

# HOMeward

Serving the Sacramento area homeless community

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April 1998

## Census 2000

U.S. bureau wants nation's homeless to account for themselves in next counting

By Joe Tinker  
Special to Homeward

United States Census Bureau folks are telling Sacramento's homeless community that it is time for them to stand up and be counted.

In a recent press conference at Loaves and Fishes, representatives stressed the importance of being counted and also announced a dry run for April which represents potential jobs.

"The census is a picture in time," said D.E. "Red" Banes, assistant manager of Field Operations for the census's Sacramento local office. Banes, who in her spare time is a Sacramento activist involved in issues ranging from public safety to street lighting, adds the event has been an American tradition since the time of Thomas Jefferson who instituted the count by including it in the U.S. Constitution.

When asked, "What does the census do for the areas us?", Banes said it is an important event for Sacramentans interested in social service issues and that getting an accurate count of the local

population—including the homeless community—is imperative in getting Sacramento its fair share of federal dollars. Banes explained that in the 1990 count, an estimated 4 million folks fell through the cracks, particularly homeless folks and women with children.

She adds that U.S. congressional boundaries are dictated by the count as is federal monies for roads and other federally subsidized projects and that Sacramento was one of three sites chosen across the nation for the test run.

Loaves and Fishes guests in attendance at the meeting expressed their concern that the census is nothing but an effort to invade the privacy of the homeless and other area residents. Census officials say there is no reason to worry.

"Big brother is not going to find you," said census official Pete McAllister. He explained that the census is strictly confidential and that only demographic information is released for 72 years after the tabulation. "Law enforcement can't access the records. The IRS



## New law illegalizes 'begging' on street

Panhandling on median strips and freeway ramps will soon be illegal in Sacramento, after a recent unanimous vote by the city council. Proponents say the issue is one of public safety, opponents say it is another law designed to criminalize poverty. For story on the issue, see page 7.

Photo/Christina Stock

has tried to subpoena the findings but was turned down."

Census officials are reaching out to the area's churches, cultural and ethnic community centers and neighborhoods to recruit people capable of getting the message out to the public. "We are visiting the Asian Resource Center, neighborhood centers and churches in an effort to get an accurate count," said Banes.

Banes stressed the potential for the area disenfranchised to obtain needed job skills on the

government's payroll.

"The census is a job incubator," said Banes. She said the jobs, which are both full and part-time, pay between \$9.50 and \$16 an hour. She said when the census is over, the temporary workers may qualify for federal unemployment benefits.

Census officials said the dry run, which will begin on April 18, is an opportunity for the government to allow the area's jobless to put something on their resume.

Other than the requirement that 17 and 18 year-olds have a GED certificate or high school diploma, no other particular skills are required. Folks interested in becoming involved in the hiring process, which includes a test and an FBI background check, may call the census bureau at (916) 498-6682.

Joe Tinker is a regular contributor to the Sacramento News and Review where this article first appeared.

## Shelter scheduled to close: Concerns over coming winter

The winter overflow shelter closed its doors March 31. As spring approaches, few are concerned about next year's overflow shelter, but now is the time to pay attention.

The Department of Human Assistance reported to the Board of Supervisors in December on the operations and use of the Winter Overflow Program. Concerns were raised about people migrating from other counties to Sacramento's overflow program, single women leaving the structure of permanent shelters to stay in the overflow shelter; and families choosing motel vouchers over the structure of permanent shelters.

The December decision not to open a winter overflow shelter was met with

public disapproval, bringing a quick response by the board to open the shelter. The confusion was based largely on an inaccurate count of the area's homeless and also philosophical differences among advocates and policy makers.

To better prepare for next winter, a series of philosophical questions was outlined, such as, "Is there a distinction between government assistance and charity?" and "What constitutes an emergency?"

The DHA will work with the Human Services Cabinet to develop answers to these questions to bring to the public in

Please see SHELTER, page 2

## Homeless workers benefit from tax program

By Stacie Clary

Many homeless individuals and families who have worked part of the year are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) but don't know that they have the right to receive this money. A national report states that of homeless adults surveyed, the average refund was \$132 and the average refund for families was \$1,286.

Any person who earned at least \$1 in 1997 but earned less than \$9,770 is eligible to receive up to \$332; earned

less than \$25,760 and have one qualifying child is eligible to receive up to \$2,210; and earned less than \$29,290 and have two or more qualifying children is eligible to receive up to \$3,656.

