

The Spare Changer

Our mission is simple: To inform the uninformed, to entertain, and most importantly to foster pride and self-respect within and among the unsheltered homeless in Davis and Greater Yolo County. We do this by proffering something to you, our valued reader. Your donation, in this time of increased budget cuts to social services, narrows the gap between basic needs you and I may take for granted, but which remain unmet by social service agency funding and the truly courageous efforts of the sheltered and un-sheltered poor. “It is better to give than to receive,” says The Bible. We say it is even better to give something back. Read ‘The Spange’ and Enjoy!

New Non-Profit, UCD Interns Aid Homeless Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter A Reality

Doing My Part Two

By Lawson
Publisher, Editor-in-Chief

Thank you for taking the time and interest in Davis community efforts to alleviate and one day eradicate homelessness in Our Little City. This is a journey I would like to see undertaken everywhere, and the little part I can play as publisher of this “conduit between the haves and have-nots” begins with promoting awareness of the problems, origins, developments and most importantly, what has been

successful: community involvement, resolve, and **desire on the part of the sheltered and unsheltered poor to do something for ourselves.** Davis Community Meals, Grace-in-Action the Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter of Davis, while working independently, function together de facto by offering what now has become a greater opportunity for food, clothing and housing... I believe the last two pieces of the puzzle, aside from the continuing need for compassionate and dedicated members of the UC Davis Student Community as activists and our Faith Communities as providers... of winter sheltering, is a more rapid development of “sliding scale” dwellings, and a 24 hour drop in center as a back-up Plan B.

Before I hit the lottery, truly *affordable* housing at Caesar Chavez Plaza, where I like to say I live in luxurious poverty Do I ever remember the *bad* old good days?! When I wasn't living out of a tent, I was “camping” in The Cave, along the tracks, and half a dozen more secret locations where I was sure to be alone for security sake. I'd get up at the crack of dawn, hang out at Jack-in-the-Box until the DCM Resource Center opened at 8am where I'd shower, eat what was donated, watched TV, videos and surfed the Web while the laundry was in wash. I learned Homeless The Hardway, and so to minimize theft, I just carried a backpack containing my laptop, a clean change of clothing, a few toiletries and a couple of cans of emergency food. Much more

and I'd just lose it. **Had I a locker to safely keep my things, I can only imagine the progress towards return to mainstream society** I could have made. I lost many things to theft and abandonment along the way nevertheless, not the least important of which was a sense of identity and a sense of having something that was my own; a little place to *call* my own. It is subtle but inescapable, this sense of identity loss, as a natural and logical consequence of having no place to call my own. Of having no privacy. (Get your hands on a copy of January's issue!)

Lockers for the Homeless on church properties and a "no frills" 24 hour "drop in center" is something we can work towards in the *short* term. We are a relatively small city, with a progressive City Council and an arguably affluent resident population as well as host to a University of some 37 thousand students with the largest freshman class ever. With a count of approximately 130 "homeless" (either in shelters and transition homes or literally on the streets, I think it unconscionable there are any at all: that is not very many people compared to the number of "mainstreamers." **And while my last bout of homelessness ended in December of last year and I have far less need**

for these "services in kind" as in past years, my heart still goes out to those not yet fortunate to find affordable housing and who still need "a place to be." This I find particularly heart wrenching, considering DCM's 10 bed winter shelter will be closing at month's end, and the Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter, in it's first (and quite successful first year) ended February 23. What this means of course, is that the 20 to 30 or more guests who could not or chose not to prepare for surviving outdoors and all that that entails are again un-sheltered. **True, the weather for much of the next 6 months or so will be California comfortable for the homeless, and showers, food, and places to be during some hours of the week remain, but so does the need to store the belongings of the un-sheltered poor.** But this begs the question: What can be done about this and why has it not been done? Five words: **Not In My Back Yard.**

