

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!***

Cesar Chavez Plaza Opens To Success But Truly Affordable Housing Fills Quickly

Homeless No More

By Lawson
Publisher, Editor-in Chief

The new 52 unit Cesar Chavez Plaza apartments became available to us lucky ones last month, and I cannot in this column say how much it has and will continue to change my life for the better. My homelessness “by choice” these past four years plus has been a difficult one to be sure, scheduling my life around times and places free community services for the homeless were available, having pocket money from a fixed and quite limited income not withstanding. I have survived several cold and rainy winters, marginally adequate

nutrition, many losses due to abandonment and theft, and most significantly a loss of identity as a gradual consequence of not having a place to call my own. Some “choice,” since living in Davis is expensive, particularly without roommates to share costs at market rates. I’d decided quite early on that **I did not want to spend all my income on housing and related expenses, only to have nothing left for food and my projects and hobbies; all that keep me getting up in the morning.** Nothing but four walls at which to stare? Not for me, so instead I’ve slept in down mummy sleeping bags, two large tents (that were burned to the ground) or in The Cave until the drunks drew so much attention a couple of neighbors nearby put pressure to bear.. I am happy beyond words my application was selected in the lottery for this truly affordable housing opportunity where, unlike other places where affordable is defined in terms of “median” income of the

neighborhood in which the housing is offered, “affordable” here at Cesar Chavez, is truly that: defined on a sliding scale. In my case, it is 25%. This I can afford.

No longer must I “hang out” in public places until long after dark to insure no one sees me go where I’m sleeping, or get up and out before sunrise so no one sees me leave... No longer must I go to Davis Community Meals Resource Center for showers, “breakfast” on whatever’s been donated there, for laundry, for phone or mail. Only the staff and community volunteers that work there do I miss, they are fair, friendly and yet firm, which is saying a lot since I can be a bit much at times, not to mention all the other... *personalities* that also utilize the services without which homelessness in Davis is all but impossible for most. No

longer must I hang out at Grace House, UCD's Memorial Union lounges and Central Park, just to have a place to "be." And no longer must I risk losing sleeping bags, backpacks, jackets or bicycles to theft.

You'd have to experience chronic homelessness yourself to truly know what it is like

to now own something as "normal" and "mainstream" as a door key. The first thing that happens when you are homeless is the last thing you notice: a gradual loss of identity as a natural and logical consequence of the loss of privacy. It goes something like this: scheduling your life around free places to eat, sleep and staying out of the weather, you are also in the company of others living Homeless The Hard Way and so are bombarded by the "drama" that comes along with the "baggage" of others pretty much in the same boat as you and, more often than not, much more so. This means you have no time, energy or enthusiasm to think your own thoughts, even speak your own mind and certainly not to "do your own thing." You hear stories similar to your own; sometimes even more depressing ones made worse by the knowledge that some of the personalities, with which you have no choice but to interact, do not respond to the challenges and pressures in

a way that you think they should, in a way that is positive, uplifting in some way or even legal. **Without enough privacy, it becomes all but impossible to solve your own problems, plan strategies to improve your life** and just generally enjoy the fruits of some modicum of peace of mind. You become moody, cranky and depressed, if not combative, right along with the rest. And since you have no time and place to sort out and process these emotionally charged states, you gradually stop being yourself, all the while becoming something, some *one*, else. You run the risk of alienating old friends and family and at the same time, for the same reason, acquire new "friends" who become family; your "street" family. "Misery loves company" they say, but from first-hand experience I can tell you these new "support" affiliations only add to your own misery and expedites it's downward spiral. Woes unto you if you still try to maintain your identity, as you make jealous enemies either because of your own efforts to improve your life; your sense of self-worth, or that of others. **I've been the victim of homeless-on-homeless crime a half a dozen times or more, and I'm embarrassed to say my sympathies have grown somewhat limited as a direct result.** They treat you like you think you are "better" than they, and encourage others to think the same, when you don't think so at all. Personally, I often think I'm not *as* good, because I've *had* my chances in life...