Types of income included are wages, salaries, tips, union strike benefits, long-term disability benefits received prior to retirement, and self-employed income. Unemployment, social security, welfare, and veterans

Please see PROGRAM, page 2

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## Citizen lacking humane access to restroom facilities

I know it's really none of my business, unless you do your business on my Monday night sidewalk sleeping spot. You may say you were just 'doing your duty'—but you'd only be half right—I had to clean it up. There was room to sleep without uncomfortable proximity to the offense. But even though my spot is out of public view during the evening hours, when morning comes I wake up in the view of over 100 skyscraper office windows. I could just imagine at least 50 daydreaming workers thinking to themselves, "I've seen that lady around town before. I never would have guessed...". So I cleaned it up for you (for me)—well, somebody's gotta do it. Better me than some city worker that may have a bad opinion of homeless people in the first place. Actually, best if you'd do it.

I think there is a simple solution to keeping me from being inconvenienced. Find some paper from a garbage can or

### Opinion

By Paula

on the ground (not from free news stands, please) on your way to a private spot. Lay it down on the spot. Don't miss. Wipe or whatever. Wrap up the paper. Dispose of properly\*.

Thank you. Sincerely, Paula  
What is properly? I really don't know. In a garbage can? You might get a nasty letter like this when found by someone looking in the can for something to eat. Disposal in clearly marked (see-through) baggies is a popular method among some of my rubber tramp friends. I've heard the argument "It can't harm the city dump-site much."

Bury it? How deeply? I heard the boy scouts make sure it's several feet deep. You probably don't have a shovel. On the surface? The dirt under some plants

might appreciate the nutrients but decomposition still takes time and may still panic some of our fellow concrete jungle natives. Close to the surface with a leaf mulch?

Until that "proper disposal" question is answered, use your own judgment, but please don't leave it on cement. Dirt contains gobs of microbiotic creatures that help breakdown all the various excretions a body produces, changing it into the chemical forms plant life depends on for growth. Cement offers nothing and needs human maintenance when something smelly is left on it.

Dirt handles urine excellently. Plants receive nitrogen from the stuff. If the only privacy you can find is covered with cement, fill a large paper cup (they're everywhere) and pour it on some dirt nearby. If there's no dirt around (sadly, that's possible), pour it down a storm drain or at least where the street

cleaners can get to it easily.

Of course, it would be awful nice if we all had access to restroom facilities. But even disposal by flushing might not be the most correct way. Do we know for sure? It seems funny we flush away our problems to some distant location for some stranger to handle for us, and eliminating a possibility of giving back to the earth what's left over after digesting the food we've taken from the earth. Composting toilets may be more earth friendly, but are costly to purchase. Or methane production?

Well, I just don't know the most proper method. I want to find out because I'm very concerned about how to better coexist with nature (that includes other people). I have more questions than answers but I suspect that being homeless is a perfect position for seeking those kinds of answers. Instead of just taking, we should give a ---.

YES! I want to see Homeward, the bi-monthly newspaper by homeless individuals, expand in Sacramento. Sign me up for a one year subscription, \$15.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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Mail to Homeward, 2125 19th St., suite 101, Sacramento, CA 95818.

## Eighty percent of prisoners in on drug charge

Eighty percent of the adults in U.S. prisons are locked up because of criminal activity linked to drug and alcohol abuse, reports Associated Press.

The report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse urged governments, particularly the states, to spend more money to help those 1.4 million inmates kick their habits before they are returned to society. In addition, the report said prisoners need other services such as job training, health care and religious instruction.

In a news conference, President Clinton's top drug advisor said the government has begun to

President Clinton's top drug advisor said the government has begun to spend more on treatment

spend more on treatment as it focused its efforts on keeping the nation's teens and children from turning to drugs.

The 281-page drugs report said the tripling of America's prison population, from 500,000 in 1980 to 1.7 million in 1996, was due mainly to criminal acts influenced by drugs and/or alcohol.

Charles Hynes, the district attorney for Brooklyn, N.Y., said a program allowing drug offenders to seek residential treatment instead of imprisonment had helped 325 people since it began in 1990. More than two-thirds are still employed and paying taxes instead of collecting welfare, he said.

Printed with permission from Real Change, Seattle, WA.

## Shelter

Continued from page 1

August 1998. The answers will guide the county's decisions regarding homeless programs, including the potential of a 1998 winter overflow program.

In an effort to get an accurate count of the area's homeless, an internet website is being designed to link shelters, providing an immediate bed count for referrals, and track client information. A questionnaire has been used in the meantime, to begin monitoring the use of overflow.

The county will also be working with nearby counties to develop regional solutions, based on DHA's data that individuals are coming from other counties that do not provide adequate shelter.

DHA reports that 40 percent of those utilizing the overflow shelter have been in Sacramento less than one week. Some homeless advocates have questioned such data, stating that the question was asked in a vague way at the overflow shelter. Some individuals may have taken the question of where s/he is from to mean

hometown as opposed to where s/he is from that week. In response, Loaves and Fishes staff conducted a survey of 671 homeless men and women at North C Street and the overflow shelter waiting area at Salvation Army. Of the 267 who stayed in an emergency shelter the previous night, 91 percent identified themselves as Sacramento residents, 78 percent stated they had been in Sacramento for more than one year, and only 5 percent said they had lived in Sacramento for less than one month. Of all the people interviewed, 82 percent had been living in Sacramento over one year and only 4 percent had been in Sacramento for less than one month.