While security for personal belongings is of course the primary need and goal, I mentioned privacy and a sense of having "something to call our own" as being just as important. But there is yet another benefit: reduction in the "appearance" of homelessness as an eyesore in the community, and reduction of our needs for

donations of services in kind like clothing, due to homeless on homeless theft, abandonment, and ruination. **Lockers for the Homeless will reduce the burden on the community to supply and re-supply.** Pastor Tobin and Associate Pastor for Mission and Outreach Bill Habict, and the administration of Davis Community Church, at the urging of the (volunteer member) Interfaith Homeless Task Force, realized all of this over a year ago and, in fact secured volunteers for the construction of some 25 adequately-sized lockers on DCC property, and although not a part of Grace House, the shed containing them rests less than 20 yards behind it. **That's right, they have already been built, and have been all but ready for use since August of last year.**

So what's the holdup? I'll tell you what the hold up is: DCC is under opposition pressure from an influential businessman "representing his (business) tenants," and a long-time resident who voiced ire not so much at a Lockers for the Homeless program per se, but that it be located "...500 feet from my doorstep," and that the neighboring families were not asked about it. We (IHTF and representatives from Pastor Tobin's Church and Society Committee) held an

open meeting late last Fall to hear their concerns and it became clear they did not"... appreciate the opening of Grace House (on church property), and lockers will present another 'homeless central' addition to a neighborhood corner that provides bag lunches, STEAC groceries, STEAC clothing and DCM's Cold Weather Shelter..."DCM houses up to 10 guests each night through the winter, hardly sufficient as you will see from the Interview With Pastor Bill, co-chair of our Interfaith Rotational Winter Shelter (irwsd.org), later in this issue. **This meeting went on and on for more than two hours with the opposition's position repeated over and over again.** It was particularly difficult for me personally, emotionally, not only because I understood their position in terms of potential quality of life issues manifested by loud and drunken homeless "crashing" on the property over the years and the long term animosity between this one family and some of the sleepers in The Cave, but also because the wife of this man is a giving, compassionate member of the community who volunteers one place or another 3 times a week and is a long supporter of this publication as well... **In the final analysis, DCC decided it wanted to "... remain on good terms with its neighbors and has delayed if not suspended its Lockers for the Homeless Project" pending resolution of security concerns and the closing of DCM's Cold**

Weather Shelter" across the street from the locker site and next to STEAC. This meeting was difficult for me philosophically as well: when the founders of this great country left England, it was primarily for religious freedom and the tyranny of King James, and separation of church and state, hallmark of American government, **and here we have a neighbor or two demanding Davis Community Church all but ask permission to reach out to the less fortunate on its own property. What up with that?!**

IRWS:Year One

An Interview with Pastor Bill

"I think the shelter was a huge success. From my view the shelter had three main goals: first one was to provide emergency shelter. The second goal was to involve MORE people in the issue of homelessness. And I think we are successful in that having probably over 300 people volunteering. And the third goal is to have volunteers realize there is no one "typical" homeless person. **By that I mean, at least from the faith perspective, we are part of all Gods creation. We all deserve to be honored and respected and valued. The guests at the rotating shelter were respectful, always offering to help, and**

once we got to know each person, willing to share their story. Each person, each story was different. Some had college degrees, some didn't graduate high school. Many people actually had jobs and were trying to save up money for a place of their own. Getting your foot in the door isn't always as easy as it seems.

A typical evening began at intake which was at the Friends Meeting

House where guests were greeted, behavior assessed, and general information taken. Guests were then transported by volunteers of various congregations, to the host site for one week stays. One of the greatest gifts of congregations hosting was the amazing foods prepared on site. Volunteers and guests talked with one another, played games and watched movies until 10 o'clock lights out. Mats and sleeping bags were purchased by a group from St. James and donated for use at the shelter sites. There were varying levels of volunteer participation. Some congregations were able to provide space. Others were able to supplement volunteers while others were able to provide transportation. No matter how large or small a congregation may be, a means to participate was always found and appreciated.

The rotating shelter would never have been possible were it not for the immense dedication of UCD

student interns and Rita Lundin from the Human & Community Development Department who set up the internships. These students brought immense gifts, knowledge and leadership. These stipend internships (suggested by Lawson) turned out to be one of our greatest assets. **We look forward to new interns next season. Students can find out more by contacting my co chair Nfookune@ irwsd.org or visiting our website at irwsd.org.”**

Editor’s Note:

The Spare Changer wishes to thank Pastor Bill, Terry Toy and the rest of the IRWS Core Team for providing us with some of the responses to its end of the year questionnaire you see below. This is the raw data. I hope it inspires you to help us prepare for next season!