Anyways, over time, you'd see a gradual

change come over you, only to question yourself on a variety of fronts, just because you have zip for private time, coupled with the time you spend with others under circumstances that are often disparaging to say the least. And you have little choice, because these very same people are at each and every place you *have* to go, homeless as you are. True, there are some "hard core" un-sheltered poor that want nothing to do with social services, for just this reason but, sadly, they cannot avail themselves to services that are here just for the asking... **Oh, it isn't all bad, this being homeless, because no matter where you go, there are always decent people, good people that care, and many that go out of their way to show it.** These, in my experience with homelessness in Davis and several other cities and communities in California, along with the generally "homeless friendly" weather, has made my life as "a homeless man" not nearly the hardship it could have been otherwise. Homelessness is as much a state of mind as anything, which brings us right back to the privacy issue, or lack thereof, doesn't it? **My point here is that while it is easy to see how attitude shapes our behavior, the subtle yet undeniable truth is that behavior shapes attitudes even more so,** and when you are constantly surrounded by bad actors, you must act bad just to get along. Or suffer by failing to do so. This changes you, and soon, you begin to dislike yourself as well as these others. Your attitude changes, believe me.

So now I have a door key, and December 2007 has been the best month in recent memory. It is a leased un-furnished apartment with modern amenities including new Kenmore refrigerator and electric-gas stove and digital oven. Many of us here have been blessed with anonymous and not so anonymous donations of furnishings and other needed items common to “normal” living. I’ve come to enjoy sleeping again: in the same bed, the same covers, the same light shining in my bedroom with the only command to sleep or wake mine alone. I enjoy the security of a locked door, to be able to leave my valuables, few though they may be, at home! **I enjoy making meals again, of my choosing, when I am hungry. And for what I want to eat. People, I enjoy washing dishes and taking out the d--- trash.** In the mornings, I can make coffee, breakfast, shower, shave, and dress in different clothes. And do so when I get good and ready. I am renewed, and in a sense, *rejuvenated*. My neighbors are pleasant. And I can think. Freely, without the constant negativity of environments that naturally force me on the defensive. I can plan my day, my week, and the rest of my life, without interference. And I have the private time to not only plan my works, but also work my

plans. I’ve paid rent twice now, and I got a kick out of it! Imagine that!

Speaking of “hard-core” homeless, I’m curious to know how many campsites got flooded last night, and I worry for them too. Hopefully, they will make their way to 345 L Street. It is there at The Society of Friends meeting house where, at 5:30 each evening until February 29th, any one unsheltered will be transported to and from one of several church venues (sites) where they will be served a hot meal, treated to a movie and sheltered for the night.

Editor’s Note: Longtime readers of *The Spare Changer* are well aware of My Three Little Projects: a paper that our panhandling poor could exchange for donations given by passersby, an Interfaith Winter Shelter system by which our faith communities would agree to take turns housing the homeless in their unused space during the worst of the winter, this at a time before DCM’s 5th Street Cold Weather Shelter opened, and of course, Lockers for the Homeless. . Davis Community Church hosted the first week beginning December 16th, followed by St. James during Christmas Week!

DCC volunteers have already built 25 custom lockers on their property, but the project was suspended/delayed I am proud to say I am vocal participant in the Interfaith Homeless Task Force and an active Board Member of the

Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter of Davis (irwsd.org for more information, donations and volunteer opportunities). With roads, railroad track and other gullies flooded, trees falling, clothing, sleeping bags and sneakers wet because the storms, it had to be nothing short of miserable for them. And unhealthy. And dangerous at times too. I’m both thankful and blessed to have a place to call my home, one that is warm, spacious, comes with lockable doors and doesn’t leak.

I don’t mind telling you what a relief it has been this past month, not having to worry about thefts. I don’t have much as I said, and it really... *disappoints* me when somebody with not a pot to piss in, nor a window out of which to throw it, would steal from the same. I’m no saint, trust me, but at this stage of the game of life I have to hate the poor who choose to take from the poor. I mean, why? Why?? We have social services that give food, clothing and shelter for the asking. **Why take a backpack, or a bicycle, or a tent or what ever, from somebody you not only likely see everyday, if not know, and who just as likely needs his or her things as much as you? This is just wrong,** and I’ve got little respect for the thief with no conscious or moral integrity, regardless of “need,” when the victim has the very same need... Frankly I think in today’s modern world there are far too many ways to “get over” both legally and illegally, than to have