DHA reports that Sacramento County spends three times more per capita on homeless programs than Yolo and San Joaquin Counties combined, and that the other nearby counties (Placer, El Dorado, Sutter, and Yuba) spend nothing on homeless programs. For the fiscal year 1997-98, the county spent close to \$11 million on homeless services, not counting cash aid and food stamps.

The listed philosophical questions revolve greatly around the concept of a small population of "core" homeless

individuals; individuals who remain chronically homeless and/or choose to remain homeless. DHA emphasizes that this population is estimated to be only 200-300 of the much larger homeless population, estimated by others to be 3,000-5,000 people. DHA believes that programs are in place for those who wish to get out of homelessness, and now the county needs to determine how to assist those in the "core" population. The questions come down to whether or not the county should provide shelter without expecting that individuals and families address and resolve the issues leading to their homelessness. DHA states that to not intervene means the individual, the family, and the community continue to deteriorate. Other advocates hold the position that people cannot change until they are ready to seek change. All agree that

more data is needed in order to answer these questions and to create a program for next winter.

Data collection and discussions among DHA, the Human Services Cabinet, advocates, and the general public will continue with a planned resolution by August.

## Program

Continued from page 1

benefits do not count.

A homeless person has the right to claim his or her EITC and use the address of a shelter or another facility to receive the refund and other tax documents. For those who receive welfare benefits, it is recommended to check with the welfare department to determine if the EITC will affect welfare benefits.

Tax forms are available at all libraries and post offices.

To receive assistance in filling out a tax form, go to the Central Library, 828 I Street any Saturday between 1:00-5:00 pm until April 11. For questions call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 (a free call) or the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty at 1-202-638-2535.



# Move-in day at cottages

## Home brings second thoughts, new dream

By Billeen Pruett

After a year on the streets, when the final OK came, I was surprised.

Though I had waited so long and worked so hard to get into Quinn Cottages, panic, fear and jubilation were all reactions I had to the news that I was to finally move in. I'd been wondering and visualizing what it would be like for so long. But then came the panic and fear. I was leaving what was familiar—even though very uncomfortable—for something unknown.

By coming in, I was being separated from everything that I held dear: My homeless friends, the only real family I have, and the support, love, and comfort they represent. I had hoped and expected that I'd find a lot of my street family waiting with open arms to give me some familiarity, but that wasn't the case. Except for a handful of people, I knew almost no one who was already there, beyond the big front gate. I felt scared and alone.

Then there were "the rules." Could I handle jumping through all those hoops?

The move in day was a shock to my system but also a delight. I knew that day, for sure, that I would be warm and safe when I slept. That day there was a battery of more papers to sign, more rules—they seemed to multiply as time went on—and the ceremony of picking the cottage that, for up to two years, was going to be mine. I sure hoped that I picked one I could stand to live in for those two years.

### Essay

By Billeen Pruett

The one I picked was the one with the biggest view of "outside," where I really longed to be.

I finally got all of the preliminaries done and opened the door of cottage number 102, with my bags in hand, containing all the necessities of life for me at that time. The floors were bare concrete and the place was small. The size of the cottage was truly something to fear. How did one live in such cramped quarters when I had been living in a circumstance where all the world was my home?

### I railed in my heart and soul, I can't do this...

I looked around me and tried to visualize where everything would go and how it was going to be, as in my mind I had done so many times before. Only this time was for real. I took a long, hard look at each room. Where was I going to put things?

The rooms were so small! Bare, concrete floors and four walls closing in. Panic time! It was getting dark outside and I felt like a caged animal. All I could think of was "I can't do this. I just want out of here!" Gone were the familiar



Billeen wants to turn her new cottage into a working art studio.

Photo/Christine Stock

camp buddies and evening cups of coffee shared over good conversation, the familiar feel of "belonging," being "part of." No coffee, no coffee pot, no friends to share this experience with me. I had myself a good cry, paced the floor, while gnashing my teeth. I railed in my heart and soul, I can't do this, I can't stand being caged and confined and I miss my friends and family. I cursed and talked to myself and cried some more. I missed my dogs, always my love and comfort in times like these. They were gone and so was part of me.

But I was used to losses by now. I stopped and took a good honest look around and prayed. The concrete floors didn't seem so bad when I considered the possibility of them being a plus instead of a minus. Slowly the idea came that it

would be a big advantage to have those kind of floors. Then came my vision of having my little cottage as a working studio for arts and fine crafts. A vision and dream were born then. I wanted to create a haven and a place of serenity and peace in which to write, create, and share for myself and others. This would be a chance to do something I had never been able to do before. After a long time I made myself a comfortable and more familiar bed on the floor and slept. Sleeping in a bed was too uncomfortable and unfamiliar at the time.