IRWS EVALUATION FORMS—VOLUNTEERS 2007-2008

18 electronic submissions

Congregation

DUMC – 8
DCC – 2

UCC – 2
LCI – 3
LDS - Davis 2nd Ward
Friends – 1
FBC- 1

Did any other congregation or outside group assist you?

Yes 10 (3 LCI) (1 LDS
Davis 1st and Elmwood Wards)
(UC Davis Students)
No 8
No Response 9

Rate Your Volunteers’ Experience:

Excellent 25
Good 9
Average 1
Poor 0

Is there anything the IRWS could do to make your job easier?

Documentation of duties
Have box with folders and forms at intake—separate from binders
Have the paperwork easier to find and carry
A bigger (though heavier) lock box for meds and other items (or have 2 boxes)
Make sure blank forms in the binder don’t run out
We need 3 or 4 people for intake to have a smooth process. Some nights we only had 2
Maybe have a task list to complete. Sometimes you wanted to help, but maybe didn’t know what to do or what needed to get done
Better transportation from Intake to churches
Would it be too much to ask for a website where the

designated sleep place would be for all to know?
Have extra forms available
Guests use a lot of sugar
IRWS provided excellent training and help throughout the period.
More overall organization.
Someone on site (knows the church) having more information about needs of guests. The "employees" were somewhat clueless as to what to do...and the volunteers were looking to "them" for guidance.
jobeasier = Many guests want to be helpful. Staff can facilitate this.
jobeasier = I worked mostly as an evening supervisor and overnight volunteer. It was quite straight forward most nights. However, it looked as though the volunteer co-ordination jobs were pretty big. Either we could split those duties up further, or hire someone to cover certain aspects.
jobeasier = No. I brought food for dinner and enjoyed my conversations with the guests.
jobeasier = I feel that you should follow the same model that was used
jobeasier = I was with the sleep over portion, most of the folks were already sleeping. Didn't quite know how to mingle the next morning as we were preparing to leave and clean up.
jobeasier = Give an accurate estimate of the time it would take to do the driving in the morning. We were told 15 minutes. It never took less than an hour for me and some mornings took almost 2 hours.
jobeasier = I think it went very well.
job
easier = We need to tighten up record keeping. We need to make sure there are at least 3 volunteers at intake at all times. We need to do better training on nonviolent communication and conflict resolution
jobeasier = I don't know if we really had any difficulties with anything. I was one of the

volunteers that was present the entire week
 jobeasier = Yes, clearer communication. We were told, for example, that IRWS would provide two paid staff for overnight, and we were never told in advance that this policy had been changed
 jobeasier = We provided volunteers for the Methodist Church
 They provided tremendous assistance in following through with volunteers assignment sheets, etc. Excellent cooperation

Were there any difficulties or concerns about the IRWS staff?

No- maybe nametags would help

No- intake/transportation controls were reassuring
 Very helpful and good organization...supportive

No-they were great
 IRWS staff were very knowledgeable and provided excellent help to our volunteers. Since this year was our first experience it was very helpful to have an IRWS staff person present each night. Possibly next winter we could get by without having the need for IRWS staff present each night.

IRWSconcerns = Some of the guests informed me that the younger staff (overnight) had allowed them to go out to purchase alcohol at one of the other church sites that was closer to an AM/PM store. Not a good idea. :(Stonger boundaries enforced by paid staff.

IRWSconcerns = Bossy, arbitrary rules. Clear structure is very helpful.

IRWSconcerns = No. On the whole, folks were reasonable about showing up when they said they would, and were engaged while they were there.

IRWSconcerns = Natasha was a great help.

IRWSconcerns = I have no idea who the staff were but one morning the guy handing out pills had me take the lock boxes to the Friends Fellowship hall - it turned out no-one was there to drop it off to.

IRWSconcerns = Intake staff need to have a specific skill set. This first year there were some people who were challenged beyond their capability. I hope I can do a different job next year and have people who are more skilled at dealing with guests do that. I think I could do a good job of coordinating volunteers and preparing the weekly Excel schedule.

IRWSconcerns = No. Natacha, Mary Anne, and Terry were most helpful, and cheerfully so.