to stoop so low as to steal from someone that needs the things he or she has. All moral/legal issues held constant, it seems stealing from a large entity that is insured makes more moral sense. **(Let's face it: insurance companies are legal crooks anyways. They "insure" us and then force us to sue them to receive fair benefits when we claim. They stay in business by paying out less than they take in.** In principle it works for insurer and insured, but the bottom line, as I see it, is that the onus is upon them to deny as many claims as they can. Consider your own HMO. And if you have cheap insurance, you likely don't even know the administrators prohibit it's member MDs from ordering early detection and "rule out" tests that could prevent your suffering or even death; The doctors are forced to wait for specific symptoms, when their training and Hippocratic oath, tells them they shouldn't wait that long. And we all know there is more profit in treating than in preventing, don't we? Why do you think there are so many treatments, and so few vaccines? I am not advocating stealing from the rich instead of the poor, no matter how whimsically romantic it may sound.) **I am not advocating stealing at all, just lamenting, with deep visceral sadness, how difficult life on the streets can be, and how much more difficult it is made by the 10% of the criminal homeless that commit 90% of the homeless on homeless crimes.** And we victims cannot

depend on law enforcement after the fact. In part for fear of ostracism if not reprisal, in part for lack of evidence or corroboration, in part from insensitivity...

It is no secret that Our Little City has its fair share of "quality of life" crimes and infractions, the little things that don't matter much to some, but over time affect us all. The smell of days-old urine in the shrubs and bushes of our churches, the sight of human feces between our parked cars, the sounds of violence and drunkenness on our city streets and parks where our children play, all impact our quality (and inequality) of life here. **In the past six months I've done some traveling, call it field research if you like, to LA's Skid Row, San Francisco's Tenderloin, San Rafael's Canal and Sacramento's Alkali Flats...and points in between...** and I'm here to tell you *every* city has its homeless population, and in many respects, like Davis, has its homeless *community*. **I've been a part of this community, until a month ago, and can relate to the phrase "When ya' gotta go, ya' gotta go!" I've bumped into and stepped over a sleeping or "passed out" body or two, scrambling to find a quick place to hide and peek..err...hide and pee.** Wherever I found smelled of bacteria-infested urine, my cold and stiff fingers trying to separate my pride from my passion and do it quickly, lest I'm embarrassed by being seen or worse, observed and busted for a sex crime, or fear of it, what with Megan's Law and such. **Can you imagine being forced to**

register as a sex offender because you didn't have a place to live and got caught relieving yourself in public? Not a pretty idea or a far-fetched one either... Well, no more of that for me, thank God, or for the others here at CCP. But what about my other brothers and sisters? What about the truly unsheltered poor? Unless you are part of The Central Park Bathroom Crew, finding a toilet, especially if you've been drinking, is a task and a half. A credit to Davis city government's sensitivity, that bathroom near the park's sandbox play area and carousel is open 24/7. This is a good thing. It is *not* a good thing to find needles, broken beer bottles and cans all about. On more than one occasion I have personally trashed canned this stuff and I wasn't even invited to the "party." **But I've felt compelled to "do a little more than my share," partly for the community of Davis as a whole (I love it here), but mostly because I wanted to shield that "90%" from the prejudice and ill will "mainstream" community would have embraced, not to mention officers of the Davis Police Department, at the sight of such wanton, irresponsible and laughingly thoughtless bad behavior.**

I've heard more horror stories about how bad "the cops" can be than I'd care to repeat. My personal experiences last year, of which there were four that I recall, do not echo these sentiments, considering our local law enforcement personnel are all *human*, and so are affected by previous and present

encounters like anybody else. **Police/community relations have suffered some in the last 18 months or so:** We have seen everything from accusations of insensitivity to minorities and “profiling” and the resignation of a very capable, fair and perceptive Chief of Police, to stepped-up City counsel mandated citations and arrests for drinking in public and other misdemeanor disturbances, stepped-up patrolling of the parks in town. Often, tools and tactics that appear as “profiling” is simply good police work. No more, no less. **Other times we, myself very much included, find ourselves victims of “harassment” that we bring directly on ourselves;** trying to buy a train ticket, raising our voices three sheets to the wind, or leaving an establishment and walking home(less) after drinking heavily or even bicycling up the wrong way on Covell Blvd. at night. **(I was guilty as hell by the way, despite my conviction to this day that I would have been just fine had it not been for “concerned citizens” or that on-coming patrol car.)** Whether it’s the good “say yes” cop or the bad “condemn not condone” cop “type,” if I’m hangin’ out at the tables, talking loud, the tables sky-lined with “forties,” obvious to any neighbor with a cell phone, who can blame “the cops” for doing their job and “checking me out?”