Alone, totally alone and lonesome for my camp family. I was grateful, very grateful. For the first time in a long time I was really safe and warm, but thoroughly worn out. When I was trying

Please see COTTAGE, page 4

## Busy month for homeless artists

It's been a busy month for the Homeless Artisans; a lot of things are off the ground and working.

There is a month long art show at the Swanks Dinner House in Rocklin. At this writing the date hasn't been set but according to Diane Bartlett Promotions it will be the last two weeks of April and the first two weeks of May. This show will also have three dimensional art. 'Razor' will have his wood carvings; Art Clay will have raku lustres and metal sculpture. There may even be some new artists at this show.

### Artists' update

By Art Clay

For all artists who wish to show their work in Rocklin, please bring your work to the Loaves and Fishes Library; Birte will see that I get it. Be sure it's ready to display and have your name and price on it if you wish to sell it, "put not for sale" if you want to keep it. If you need help getting it ready, or for more information, contact Art Clay or

leave a message at 492-1115.

'Razor' is still giving his wood carving classes in the library at Loaves and Fishes every Monday through Thursday mornings until 10:00AM. The pottery studio is open for those who want to work in clay. Everything is free to the homeless and transitional. There are day and night openings. Contact Art at 492-1115 to reserve a spot or catch him in Friendship Park around lunch time.

Caution; Inspiration can bring on perspiration. Keep on working, Art Clay

### Joining SHA

Annual Membership dues:  
Individuals, \$35;  
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non-profit, \$50;  
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101, Sacramento, CA 95818  
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## Welcome to Homeward: Please feel free to make a contribution

'Homeward' is a publication of the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee (SHOC), which is a part of the Sacramento Housing Alliance.

Homeward's mission is to publish a newspaper for the homeless so that communication and concerns of and about the homeless are presented in a way that increases public awareness through education, involvement, and encouragement of our

community about this segment of our population. It hopes to alleviate miscommunication by providing a dialogue between disparate communities. It also serves as a creative outlet for homeless people.

Our committee meets at 10 a.m. Mondays and Wednesdays at Loaves and Fishes. We welcome any participation or contributions.

Articles, poems and other writing can be submitted to the Sacramento Housing Alliance or given to Birte in the library

at Loaves and Fishes.

We would like to thank the Vanguard Foundation for the grant that funds the committee.

Introductory subscriptions to Homeward are available with a \$10 contribution. A one-year subscription is offered with a \$50 annual membership to the Sacramento Housing Alliance. Make checks out to SHA.

All correspondence can be sent to Homeward, 2125 19th St., Suite 101, Sacramento, CA 95818.

For information call 442-1198.





# Stand up and be counted: Homeless votes do matter

With some very interesting propositions coming up for our very attentive concern, here we are staring down the barrel of another national and local election.

But before we start filling our heads with all of the information about the pros and cons of the election, let us give some thought to why 'Star People' should exercise this very important franchise. In other words, Why do we vote?

Voting is one of the few things the homeless have left. We can still decide to use our power of representation.

Many of us homeless people feel like they are living the life of the

## Essay

By Norman Daringer

disenfranchised.

"What is the use of voting?" we ask, "While we seem to be at the bottom of a deep hole."

Well even being at the bottom of a deep hole has its good aspects, if you look up. Then it is more like looking through a tunnel with light at the end. We have a poverty of expectation, until we remember the power and privilege of the vote, and look up.

It gives you a special feeling of worth and direction and a means for change. No other qualified citizen has a legal right to a more powerful vote than you do.

It gives you a special feeling of worth and direction and a means for change. No other qualified citizen has a legal right to a more powerful vote than you do.

The most affluent millionaire's vote cannot legally gain any more influence exercising his franchise than you can yours. Yes his excessive largess (contributions, donations, or out and out monetary bribery) may allow him to influence and sway weak legislators or the easily lead minions of power. But that is illegal and will often be rectified by the honest vote of free responsible citizens.

The honest vote of a concerned citizen is one of the most powerful institutions in the world. Citizens of a democracy, rich or not, who exercise their voting privilege possess one of the most priceless treasures of the modern world. If on the eve of election day you doubt that this priceless gift is worth your time, please think of the more than eight hundred million Chinese who cannot own a personal fire arm, take a completely free breath, or select a personal style of government.

Patrick Henry is one of our most verbal

patriots, who uttered one of the most powerful statements against the tyranny of King George and led the colonists to thirst for liberty, and hunger for the right of representation in government. He said, "If this be treason let me make the most of it then give me liberty or give me death."

