craig hadn't made it that day. We carried on joking and laughing like always. Life was good. Suddenly, Don said, "Oh, hell, give me a beer!"

Next thing we knew the party was in full swing. Don had drunk a lot of beer and was carrying on in his usual loud, boisterous way, recounting his many experiences as a vet, as a native of New Orleans. He just barely managed to find me a sleeping bag to sleep on before he commenced to pass out. The party had ended and no one had even thought of the beans. Luckily, the fire had gone out. As I laid down to sleep, I remember clutching at my backpack and putting it close to me.

When I woke up in the morning, my backpack was all torn up. I walked over to the beans and Don was sitting by the pot. "The dogs got them last night!" They had overturned the pot and there wasn't but a spoonful left. We all sat there, with dismal faces, hoping we could rustle up some bread and cheese somewhere.

Don was a Vietnam vet and his closest buddies had served in Vietnam with him. He was a tall man with thinning reddish brown hair all straggly down his shoulders, and deep set blue eyes behind his large glasses. He walked with a limp, half dragging one leg along as he walked because they hadn't been able to get

all the shrapnel out of his leg in Vietnam. Don was a real character the most colorful friend that Craig drank with. Born in New Orleans, he spoke with a southern drawl and described himself as a real 'coon ass' from Louisiana. Somehow, he had ended up here in Sacramento and he lived in the streets. He carried his 'house' around with him, that is a great big backpack, complete with sleeping bag, tent, clothes, etc. Don liked to drink and he liked to camp in the mountains. Above all, he liked people and people everywhere just loved him. Often, Don would go camping in the Sierras in California, but also in other states. Don would always take his buddy, John, with him because John was a mountain guide and "could find his way out of any mountain" so John would say.

One time, while they were driving through the mountains of Montana, they decided to camp for the night and parked their vehicle and decided to go hiking as they drank the cases of beer they had bought. It was getting on twilight. They laughed and joked the night away until the beer ran out. Then as Don recalls, they suddenly realized that they were lost deep in the canyons and ravines, they didn't know where their vehicle was parked and it was frightfully cold and pitch black. They perceived that their lives were in danger. Don told John, "Use your instincts and try to find the car, just do your best." By now, everyone was dead sober and frightened. After much hiking and

going up and down ravines and deep forests, John managed to find the vehicle. When Don told me the story, he said, "That's why I won't go camping in the mountains without John."

Another time, I went to visit him in his camp at Roseville. When I got to the river, I asked someone for Don's camp and the guy looked wryly at me and said "just follow the bodies of the guys that have passed out rear end up." and he pointed up the river, and sure enough there was some guy all passed out, rear end up. It was easy to find the camp. Don and his Vietnam buddy, Bear, were already pretty toasted by the time I got there, but they had my sleeping bag inside a nice little tent because it had been raining lightly. I joined the boys and drank with them and we all got so happy that we sang the night away singing even songs from our childhood. It started to rain. I noticed that the tent that Don and Bear were in had holes in it, holes that had been kicked out. When I asked Don why he had kicked those holes in his tent, he said, "Hell, this tent is too small for me and Bear to sit in comfortably, and so I kicked the holes in so I can sit without being all cramped up." With this, Don and Bear commenced to go into hilarious peals of laughter and after this, I went to my nice dry tent to sleep. I had passed one of the happiest nights of my life that night with Don and Bear drinking beer and singing songs in that tent of his with all the holes kicked in.

Best Friend

continued from page 1

decisions, such as not getting intoxicated today, or staying out of someone's way that you know is combative, is what Professor Lyn Rew calls "self care" and affects not just the one making the decision, but the community and essentially the world.

Lyn Rew is a professor of nursing at the University of Texas, and is actively involved in researching the "Theory of Self Care" first practiced with a sense of authority by Florence Nightingale a century ago. Lyn explains how there are three categories of self care, based on the principles of Orem. "Orem conceptualized self-care as the personal care that human beings require each day and that may be modified by health state (one's state of health), environmental conditions, the effects of medical care, and other factors." This theory is a reference point for determining if one is effective in meeting the basic needs that must be met to maintain health and safety. The three categories, each have a unique role for the companion dog. Staying alive with limited resources, becoming aware of oneself, and handling one's own health are the three categories.