Make no mistake, I’ve enjoyed my vices, just like the next man, but there *are* things like discretion... and propriety...and common sense. Let’s keep it real: there are bums everywhere you go nowadays, and Our Little City has a better class of bums, but how smart is it, knowing you’ve got an arrest warrant, knowing “the cops” know you on sight anyways and are generally cool, to give them an excuse (in the case of the cops with whom you already have a negative history), if not a legitimate reason, to spoil your...party? ... and to give you grief? **I don’t suppose I’ll have these problems now that I am paying rent and enjoying my brand spankin’ new digs here at Cesar Chavez Plaza, although I’m sure I’ll be trading one set of risks, concerns and challenges for another. But that’s okay with me.**

Take a break...

**Editor’s Comment: CCP is a fine environment for us all, but don’t take my word for it. Below are a few comments by both staff and a few of the residents. See what you think.*

Says **Kathy**, Leasing Agent:

“I was hired as a leasing agent to help qualify people to move into the complex. I work for John Stewart through Temps to Go, a Sacramento Temp Agency. In qualifying there is a sliding scale. Very low, moderately low and very

low income applicants from the Yolo county area. I think its great working here! I give out applications and try to get to know the prospective tenants before they sign our lease. Unfortunately, I will be leaving at the end of January. Much of my work revolved around getting the people in... getting the units “leased-up.” That means taking their applications, verifying their information, like proof of income, a credit check, past tenancy (eviction history), and criminal background. After that comes their personal interview. We had over 200 people on the list, and I have spoken to many of them in one form or another. We’ve done at least 52 “in depth” interviews, and now all the apartments a full, certainly spoken for, although some have not as yet moved in. **These are nice apartments, between 580 and 590 square feet. Fantastic little apartments, with a commons area, with a fireplace, laundry room, computer room,** and a meeting room that can be rented for a little get-together. Everything in the units is new of course; beautiful black appliances with self-cleaning ovens! *Three* phone jacks and cable outlet for living room *and* bedroom; back patio, or balcony for the upstairs units, and a *wonderful* sense of privacy.

Out of a total of 52 units, all are one bedroom and can occupy a maximum of three people. They call that two plus one” meaning two in the bedroom and one on the couch. Three rent categories 25%, 50%,

and 60% of the medium income of Yolo County. At the 25% level there were 19 units set aside for the “homeless,” and for the mentally, physically and medically handicapped. The rest of the units were giving to whoever could meet the income requirements. Since these units are tax credit they cannot be rented by full time students unless they meet the guidelines. For example, a single person in one of the 25% units cannot exceed the maximum income of \$11,500. I’m happy to have been a part of a new beginning for some of these people. It feels wonderful, and once again I appreciate the simple things in life; things I take for granted like a clean, warm, *safe* place to be. Whether the cold of winter, or the heat of summer: a place to call home. More housing like this is needed. Davis should be proud to include such a place in this wonderful city!”

Says **Synda**, Social Services Coordinator:

“My role here at Cesar Chavez Plaza (CCP) is to provide support to residents as needed. This may come in the form of a referral to another agency for support, counseling, assistance with accessing medical care, etc. **I also see my role here at CCP to build community among staff and residents through classes,**

workshops, movie/game nights, community gardening, exercise/wellness groups and monthly potlucks. CCP is a wonderful place where individuals living in Davis have the opportunity to live in a beautiful, safe and comfortable place while living on a fixed income. All of the apartments came unfurnished. Some of the residents had furniture of their own and many had only the shirt on their back and some belongings in a backpack. **People from our [Davis] community were generous and gracious enough to donate all of the items that furnished the apartments.** [We] thank you. The residents living here have worked so hard to be here and were patient with the process of opening our doors. It has been a pleasure getting to know the residents here at CCP. I enjoy hearing their stories and providing support as they get settled into their new apartments and for some, getting settled into a new community.”