Death is exactly what was given to the Chinese students who defied their authoritarian government at Tentement square a few years ago. The Chinese tanks showed no mercy to their citizens who had the thirst for a tiny bit of the franchise we often take for granted and often waste by not even attempting to exercise it.

There are among us many who don't have the conventional pot or the window to throw it out of, but who exercise one of the most powerful and priceless institutions in the world: the vote.

How can anyone of us—homeless, and disenfranchised in most everything else—split in the face of Patrick Henry and all the other valiant citizens who fought and died for the privilege of the vote.

For I who vote, am very much akin to those patriots, as I continue the tradition of voting in defense of my personal liberty.

## Voter registration: The facts

- Homeless people are eligible to vote. To register, fill out a voter registration card. There are many options for those who do not have a permanent address.

- General delivery or a post office box is considered a legal address and can be used for voter registration. Required with this mailing address is a physical address, which may be a shelter, camp, or wherever you spend the majority of your nights. It can be described by using landmarks such as cross streets, bridges, or river banks.

- Shelters providing mail service, such as Francis House, Loaves and Fishes, Maryhouse, Union Gospel Mission, or Volunteers of America are also legal addresses for voter registration. Also necessary is a

physical address (wherever you spend the night) if your mail service is not provided by an overnight shelter.

- The reason for this is to localize you into a precinct so that you are voting on the issues important to the area in which you live.

- If you are registered to vote in another state, county, or voting precinct, you can still vote by absentee ballot.

- The deadline for registration is 30 days before the election. The last date for registering for the upcoming election is May 4.

- All registered voters will receive voting information at their mailing address.

# SHOC update: A look at activities — past and upcoming

The Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee (SHOC) has been busy in its continuous work to raise awareness of the needs of the homeless community.

- On Jan. 17, SHOC sponsored its Symposium on Homelessness. The symposium was held at the Loaves and Fishes Guest House as five members of SHOC gave speeches to an audience of approximately 35. Topics covered were human rights, anti-camping laws, and the

special survival needs of homeless women. Symposium organizer, Jimmy Baca, and SHOC members have been working with Amnesty International and the El Dorado County Round Table on Human Rights to begin documenting cases of human rights violations. Baca believes that human rights education will help homeless people better protect themselves. The January symposium was the first in a series of three events, and was open to homeless individuals. Upcoming events



will be open to all who want to attend.

- SHOC will sponsor the second Symposium on

Homelessness on April 21 at 9 a.m. in Friendship Park.

- The recent forum on police abuse, hosted by the Sacramento Branch of the NAACP, was attended by SHOC. Testimonies of personal experiences with police misconduct were given, as well as an appeal for a citizens' review committee. SHOC supports efforts toward a citizens' review committee as a means of monitoring cases of police misconduct, and continues to work with local

organizations to strengthen these efforts.

- A voter registration drive will be held in mid-April. SHOC president, Eddie Harris and other members of SHOC will circulate voter registration forms in Friendship Park. All are encouraged to register so that they may participate in the upcoming June election.

Everyone is invited to attend SHOC meetings, which are held Monday mornings at 10 a.m. in Friendship Park.

## Cottages

Continued from page 3

to sleep outside. I never got enough rest. As the weeks went on, I talked to others who were making the transition from outside to in. I found there is a period of adjustment that takes about a month or more to get through. Typical things include trouble sleeping, depression, and loneliness. There is a kind of "survivors guilt," in the

knowledge that your brothers and sisters are out there still suffering. You feel guilty somehow.

The excitement and happiness of having a place to set up and decorate is great, but many of us soon realize there isn't money for that. That fact is very frustrating, but also a challenge in ingenuity. Fortunately, most street people are very good at improvising and very ingenious at inventing what they need.

Practical things are still a challenge. One of them is how to shop when you

have a 2.5 cu.ft. refrigerator. With mutual problems like refrigerator size, you find others to talk to who are going through the same thing. The support helps. There is a kind of "we're all in this together" feeling.

I never want to forget where I came from and thank God for the experience of being homeless that taught me so many things I consider real and worthwhile. Living simple is being rich, not how big your house is, or how much money you have. I guess I am "rich in friends," and

that is the best kind of rich there is.

I would like to see the arts and various quality crafts brought to the homeless and those in transition. A creative outlet helps to relieve the pain of loneliness and depression. It is very healing to develop any creative skill, as it feeds the soul.

Billean Pruett, a.k.a. "Sunshine," is a freelance writer and a member of the Homeless Artisans.



# Encouraging words from one who was once homeless

**O**n an August summer day in 1996 I was red with rage. Little did I know that anger would create for me one of the greatest experiences in the world.

I had just read a series of Letters To The Editor to a local newspaper on the subject of the Prostraint Chair, a device used by the Sacramento County Sheriff to control unruly jail inmates. The anger led me to write an essay about my perceived "facts of life" on the topic of the nation's penal concepts.