Were there any difficulties for concerns about guests?

Yes, but they were dealt with as they arose

It will be good to have volunteers at check-in who are MD's or nurses, etc.... someone who would be able to recognize possible medical problems. Ex- we had a head injury come in one night and 1 case of very severe DTs

A few but all got worked out
 Whether they were able to sleep well

No. They were great to know
 Smoking on (Friends) Meeting House grounds

They were very grateful and often expressed this to us
 Just minor ones

There was some tension at the end of operations

My only concern is when guests would go outside to smoke. It is difficult to keep track of their activities during this time. As a host you hate to monitor them all the time since it gives them a

sense of not trusting them. On the other hand alcohol containers were found around the premises of some churches. This was not a large problem, however, the use of alcohol is prohibited on our church grounds.

GUESTSconcerns = Personal items should be stored elsewhere as per the template based on the Placerville model. Access to alcohol and drugs is too easy when personal backpacks are allowed to go with them to host sites. Overnight supplies only should be allowed on site.
 GUESTSconcerns = Very enjoyable for the most part. I loved the jigsaw puzzle. Games and puzzles provide a variety of ways to interact.

GUESTSconcerns = No. On the whole, folks responded well to the services we offered.

nextseason = My sense is that the organizations involved will need to assess whether the experience was worthwhile from their perspective. The number of organizations willing to participate again will affect whether we attempt another season.

GUESTSconcerns = ON the last night a few guests were agitated and loud.

GUESTSconcerns = I had no difficulties and do not have any concerns

GUESTSconcerns = No, we just had more people than we had planned for. All the food was gone!

GUESTSconcerns = No. The guests were all very polite and appreciative of our efforts.

GUESTSconcerns = There were some tensions between a couple of them, but that never translated into problems.

GUESTSconcerns = Drug abuse and alcoholism are a fact for many guests. We need to find ways to help those who are in recovery so their needs are met and they continue to make progress. Sometimes I felt those who were still using were demanding more than their share of our energy and attention.

GUESTS concerns = At first there were concerns due to the fact that this year was the first time for our church. After the first night...every other night was fun and smooth.

GUESTS concerns = We had problems with drinking in the outside smoking area. One or two guests exhibited problematic behaviors due to intoxication (DT's, screaming and moaning, belligerence). Most guests were very cooperative & helpful.

Any suggestions for next winter?

- Offer tours of the sites
- Nametags
- Potluck before the end of operations
- Info for other homeless services
- Yes, I'll come to a meeting
- Expand it! Grow it! Have churches host but invite members of other churches to come and volunteer—cross-congregation/community building
- Have drivers able to get to the check-in place earlier
- Have drivers coordinate with regard to how many people each one can carry and thus able to pickup in a more timely way
- Volunteers can be taught or trained more generally on community resources
- The volunteer training for intake was ok considering it was year 1. Hopefully it can be more detailed and more specific next year on procedures
- Could they get cots or beds?
- Cots?
- There are small challenges to iron out

Same thing! Great! Maybe a list of snacks or foods that the volunteers could bring.

Please continue!

Maybe consider increasing to 30 people for all churches

Maybe let them stay longer in the mornings

Like LDS did, have a church solely to pick people up in the evenings

It was great

Continue to have one place for intake

The only suggestion I may have is to establish set smoking times and have one volunteer monitor the guests during those periods. The smoke breaks may also be an opportunity for the host to join in on their conversations.

nextseason = See above...and extend the time. Feedback from an LCI volunteer - They felt a bit "lost" in that most of the volunteers were Davis UMC folks and they (LCI) didn't really feel welcomed and/or part of the whole team. :(Better sharing of responsibilities if a team of churches are working at one shared site. Over all...a true success! Thank you!

nextseason = Open two weeks earlier in the fall, stay open two weeks later in the spring. Begin discussion about permanent housing. Are there any guests who could rent a room if someone has an extra bedroom? Help with motel rental agreement, mediation, mental health issues could make this possible for some people.

nextseason = Run longer, and include extra support on the last few nights

nextseason = Based on a comparison to another model I have experienced, I feel that there should be better separation between female and male guests during sleeping hours

nextseason = maybe just some one pager to read through of tips or to dos for first time folks. How

to's etc.