Lyn interviewed 15 homeless youths to find that being companioned with a dog is beneficial to all three categories of self care. Liz is between the ages of 16 and 20 and is very aware of her need for self-protection, which secures self-preservation. "I've got my big huge dog and I know how to fight and I carry weapons (a knife).

Bev, another homeless youth between the age of 16 and 20, said, "Yeah, I had a really big dog for a very long time; that was kind of my knife, I guess you could say. Nobody ever messed with me with him, you know." In the category of staying alive with limited resources, dogs are a girl's best friend.

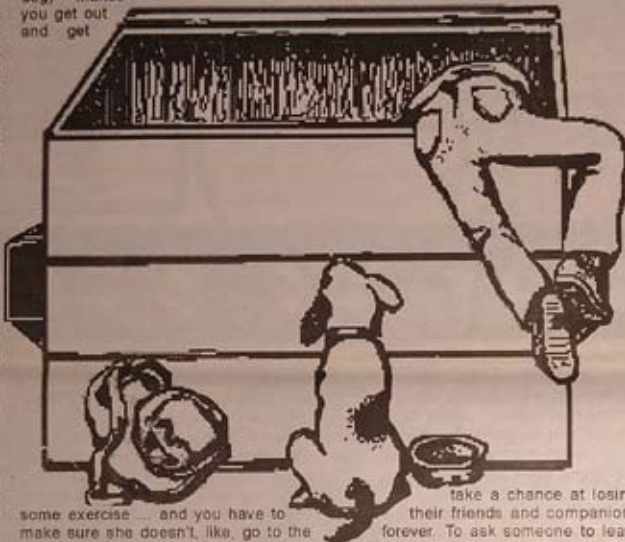
Self-reliance begets self-respect, and in this interview of 15 homeless youths, "strategies that increased their self-reliance included (a) taking care of a dog... (d) staying aware of one's surroundings." The partnership between the two natures is quite moving. To protect is in dogs' genes, and to nurture is one of the greatest of humanity's qualities, when given the opportunity to develop. Dogs, as well as other pets, become surrogates for the absent parent or loved one and "in caring for a dog" homeless youths "may mitigate the circumstances that otherwise make them vulnerable to unhealthy development and emotional distress."

Loneliness is an obstacle that can be crushing to the homeless. "Interacting with peers as well as professionals" becomes part of "handling one's own health." Having a dog stimulates conversation with the public. People who would otherwise keep walking stop and chat when seeing the presence of a dog or cat.

Panhandling, one of the strategies listed in Lyn Rew's self-preservation categories, tends to profit when a dog is watching. This is not to imply that people have dogs

for the purpose of making money pan-handling. It is a connection that is made between the dog and a stranger's heart; this connection has been going on for thousands of years.

A 15-year-old female interviewed by Rew voices her experience: "(Dogs) give you more responsibility, because, I mean, you have a lot of responsibility for a dog. Even in my muscles and shoulders, because when you're hitchhiking, you have to carry like 20 pounds of dog food with you. (The dog) makes you get out and get



some exercise... and you have to make sure she doesn't like, go to the bathroom in the middle of the sidewalk or something." The next young woman was 15 and said, "(A dog) makes me feel like I have to be responsible for something. I know it's not just that he's just, you know, to play with, but, yes, this is something I can be responsible for. I choose to spend \$700 to take care of him and - over the last couple of months when I had him, I don't drink as much. He means a lot to me."

Sisters of the Road, a cafe and mingling place for the homeless community in Portland, helps meet this critical need of interaction. Sisters is in the process of a research project concerning the homeless in Portland. One of the people interviewed validated the reason so many homeless stay sober when they have a beloved pet: "I was in jail and my partner got drunk and he passed out. And they took him and my dog - they took my dog to the pound and I've never seen him since."

Lyn Rew says being sober and living on the streets "is a major obstacle to caring for oneself and staying healthy." In this domain, dogs are miracle workers.