After much anguish—there is no such thing as instant gratification—the piece was accepted by an editor of the Sacramento News & Review where it ran as Attitude Adjustment on Sept. 26, 1996.

From there came more essays, a

## Essay

By Joe Tinker

hundred of news stories and eventually, a full time job with my byline in print weekly for quite some time. While I have since left the paper as a staff writer, I remain a regular contributor with my byline appearing in three or four times a month.

I tell you this because during much of this time, from mid-April 1996 to February 1997, I was homeless—living out of my car and fending for myself. In fact, the second essay I wrote was 'The High Cost Of Homelessness' (SN&R, Oct. 17, 1996), where I depicted my personal experiences, costs and means of survival on the streets.

I am not saying that everyone can duplicate my experiences... What I am saying is that there is always hope for the future.

I am not saying that everyone can duplicate my experiences. In fact, writing for cash is a very difficult task to accomplish. What I am saying is that there is always hope for the future. If one

takes that hope and adds to it patience, perseverance and strength of character, then all is possible.

A sure poison to the mix is lack of esteem. Too often people tend to believe they are what society pigeonholes them as. This problem is then magnified by the day-to-day struggles that one must undergo to gain what others take for granted, the raw essentials of human life: housing, food and peace of mind.

While parts of society appear cruel and callous, other parts try hard to help by filling your immediate needs and concerns. But only you can keep the hope.

So remember this: when you reach the end of your rope, you need to tie a knot and hold on, because no one else can tie the knot for you.

## Notes and news from the nation's homeless

From the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA) News Service

Survival News, Winter 1998 Vol. 12 No. 1

Federal Legislation Would Provide Low-Income Child Care Grants calling campus-based child care "the key to a higher education and the American dream" for low-income students who are parents. U.S. Senator Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine) joined Senator Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) in introducing legislation to provide grants to colleges to establish campus-based child care programs.

The Child Care Access Means Parents in School Act (called the CAMPUS Act) amends Title IV of the Higher Education Act to help provide campus-based child care to low-income parents seeking a college degree. The legislation authorizes three-year grants to institutions of higher education to support, or help establish, a campus-based child care program serving the needs of low-income student parents.

### Handsnet: States to vie for welfare-to-work bonus money

Competing for \$1 billion in bonus money, states will be judged by how many welfare recipients find and keep jobs over the next five years.

The formula, being sent to state governments this week, gives no weight to states that see caseloads drop but can't prove that the people are finding work.

The guidelines will judge

Competing for \$1 billion in bonus money, states will be judged by how many welfare recipients find and keep jobs over the next five years.

success as states implement their own welfare programs. While Clinton and the governors often boast about declining caseloads—they have dropped 31 percent since their peak in 1994—it is less clear where these former recipients are landing or if they are moving out of poverty.

The high-performance bonuses offer \$200 million a year for five years to the 10 states that have the most success.

States will be judged on the number of recipients who get jobs that year, their success in the workforce, and the increase in their incomes. Also considered is how much states improved over the previous year in the categories.

### San Francisco may allow homeless to live in cars

The head of the San Francisco Police Commission agreed recently to meet with homeless



advocates to consider a proposal under which San Francisco would be the first city in the nation to allow people to legally live in their vehicles.

Commission President Pat Norman cautioned that she was acting on her own and would not bring the matter back before the panel until she meets with officials from the city attorney's office and Police Department to determine what laws would have been aggressively towing away their makeshift homes, taking everything they own.

Norman said the proposal to set up a place where people could legally sleep in vehicles has the backing of Terrence Hill, Mayor Willie Brown's coordinator on homelessness.

Brown has yet to speak publicly about the proposal, and his office has referred all

questions to Hill, who has said the mayor has given him permission to explore the possibility.

### Food stamp debit cards ease shame

Shame and disgust are often experienced at the checkout line for someone paying with food stamps. Soon, people on public assistance will not be so conspicuous. Under the 1996 federal welfare-reform law, states will not be required to replace the cumbersome, paper-laden food-stamp programs with automated systems that give recipients access to their benefits with the whisk of a card.

New Jersey began distributing food stamp benefits electronically two years ago in a

pilot program. Fifteen other states are also using cards on a limited basis.

Under welfare reform, all 50 states must at least have begun an electronic benefits program by 2002. In New Jersey and Pennsylvania, welfare and food stamp benefits are wired to accounts established for each recipient. Recipients can use the cards to get cash welfare benefits as well as to pay for food. They can be used at ATMs almost anywhere in the country to get cash, and at supermarkets throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

State officials in Pennsylvania and New Jersey say they plan to install machines that read the cards in a wide variety of locations, including large and

Please see NEWS, page 7

Poetry

Come and Sit By Me  
anonymous

Come and sit by me, so I can  
see you smile.