nextseason = could someone just borrow a bus and pick up all the guests at one time and drop them off at one place each morning. That would only take 1 person and about 20 minutes - instead of 2 people spending 1-2 hours each.

nextseason = I would be interested in having an educational get-together before the season starts where I could learn a little more about the guest screening process for this program and about the other resources that are available for homeless people in our area.

nextseason = Hope that IRWS can serve more guests next winter and for a longer period of time, e.g., January through mid-March.

nextseason = -Place more emphasis on recruiting morning drivers

-Attempt to be open earlier in the year and also later

-Make sure that churches do not double-book their facilities

nextseason = having more volunteers take on leadership roles so so many responsibilities don't fall on Natacha & Bill. I thought the shelter was well organized & an important asset to the Davis community!!!!!! Great job!!!!

nextseason = The only suggestion I can make would be to make this event a little longer for the Homeless, involving more locations.

nextseason = Yes. Longer season, from early November to end of March. Stay open later in morning, e.g. until 7:30. Better communication between churches and with IRWS. Closer links with Grace In Action.

nextseason = I think we all did an excellent job for first timers. We'll have plenty of time to fine tune the operation before next winter. I'd like to help.

Volunteer Interest

Joining IRWS Core Team:

Alex
washvalley@gmail.com

Robb
robbathome@gmail.com

Coordinating Volunteers for
Your Congregation:
Friends Meeting:

Alex
washvalley@gmail.com

Kathy
stmiura@pacbell.net

Davis United Methodist:
Rob
yosemitetoad@yahoo.com

St. James:
Olivia

First Baptist:
Jonnalee
jonnaleeh@gmail.com

Karl
yokarlito@gmail.com

DCC
vol_cordinator = on
contact = Christine
chrisbeck127@sbcglobal.net

Helping with Accounting:

Helping with Fundraising:
Robb
robbathome@gmail.com

Helping with Presentations to
Potential Host Congregations:

Olivia

Helping Other
Consultation and training as
needed

contact = Cindy
contact = CindyB@Grace-in-Action.org

other_details = I'm happy to
volunteer at intake again
contact = Susie
susiekisber@yahoo.com

joinIRWS = on
vol_cordinator = on
other = on
other_details = could do the Excel
schedule weekly
contact = Willa
bmngrove@sbcglobal.net

vol_cordinator = on
accounting = on
presentation = on
contact = Jim
contact = jcramer@ucdavis.edu

joinIRWS = on
vol_cordinator = on
other_details = Plan to reactivate
my attendance
contact = Wanda

kennedy5457@sbcglobal.net

A RICH BLESSING AND A TRUE CHRISTMAS!

By Patrick

It was with great joy
that I started to
volunteer at the
Interfaith Rotating
Winter Shelter

(IRWS). It rotated to my church (Saint James) during the Christmas week. Instead of having Christmas Eve dinner with my family, I chose to volunteer at the IRWS. **I knew all the clients because of my previous volunteer work at DCM.** The clients were both surprised and pleased to see me working there. On Christmas Eve 2008, I had Christmas Eve dinner with eighteen shelter guests, a family of five who prepared the dinner, and one other overnight staff...a good friend named Guy. We all had a wonderful meal and chatted amicably amongst ourselves. After dinner and dessert, we watched a DVD and then went to bed. All throughout the evening and the night, I could feel very strongly the presence of the Holy One, the Christ. **That night, I came to a deep realization that we are all related and have deep within us, a spark of the Divine flame,** the light, the truth, the way. We are all brothers and sisters with God our Father. God our Mother. God our friend. God our helper. God our strength. God our shield. God our all.

“Whatever you have done to the least of these who are members of my family, you have done unto me.” I came to a deep realization of this scriptural truth about nine years ago, when, through the grace of God, I became sober and had a desire to help others who were in need of some direction. I started

volunteering at a local homeless shelter, It was enriching work...very enriching. To see the broken and disgraced Christ in the poorest of the poor. The lonely Christ. The misunderstood Christ. The persecuted Christ. The poor Christ. The addicted Christ. The mentally ill Christ. The beaten Christ. Christ, in all. Christ, through all. Christ...the all. Who was, and is, and is the One coming.