**Editor’s Note: No account of CCP staff would be complete without praising our cheerful and courteous Resident Manager, Adrianna. This Amazon Amazing, a golden section of Competence and Cool, brightens the day of everyone who encounters her. Paying the rent is a beautiful experience; her always ready smile is the first thing you notice when you enter her multi-task-ready office. The second thing you notice are the stacks of binders and papers on her desks...She is always busy and yet she, like Synda is very giving of her time to us tenants. Our apartments are brand new, so when I moved into mine, she was also helpful, along with Maintenance Supervisor Victor in “tweaking” my new*

*heater that had a “short,” my new door locks that needed “breaking in” and my new dining room lamplight that needed installing. Sometimes I wish I could afford to pay rent every week; Adrianna signs a mean receipt.**

***Editor’s Comment:** *Indeed Davis should be proud and is proud, I think. And now, from a few residents here at CCP...*

Says **Jonathan**, Resident:

“My first week was a ton of surprise, rest and amazement. I haven’t found myself in a quiet situation in a very long time. Also, I haven’t found myself in such a...a...*nice* situation in such a long time. Nice being explained by the fact that things are organized to understand peace as a prosperous factor. It’s accepted. Peace is accepted as being part of the Cesar Chavez way. Understanding that I can rest and stay in this situation of rest, caused a shift of consciousness in my mind. Instead of being preoccupied by complications, I can find myself actually thinking that I’m in a real good living situation. **Found through the understanding that I’m in a brand new apartment with neighbors also enjoying their apartments; this is definitely a good thing.** First couple of days I spent organizing my apartment. I had furniture and stuff moved in., and I had much room. I had space to get around. I’m new to Davis but had furniture to move in with already. And I also had space to move around in. **I**

moved from a much smaller one-bedroom apartment in Sacramento but moved here because Davis is a better life for me, a much more peaceful environment than in Sac.

People have a greater sense of acceptance here, of just being *together*, as a community, here in Davis, whereas things in Sacramento are much less geared to acceptance and socialization. Things are more hectic. Factually, life is much quieter; something I need because that is a preference I have at this time of my life.

It's been a month now, I'm all moved in, and I'm noticing that Davis is really living up to the feeling that I had when I first got here in December. That feeling is a simple one that leads me to feel I am welcome here. Davis holds a character of a city that has an acknowledgement of a wanted respect. By that I mean that Davis' success is established by people liking Davis as place to live, and as a city itself. People only live in one place, but people get to know a lot more of the city eventually. This in turn presents itself as a city in which one can live and *grow*, and feel welcome as a member of the community.

My prospects for the future holds no long range goals, just goals that I see myself living

for today, and hope to continue in. I suppose to name some long-range goals, I would certainly ask for the planet to a much more peaceful picture than I see today with the wars in the world. There are problems in wars; I feel that these things could get better, and the whole global picture could get better. In order for this to get better, we have to seek answers as people, as a community, and see them as our answers: when people accept a greater love for the planet. Starting with the community, the people will answer with a response, and the planet will actually respond. Until that time, I realize that Davis is a place that wants that answer, and that is how I feel. **To live in Davis today, and look to a future in Davis, is the answer that I choose."**

Editor's Comment: More than happy to call you "neighbor," man...

Says **Randy**, Resident:

"It's been almost two months. What's it like not being homeless in Davis anymore? Let me tell you: It's a blessing; an opportunity that's a basis to stability. Not having to step outside. Eventually it takes its toll. Having a key a knowing that you can go out and come back at any time is *sacred*. I **don't mean to be mean, but when my place is in jeopardy, I have to let my friends visiting know it. Other than that, this is a very good environment...**the people...everyone. You see someone? It's a nice "hello" and

people are friendly....and nice... and everything. I feel okay. I feel this is where I should be... When I was hungry, and somebody brought me food? I'm not lettin' go of that....I want the opportunity.... to start helping... and giving back to folks and...and to help others ... if possible to...to....maybe... help at the Cold Weather Shelter... or something. Bruce, Patrick and others have done it. I have gone to college. I can do it too. I know I can. My experience from living on the streets of Davis and the baddest streets of Sac.? **I've been stabbed, robbed, and shot with a flare gun at gun point.** It ricocheted from my arm into my stomach! This is a good place to live, but everybody says "we can go over to Randy's place and spend the night...a couple of nights outta the cold. My kindness has somehow been misinterpreted... Let me say this: When Beamer Street was at the Yolo General Hospital [that] was when my mother passed away... **that was when my mother died. Since then, I just can't forget the helplessness and pitiful void in my life.** It was her time. Tomorrow I go to Beaver Street, a 14 day rehab program, and then after the 14 days [are up] I still have a place to come back to. That's what [the manager] said. I thought I'd be able to work this out my own self, but I realize now **I need that professional guidance and get that medication they promised on the condition that I do check into the program.** I need to go there. I hope I make it. I know I will. So I welcome this opportunity; they made this available for my own good; to have a place. And I'll do what ever is necessary to stay... Synda and Adrianna called my doctor and

made arrangements. As soon as I check in, I'll be back on my medications. More incentive and motivation go up there. It's the right thing to do.