Come and sit by me, ease  
loneliness for awhile.  
Outside looks old and gray,  
Inside, love shines each day.  
You need not do for me.  
Have sensitivity.  
Your caring, healing touch,  
Time given, mean so much.

Come and sit by me so I can  
feel your smile.

Come and sit by me so we can  
talk awhile.  
If you have nothing to say,  
I'll share a happier day.  
When I was a vital me,  
With friends and family,  
My functions still intact,  
Before time took them back.

Come and sit by me so we can  
share a smile.

Come and sit by me and listen  
for awhile.



Cartoon/Lee Parks

VIOLINS ACROSS THE SKY

By Diana J.

She looked back into her  
childhood:  
Whiskey-filled baby bottles  
Candy colored pills  
Pages torn from forbidden  
books  
Shots ringing in the chilled  
air  
Terror kicking through walls  
Behind the cold stormy night.

To save her life  
She ran,  
She ran into red flashing  
lights  
Down dead end streets  
With a needle deep in her  
veins

That rushed  
Rushed  
Rushed bruised blood  
Through her swollen belly.

She hid her shame  
Of purple black eyes  
Raw and razor edged  
As sirens  
Screeching sirens  
Dragged her towards  
Steel locked padded doors.

Ugly darkness  
Fear, treatment for shock  
Screaming madness  
Tears flowing into mud  
puddles  
Horrible stench  
Walking comatose  
Shivering stiff

Morbid zombie,  
Ah, the Thorazine  
Just kicked in.

Now, the silver haired  
Jagged tooth  
Lonely old woman  
Wanders aimlessly  
On the streets  
Diving through dumpsters  
Dodging bullets  
And muggers too,  
Chasing midnight stars  
In tangled cobwebs  
On cold cardboard alleys  
Until once again  
And again  
And again,  
She peeps quietly  
Through the hole  
In the steel locked padded  
door.

Published in Mosaic Journey,  
1994, an anthology from the  
Adult Education Program at  
Eskaton American River Manor,  
Ruth-Marie Chambers,  
Educator

LOVE

Jamal L.

The knight courageous dark  
pungent  
urban eyes, night of wonder,  
water  
D  
R  
I

P  
P  
I  
N  
G

cosmic battle  
with lucid thoughts  
imprisoning me into  
agonizing darkness  
that drains and suffocates  
the life from my soul.

L  
O  
V  
E

I will never  
give up on you.  
You tell me you love me,  
Then why,  
do you hurt me?  
Your claws rip through my  
heart  
caressing my emptiness.  
Beautiful seductress,  
we are cursed and bound,  
I walk away alone,  
without you.

Jamal is a student in the  
Adult Education Program at  
Eskaton.

AWAKE

Jamal L.

Ocean dreams urban nights  
cold weather changes tear  
freedom ringing in my ears

I woke up with a splitting  
headache  
this morning I got soaked  
with love and your tired arms

You:  
must come back to me

Me:  
I must be forced to wallow  
in self-pity

I see no resolution

I see no power

I see you no more.

MORNING FLAME  
Dana B.

Love spreads its wings  
across the flames of passion  
and untamed desire.

We cuddle  
in the early morning glow  
feeling breathless  
flushed, woven in  
each other's arms.

Then,  
we blow warmth  
through the soft touch  
of sacred scented candles.

Published in Mosaic Journey,  
1994, an anthology from the  
Adult Education Program at  
Eskaton American River Manor,  
Ruth-Marie Chambers,  
Educator

The members of the  
Sacramento Homeless  
Organizing Committee  
would like to thank the  
following individuals and  
companies for their  
generous support in 1997.  
Without the assistance  
from our supporters, our  
efforts to provide a voice for  
homeless individuals would  
not be as successful.

- all Homeward subscribers
- Anonymous
- Tim Brown
- Dana Grimes
- Francis House
- Rachel Iskow
- Ron Javor
- Loaves and Fishes
- Traci Perry
- Carmela Rudy
- Rural California Housing  
Corporation
- Shasta Hotel
- TC Printing
- University Art
- Vanguard Public  
Foundation
- Rick Watson
- Rick Sterner
- Jim Cotter
- Sacramento Regional  
Foundation



# City council votes to reduce panhandling

Panhandling on median strips and freeway ramps will soon be illegal in Sacramento, after a recent City Council vote. The issue is one of public safety for both motorists and panhandlers, say council members.

All council members voted in favor of the ordinance, with the exception of Lauren Hammond, who abstained. They voted after hearing public testimony, including several homeless people who spoke in opposition, pointing out that no statistics were presented of accident reports caused by panhandling, and also questioning the cost of enforcement to taxpayers.

"This is just a matter of common sense," said Steve Cohn, who originated the legislation. Several council members reported calls from constituents complaining of near accidents, some of whom feel threatened at the approach of a solicitor, causing them to lock car doors and windows.