The Bible says that God shows no partiality but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. We, also, are commissioned to do likewise...accept all and love all. These then, are works of mercy, when we help our fellow brethren. We are all members of God's one family. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Sheltering our fellow brethren is a sacred duty that we are all commissioned to do. It is a commission that we have receive from on high...long long ago.

I also learned that night that we have a sacred duty. A duty-just like those in Luke's Gospel we do who were commissioned just like Christ! A duty to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, mend the broken hearted.

Feed the poor, shelter the poor, and love the poor. I dare say that until we have found God, we are all poor and homeless...all of us...no matter who we are or what we own. **"...heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."** Jesus the Christ, was homeless when he did his earthly ministry. Poor he was. Persecuted he was. And we, who profess to follow him, should be prepared to be homeless, poor, persecuted, misunderstood, etc. "We must do the works of him who sent us while it is day, night is coming when no one can work. As long as I Am in the world, I AM the light of the world." I saw lights that night...many lights. I am unable to put into words the joy that I feel from helping others. There is a joy and a peace that comes from helping those who need help. There is an understanding that comes which transcends the intellect. An understanding of the heart. Like Saul on the road to Damascus, "scales fell from my eyes" that night. My spiritual eyes and ears were opened that night. I was able to be more in tune with the cries of distress and lamentation that came from lonely hearts.

I volunteered again around the New Year. I felt the same joy and peace that I had felt previously.

I was able TO BE...just BE. I was able to more clearly discern THE WAY. I truly understood what was meant in the scriptures where it is written: "Faith without works is dead." To help those who are the most destitute and the most in need. To see the Christ intelligence and the Christ Spirit in all!

In the morning, we woke the clients very early and had coffee. Drivers came and then transported the clients to wherever they wanted to go. I realized that God had worked and was working through many to get this shelter off the ground. Kudos to my editor and good friend, Lawson...who was instrumental in getting this off the ground. God worked through him to motivate many and get many involved with this project. Kudos to Pastor Bill who was also instrumental in this process. Kudos to Cindy of Grace In Action, who had many helpful suggestions and offered up many prayers for the continued success of this project. Kudos to the volunteers, without whom this would not have been possible. Kudos to all the generous people who believed in this project and helped out with monetary donations! Kudos to the teams of families who

cooked many meals for the shelter. And Kudos to you...dear reader...for...well, you know what.

I was sad to see it close. I knew that it had been a good

success and that it would be back next season. It was both a relief and a joy to know that the unsheltered of Davis would have a place to perhaps call their own. A place where they could feel safe and protected from the many storms of the night. A place where faith, hope, and love abound. A place where folks could share their joys, successes, hardships, and sorrows. A place where the light of Christ burns in hearts everywhere. A place where hope can be found. A place of love. A place of peace. A place of joy unending.

I cannot put it into words, but I learned the TRUE meaning of Christmas. The TRUE meaning of what becoming new means. It is so much more than just Christmas trees, presents, and New Year celebrations. It is life. It is love. It is God...through Christ...through the Holy Spirit. In all, through all, and with all. To quote part of the mass: "Through Christ, with Him, and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever."

May God The Father continue to bless this project now and

always. May the Grace of the Holy Spirit enlighten our mind and purify our thoughts. May we love one another as we are loved. May the Peace, which passes all understanding, fill our hearts and minds. You are all in my thoughts and prayers each day. May God richly bless each one of us. May all of us come to a rich understanding of what it means to be sent! Until next time, may peace, love, and grace be with each one of you!

UC Davis Student Homeless Outreach Club

By Elizabeth Gemaine

I remember the first time I was confronted with the concept of homelessness. I was in fifth grade, driving around Chicago with my parents on a summer road trip. We were at a stop light in the middle of downtown when I looked out my window and saw a man, lying on the sidewalk. He had covered it in newspapers, his clothes were

ragged and dirty, and he napped as people walked by reluctantly noticing his bare feet as they occasionally twitched. I wondered about this man's peculiar behavior, and asked my mom why someone would act in such a manner. Her reply left me speechless, and it took me a very long time to accept the idea that there are people in the world who have been left behind. There are people in the world who do not have enough money to buy themselves food let alone a pair of shoes. There are people in the world who have been more or less forgotten, and they are not in faraway lands. They are right in our backyard, and they have nowhere to go.