JOIN, is an outreach program in Portland that has services that embrace the healing relationships of the homeless and their pets. They provide veterinary services as well as people services. There is a down-

side to being homeless and with dog; that is that shelters, soup kitchens and public restrooms do not allow dogs for health reasons. The relationships between dogs and their homeless owners are primal. Dogs do not care or comprehend the eccentric economics of living. Wealth is a relative perception, and time is the gold lavished on the companion pets of the homeless.

Every day, the homeless choose to endure the indignities of the street rather than

Note that Panda was spayed, and her license and shots were current. The care of homeless companion dogs is generally the priority of the homeless owners. They literally live for these companions, and with the services of JOIN, Watchdog, Outside In, and Sisters of The Road, the hard life of the streets can be a little softer.

Jenna Haggie manages the Home at Last animal shelter in The Dalles. Jenna tells of a love story between a homeless man and his dog. The dog was a "cattle dog." For generations this breed was trained to herd cattle. The man was shy but content with his dog. Jenna reminds us that camping is a dog's favorite pastime, and here these two are on an extended camping trip. The reflexive nature of a cattle dog becomes problematic when the only cattle to herd is traffic. The man tried everything to break his dog of this inbred proclivity for herding, but the dog was hit and killed by a car, and the man was devastated. The animal control officer involved visited Home at Last, the humane shelter in that area, and informed the staff of what had happened. Jenna convened with her staff and they decided that Holly, a homeless dog in their custody, would be perfect for this grieving man. She was thick-furred for winter and was a breed that did not wander.

They bonded instantly, and Home at Last takes care of all her health and grooming needs. This kindness also extends into the introverted nature of the man, who is beginning to trust the staff through socializing on the days Holly has a bath.

I raise the question, why are these dogs not seen as service dogs? Service dogs are animals that are individually trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities such as guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling wheelchairs, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure or performing other special tasks. Service animals are working animals, not pets, according to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Homelessness is a disability, and the services of a companion dog are so valuable that people young and old would rather freeze and go hungry than take a chance of losing their pet. Companion dogs alert and protect. They guide people through depression and performing other special tasks such as giving purpose and hope, teaching patience, tolerance and a sense of accountability to those who would otherwise have no one to be accountable too.

I propose that the Americans with Disabilities Act re-evaluate the value of companion dogs for the homeless. A service dog is allowed entrance into all public businesses. The integration of companion dogs into the protection of the ADA will not only validate the reality of a growing homeless population, but will no longer permit circumstance to further injure the already wounded homeless individual.

Ellen Pangle is without a residence and went into a store to buy essentials. She tied Panda, her female, spayed dog of five years, to a bench in front of the store. Panda was impounded after only an hour. Ellen went to the Multnomah County Animal Shelter on a Monday to retrieve her dog, but they were not open to the public. According to the MCAS, she came through the door on Monday because painters left the door cocked open with a screwdriver. Pangle claimed to have talked to a man on the phone who quoted her a \$100 fee, and she was allowed to leave with the dog. The actual fee for redeeming was \$240, license and rabies current.

"Back to the Streets" Humanizes the Homeless

A Book Review

Street News Service www.streetnewsservice.org

by Lauren Byrne

A review in these pages of work by George Wynn is likely to be open to suggestions of bias. Wynn, a native of San Francisco, was a contributor to Spare Change News during the several years he lived in the Boston area. But read just a few pages and it's obvious that Wynn's work doesn't have to rely on biased opinions.

"Back to the Streets," his collection of poems, essays and short stories, is genuinely engaging, provocative and inspiring. In his fiction, he humanizes the homeless, and his observations on the craft of writing about street life is as good a primer for writers of any stripe as a shelf full of how-to books.

"Be fresh. Be original. Craft is less necessary than commitment, for craft is often gimmicky, inauthentic," he urges writers in "The Street Writer's Manifesto." Wynn has heeded his own advice. His first writing teacher, he tells us, was a former newspaperman, down on his luck and living in San Francisco's Tenderloin area. It was from him that the young Wynn learned that writing, like mashed potatoes, needs a little flavoring. Wynn's ability to breathe life into a disparate cast of characters in his fictional pieces is the gravy he brings to his work.