I'll be under *their* supervision, not mine.

They'll make sure I don't have a whole months worth of medications, I'll take them as prescribed. I can't do it myself. I understand that. I like to think that I... that I can do it on my own, but I can't be responsible. These are very addictive narcotics..."vicoz" and "lottapins." Those are Valiums times ten; the very best they can give me.

They've trusted me and I've been irresponsible with distributing them (taking more than prescribed and running out). In the end result I end up like this; like I am now. This time I wanna acknowledge my irresponsibility and put it in the care of Synda and my social workers for me not to have all that stuff at one time. **Two weeks at Beamer Street is a first step. These people at Cesar Chavez are right, and this isn't going to happen again. Maybe I do need that comprehensive help and guidance that I'm not really aware of.** Not getting right now. I can't do this... what ever... alone. I'm going to need some professional....counseling."

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Editor's Note: Randy made it to Beamer Street, and Adrianna has his keys for him when he gets back. You go boy...

Says **Michelle** and **Eugene**, Residents:

"We lived at The Farm House, a residential treatment (assisted living) center. They help you get back on your feet. They teach you how to cook, clean and other living skills, and how to take care of animals. There were ten of us. We found out about Cesar Chavez when they brought some application packets to The House. We liked living there; it was like a large family. It's kind of a group home for adults. You get your values straight. They have a doctor that comes and sees you and you learn how to take your meds. We are happy to be here at Cesar Chavez....**I love this place! It's our first place together. We met at the farm house, and now we have our own place.** Someday we plan on getting married and having a child. When we get the money. We plan on staying here a long time, I don't think we can have more than one child and continue to live here, unless you're a single parent. We have each other.

Editor's Comment: and in that, you two have got it all.

Guilt By Association?

By Patrick, IRWS volunteer

In the last five months, I have been "interviewed" by the Davis Police a total of five times! It seems they should know me by now? ;-) My crime? Nothing at all...at least in my mind. However, they think differently, I think. Each time, I was hanging out with some friends of mine in Central Park who happen to be homeless. **I was guilty by association, I think. Four of the times I was questioned (or should I say "grilled") about who I was and what I was doing in the park.** I was polite each time and answered all of their questions. **I kept my hands where they could see them and made no sudden movements.** My voice was calm and I looked them square in the eye. The fifth time, I was actually searched to see if I had anything illegal and/or dangerous. This was simply because I was watching some of my friends (who happen to be homeless) play horseshoes in the horseshoe pit. **I was approached and asked how I was doing. I was asked if I had anything illegal on me and I said that I did not.** They then asked if they could search me to see if that was true or not. Since I did not, I did give my consent. I have spoken to others who have had similar experiences. And there are many.

Is there any need for this type of treatment? Many have told me that this type of treatment would never happen in the big cities as the police are busy solving actual serious crimes and apprehending

dangerous criminals. I gather from the police blotters that there is really not a whole lot of serious crime in Davis. Could it be that they are bored and simply like to "interview" people whom they choose? Further, I ask, is it a crime to hang out with my friends—some of whom just happen to be homeless? Is it a crime to watch people play horseshoes in the park?

Fear...I think it is plain old fear. **I think that people see us hanging out in the park and perhaps they feel afraid and call the police to make up complaints in order to have us moved out of the park!**

After my last "interview", myself and about five other people were told to leave the park (and this was at 7:30

pm!) For some reason, the squeeze is really being put on central park and it is to the point that it is getting out of hand. Way out of hand. Every day at some point, I see two or three police cars in the park. It is to the point where I don't even want to hang out in the park anymore. And this is the town where I grew up! It was never like this in the 70s and 80s. It was NEVER like this! I think it's way out of hand and is getting worse. What can be done? I will write more and what can be done (and is being done) in my next article. **It is**

not a crime to be homeless...Jesus and the Apostles were homeless....