I have long since struggled with the concept of homelessness. I have struggled with whether or not the temporary relief that accompanies giving these people the change I can scrounge up from my pockets is worthwhile, or whether I can do more. There is only so much money one person can give to the homeless, and they will always need more. So I felt the need to become involved with these people in a deeper way, to learn more about the experience of being alone in a cruel world that has overlooked your presence and worth as a human being.

I joined the Student Homeless Outreach Club (SHOC) at UC Davis and gained a better understanding of the prevalence of homelessness in the Davis community. I was shocked to discover that there are around 100 homeless people in Davis, and I was discouraged by the public's denial of their presence. Through SHOC, I have counteracted this denial by spreading awareness of poverty and by gaining access to the homeless community through volunteering at Davis Community Meals.

My first experience serving homeless and low-income people was an eye-opening one. I watched as the minute hand on the clock approached the hour and more and more people slowly trickled in. The empty church hall, strikingly large at first, seemed to rapidly shrink in size as people filled the room and lined up to receive food. As each person passed me in line and as I dished steamed carrots onto their trays, I was struck by their overwhelming politeness. Grateful smiles and appreciative conversation took place over the next hour as these people filled their trays and subsequently cleared them again, eating the food they were thankful to have.

Realizing that most of them were indistinguishable from any other person I might have passed that day instilled within me an understanding that these people are just as human, if not more, than those people who I attend school with. The only difference is that we are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to fund our education.

The experience I had volunteering and the new relationships I formed during my time in the church have strengthened my commitment to this underrepresented group of people. I anticipate my further involvement in assisting homeless and low-income people in Davis. **It seems to me that in our increasingly socially-conscious society, young people will be the driving force that bring the changes we wish to see.** Most people I know want to take an active role in the fight against poverty, but very few take the first step in actually doing so. The experiences, relationships, and new world views I gained through working with the homeless should serve as motivation for other Davis community members to step up to their social responsibilities by meeting and further assisting the people behind the open hands in which they occasionally place quarters and dimes. **These people have something to teach us-- we just have to listen.**

Open the Homeless Lockers!

By Richard

The lockers have already been built, let's use them. I believe *everyone* in our society has either been affected by social judging or judges *others*. Poverty contributes to a cycle of poor life choices which cut off employment opportunities for some and can lead to homelessness for others. The stigma that our homeless and the poor face from job interviewers makes securing employment a challenge. **Providing lockers for our homeless is a simple, humane and an effective step to help the homeless help themselves.** Looking neat and clean makes finding and keeping a job a lot easier! What is wonderful about this very publication that you are reading is that it attempts to educate different population strata's on the phenomenon of homelessness. **True to all age groups who are reading this issue of The Spare Changer is the phenomenon of adolescence.** We can all recall when we were 13 and first beginning Junior High School. We all wanted to fit in and be with the "in" group of students. Some students were classified as

athletes, some were the smart nerds, and others were the outcasts. The group we were in was based on our clothing and our hair styles; we begged our parents to get us the clothing that would allow us to avoid being described as an outcast and to be described as one of the cool kids sporting the new Adidas. We worked hard in high school to earn high enough grades and high scores on the Scholastic Achievement Test to gain admission to prestigious universities. My senior year, I was judged competent as a student and high achiever when **I shared my University of California admission results with other members of the senior class** who also had been admitted to good schools. For some reason dressing nice and getting into a top to middle tier University of California campus was a ticket to high school popularity or at least social acceptance by middleclass peers- what ever that means. Social judging holds true for students in university and those in the work force. Extracurricular opportunities open up to the students who show themselves as competent, clean –attractive looking and motivated and the same hold true for employment opportunities.