Not homeless himself except for very brief stints, George Wynn

never settles for a safe third-person perspective on homelessness. Conjuring up what it feels like to be homeless in "It Could Happen to You" and elsewhere, he brings his reader uncomfortably close to the mixture of fear, indignity, confusion and bitterness that convincingly sums up what it must be like to be suddenly homeless.

In his "Street Writer's Manifesto," Wynn exhorts street writers not to be pessimistic, and he himself emphasizes an aspect of homelessness frequently overlooked. Too often society's urge to house the homeless is based on the desire to be rid of what offends our sense of how things should be - that people ought to hold down stressful jobs and pay exorbitant rents in "Noble Hobos" and elsewhere Wynn shows us people who are not lacking in dignity but who have chosen not to conform. They prefer to lose themselves in literature and to experience the fleeting kindnesses that reveal humanity at its best.

Retaining an attitude of optimism can't be easy for Wynn. Returning to San Francisco after several years, in a poem "Urban Planning" he describes the ever harsher conditions the city imposes on its homeless. On a trip to Montreal, he observes in even clearer shades how the well-off despise the poor.

But Wynn's is no pie-in-the sky

optimism. In "Poverty and Language," he describes what the homeless need to do for themselves: give expression to their unique perspectives through being involved with the arts; use "hard hitting" language "in order to counteract the conservative agenda of the White House."

My only quibble is that Wynn's short stories are just too short. It's as if he feared he couldn't hold his readers' attention. "Lonnie's Way" about a one-time boxing trainer and his failed fighter is as good as anything by F.X. Toole, the author of the stories on which the recent hit movie "Million Dollar Baby" hit movie was based.

Through language and tone, Wynn sets up the story so convincingly that you're ready to spend serious time with these characters only to have the experience cut short way too early. Wynn's innate curiosity and his wandering life have provided him with the kind of warehouse of knowledge that the best writers have. The consoling news is that Wynn has a novel in the works. It'll be worth the wait.

"Back to the Streets" by George Wynn. Freedom Voices. Paperback, 80 pages. \$12.95.

Reprinted from Spare Change News, Boston, MA, May 2005
©Street News Service
www.street-papers.org

Obituary

Henry Campos
d. 6/21/05
of cancer
age 80

Tim Oakley
d. 6/28/05
of poor health
aged 47

Tommy V. Gutierrez
d. 7/2/05
of misadventure
age 38

Raymond Coryell
d. 7/3/05
in his room while asleep
age 53

Julie Cooper
d. 7/12/05
at a church

Frederick VonGlahan
d. 7/15/05
in his apartment

Mason McWhinney
"Jimmy Mack"
d. 7/2/05
age 76

Henry Fred Mirl Grohman
"Half Gallon"
d. 8/13/05
of alcoholism
in front of Mission
age 46

An Agape Poem by Michael Evans

As one, I came into this world
No one to share the load,
Family so distant, To them I seem not to exist,
I am not bitter anymore by
The situation I find myself in
But, have I already passed
into the abyss called hell?
solitude and silence surround me,
I have seen this story before
I do not care for the ending
Once a time ago I could see
beautiful faces and lovely faces all around me
I look at the faces and wonder
I look into her eyes and I dream
as I search for a place with someone to call home
I guess I am not man enough to live alone,
So... God will provide my every need I am told
there is someone for me I know

not just silhouettes in the shadows
gone are the blue skies, the lakes, and the meadows
Solitude and silence surround me
my world is silent, though there is always noise,
is there no one that is speaking to me?
that seems to be my cry!
So, I came to God and he heard my plea
I hear voices all around me,
But I can hear only one
It is the voice of my Saviour
He has a work for me
gotta answer the call!
for me there is no choice
to me that I will do until the end
He has a plan for me
with Him I can win
Now serenity is near, there's peace within
turmoil and tribulation are a thing of the past!

although trials and offense will surely come
Keep me O' God
for in you I take refuge
I will praise the Lord
who counsels me
as the footprints in the sand
I know He is carrying me
my heart instructs me
my simple heart is a house for love
with rooms for those held dear
Is there a room for you my friend?
Yes! Yes! and you can stay for years!
I wonder and I dream as the days go by
I ask God for answers
my thoughts transcend time and space
for all I see when I close my eyes
is the longing... of the Day
I stand before Him and see His Face