The ordinance will not prohibit solicitation at other locations, such as ATM's, and sidewalks. Sacramento attorneys were careful to avoid stricter limitations which have been found unconstitutional in other California cities.

Robbie Waters, said, however, that will pursue stricter legislation against panhandling in Sacramento. Several council members were concerned that offenders would ignore repeated fines. "I don't think these people would be out there soliciting money if they had money," said Waters. He was in favor of making the first citing a misdemeanor, bringing quicker jail time.

As Sacramento recent efforts are focused on getting people off the streets, discussions include an impending misdemeanor jail, and funneling people into transitional programs. "This is about steering people towards appropriate behavior," said Councilwoman Heather Fargo, speaking of the city's developing policy of "tough love" on homeless, and others who seek help. "If you're not going to help yourself, and you're going to be aggressive and harm other people, then frankly, you're not welcome here."

Darryl Steinberg upheld the ordinance as a safety issue, comparing it to illegal jaywalking. "This is not to punish," said Steinberg, "but to keep people from putting themselves and others in danger." Steinberg is known for his record against "get tough" measures, saying they don't solve real problems.

Some concern was raised that this was an issue about the way panhandlers make Sacramento look. Steinberg said for him, it was not an image issue, expressing his disagreement with creating public policy based on the way people look. Fargo, however, admitted that safety was not the city's only concern. "It's also an image problem," said Fargo, "and I don't think we should be shy about saying that."

Those against the ordinance expressed that laws against camping, shopping carts, and panhandling, along with past legal actions making it difficult for agencies to provide services, are all used to further criminalize poverty. Some



Pat Thomas panhandles at the end of the month to supplement her fixed income.

called for a ban on cellular car phones on city roads to balance the issue, and the city council agreed to investigate the possibility. Barriers to protect panhandlers were also suggested as a possible cheaper solution.

Testimony showed diverse feelings on begging in Sacramento, with one saying, "begging multiplies grace, giving people the opportunity to participate in acts of kindness."

Another, speaking in defense of threatened business patrons, said, "People should not have to bury their face in a book to avoid making eye contact with a panhandler."

Violation of the ordinance will be classified as an infraction, which will mean in most cases a fine, "probably under \$50," said Lt. Michael McCarthy. For people who don't have a lot of money, it will mean community service and if they ignore tickets and do not appear in court, will become a misdemeanor. Four tickets within one year will become a misdemeanor, and mean possible jail time. The ordinance will take effect in approximately 30 days, giving police and social service agencies an opportunity to let median panhandlers know they will have to find a new avenue to survival.

## CLASSIFIEDS

Submit your classified to the Housing Alliance or put in the black and white can in the Loaves and Fishes Library.

One ad free to private parties and non-profit organizations per issue. Try to keep it under 25 words.

Loaves & Fishes Retail Store, 1225 N. B Street, open 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday thru Saturday. Donations of unwanted items appreciated.

• WANTED: Harm Reduction Services, HRS, is looking for the women who took the HIV test at Maryhouse in July. Please come back for your results. Some of you asked HRS to find specific services and we now have more information for you. YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE. Please call HRS at 456-4849 Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. or else come in to the office. Thank You. Dee Cullen.

• Give hope and happiness. Give a job — such as moving, yardwork — to a homeless worker. Call Loaves and Fishes job phone: 446-9316 Ask for Marie or Margaret Mary, or mail to: Loaves and Fishes, Jobs for Homeless, P.O. Box 2161, Sacramento, 95812.

Searching for whereabouts of David B. Burton. Please call Stacy 369-5348, 697-9391 (pager). Last saw him Monday before Easter. I love him and miss him.

Wanted: Anyone interested in wood sculpture class. See Razor in the Loaves & Fishes Library 8 a.m. to noon.

## News

Continued from page 5

small stores.

### Feds open food banks in public housing

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are working with local governments by opening one-stop food sites in public housing projects. According to the UPI, tens of thousands of the nation's poorest urban residents are going to get easier access to food and health services under a pilot project that has been launched in Detroit, Boston and several other cities. The facilities will offer food stamps, nutrition education, food bank services, life-skills training and cooking classes. Low-income mothers will be able to pick up cheese, juice and other foods through the Women, Infants and Children program. Similar programs are

being announced in Dallas, Seattle, Charleston, Jefferson City, and Oakland.

### Increase in low income housing tax credit

The Enterprise Foundation joined vice-president Al Gore and other community development organizations recently to announce the Clinton Administration's support of a 40 percent increase in the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. Enterprise, referred to as the "nation's leading community development organization," reportedly leads the nation in providing "equity financing of affordable housing," using the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. The proposal will increase the credit from \$1.24 per capita to \$1.75 per capita, making this the first increase since the program's creation in 1987. It is estimated that the new equity investments created by the tax credit increase will support the development of up to 30,000 new low-cost homes per year.