Being a child in poverty means to live in a household where the parents are working minimum wage type jobs and struggling to make ends

meet for the household unit. Poverty creates stress in the household unit between the parents. The child of a poor household may not have good role models who promote attending universities- the ticket to social mobility in our society. **A youth who has to deal with living in a chaotic household unit may rebel from the social structure and turn to alcohol and drug use to numb the pain.** A child who has to live in a single parent household with a drug addicted mother and a social identification at school as a poor social outcast may motivate the child to fit in with other social outcasts at school who also turn to drugs and alcohol as a way out of the pain. These students face many challenges to shaping up and getting into Advanced Placement Programs. Our public schools have poor teacher to student ratios which only leads to the students from the middle class and perhaps a few highly motivated poor kids to be pushed by teachers to attend college. **For the other social outcasts, the focus may be to get these students to graduate and sometimes this is a challenge.** And If we throw foster kids into the equation, the odds of these kids going to college and becoming full participants in a democratic society are reduced. Only 20% of academically qualified foster youth attended some sort of college compared to 60% of high school students not in foster care (Wolanin, T. (2005). *Higher Education*

Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policymakers. Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy). Disability and mental illness can also perpetuate homelessness.

The homeless face challenges in becoming employed.

What food establishment anywhere in America hire would hire a homeless person as an employee who had to store their belongings in the restaurant? The restaurant would fear a loss of business if they would hire such a homeless person. Managers of the restaurant would wonder if a homeless person would be a dependable employee. Managers for other job opportunities may wonder if homeless people really have skills that can be applied on the job. **Looking homeless in front of a job interviewer can eliminate any chance the homeless or even housed but poor person has to getting the job.** Homeless people may not have the clothing required to impress an interviewer or for the job itself.

There are a few social services like the Short Term

Emergency Action Committee in Davis that help the poor trying to become employed by providing a limited supply of clothing vouchers through Right and Relevant. The

demand however for the assistance provided far exceeds the resources available. **Hiring a homeless person is a way to help, but too many employers are put off by the homeless concept.** We as a society acknowledge the need to help but we often run from the uncomfortable. Homeless people want to work and some of them are the hardest working, dependable and intelligent people I know. To deny a population that has dealt with struggle a gateway to employment is inhumane. Providing lockers for our homeless is a simple, humane and an effective step to help the homeless help themselves. **Those people who initially stood in the way of a wonderful locker program for the homeless of Davis should be ashamed of themselves.** The homeless will be forced to carry their belongings with them all over town and be questioned by police for appearing homeless. A group of people congregated in a public park with sleeping bags and bicycles at there sides are an open target for surveillance by law enforcement. If a police officer says that they do not profile a homeless person prior to an officer questioning a homeless person before an act of crime has been committed, they may be lying. Police officers are human and do judge even if it is implicit in nature. Officers patrol areas known for high rates of crime and check for warrants on homeless people that are congregated in public

parks during daylight hours out of no provocation. I have seen this first hand many times in Sacramento and once in Davis. **If we provide lockers for our homeless, homeless people can drop off their sleeping bags and personal belongings into a locker and walk around clean** if they grab a shower at the Davis Community Meals Resource Center. Homeless people can apply for jobs and actually do well at getting an interview and passing it because they are qualified. Then a homeless person can get an apartment or at least get into a transitional housing program using the job as evidence to show that the client is motivated. I have seen homeless people who have been fortunate to gaining employment, actually finding an apartment and staying employed. **By not providing lockers for the homeless, we just perpetuate the cycles of discrimination and stigma for the homeless.** As a result homeless people with no jobs and economic opportunity may be forced to drink away the pain that being homeless brings forth- only to be arrested by law enforcement and incarcerated for an Open Container infraction. **I say Open Lockers for the Homeless instead!**

Editor's Comment: *I couldn't agree with you more!*

Editor's Note: *As you can see, there is no humor as you walk, captioned cartoon or*

*even **poetry section** in this issue, which will be available through April. I'm afraid there just wasn't enough space for these traditions this time...* For this reason and for lack of sufficient Client Vendors, I intend to publish a 16 page issue and make it available to you through The Spare Changer Website for a nominal yearly subscription. Please send me your e-mail address so I may add you to my mailing list. This is a few months off, but I'd like to begin building the list. **Many of you exchange your \$2.50 for 'The Spange' primarily to help the Client Vendor. This was the idea and continues to be. But I'm gratified to know many of you like what we produce as well,** so as a subscriber you will receive articles and information unavailable on the streets... and never miss an issue. **Please write in** on what you think about this. Should we do it?

Next Issue:

Homelessness: Is It All bad? Is Our Little City "Homeless Friendly?" The Springing of Spring: Living Outdoors.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the publisher.

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