"It is necessary to be strong, in order to become great; that is our duty. Life is a struggle, which we cannot avoid. We must triumph!"

-Padre Pio

Editor's Comment: *Talk about rotten luck....repeated rotten luck.*

A Broken Bottle of Old English

By Richard, College Student

When someone reads the line "a broken bottle of Old English", the person associates the term with the imagery of a broken bottle of Old English 800 on the pavement. Such imagery shows the association of alcohol consumption and fighting. This holds true for the sheltered and the unsheltered. While alcohol is associated with fighting in the homeless community, the cause of the conflicts among the homeless stem from the need to numb the emotional pain associated with being homeless and the challenges of life. **We can decrease the incidence of homeless on homeless crime through more community investment in the non-profits that serve our homeless.** Putting our homeless to work, with shelter and sufficient living resources, would stem the incidence of homeless on homeless crime.

The association of alcohol and fighting among the housed goes back many years. From stories of the drunken sailors of world wars fighting in Naval bars to the stories of college students fighting each other in the G Street parking lot after drinking some brew, the association is quite clear. **Alcohol is well known to decrease ones inhibitions to act spontaneously.** A sober student who walks along the side walk after being insulted about the make of his Honda from a BMW owning student will be likely to flip the middle finger and say a couple of curse words at the insulter and get into his vehicle and go on about his business. (Let's hope so at least). **A student, after consuming a few pints of Pabst at a local Davis bar, may instead challenge the insulter in the parking lot at 1:30am in the morning-- and throw some punches.** In fact I was the witness of such an event on one of my many nights casually strolling the local Davis bar scene. You see, alcohol consumption and fighting is common among those like students who have shelter as it is common in the homeless community. **This fighting association disappears if a person drinks responsibly which I am all for.**

The association of alcohol related assaults in the homeless community is a bit more complicated. The homeless are a group who

face many challenges of living, including the homeless life style itself. In the homeless community, there are those who want to be homeless just as there are those who want shelter. Common to these two groups are the reasons for how they became homeless. Untreated mental illness biologically and environmentally acquired is a big reason for that homelessness as is a loss of hope and a bad childhood. Someone does not wake up one day and say "I want to live under a bridge in the cold rain." There is a *reason* for one to sleep under a bridge. **A homeless person will consume alcohol to numb emotional pain or just to create a happier mental feeling for a while.** The lifestyle of the homeless is fairly chronic and so it is easy to see that the pains of homelessness will also be chronic because of the challenge of living a homeless lifestyle. So it goes, the common imagery of a homeless person in America is that of a alcohol wielding homeless person pushing a shopping cart. The emotional and economic struggles of trying to survive in capitalistic America compounded with mental, emotional or physical disabilities will surely motivate many in the homeless community to open up that can of 211 or Sparks. For those unfamiliar with my alcohol related terminology (211 refers to malt liquor with a alcohol content of above 8 percent while Sparks is a bit stronger) .

If such strong alcohol beverages are needed to numb the pain for our alcohol consuming homeless, it's clear to see that the homeless in our community are dealing with a lot of emotional pain for many reasons. I want to point out that not every homeless person in our community drinks alcohol but alcohol consumption is fairly common.

The homeless, in an attempt to survive the outdoor elements, may also attempt to achieve a happier mental feeling with the consumption of alcohol. Then a homeless individual may hang out with other members of the homeless community to avoid the feeling of isolation from the greater community even though our homeless are not integrated into the events of the Davis community. For instance: **Dear reader, you tell me how many homeless individuals you have seen attend a city council meeting over a city concern, or have emailed a city council representative with an opinion.** The answer is very close to less than ten in the past year in my mind though I could be wrong. **Our homeless are preoccupied with the challenge of surviving; eating, staying warm and avoiding getting caught with a Open Container.** Ask a homeless person their feeling on the California Primary Election if you do not believe me. There are some in the homeless community who are very articulate and who could debate someone on the most complex issues one could imagine- our homeless are not stupid- **though the more frequent and**

chief concern is of the present challenge of survival. Homeless individuals hanging out in a group and consuming alcohol may get into a disagreement for many different reasons. Before you know it a group of homeless individuals are fighting each other with fists and beer bottles. City officials and neighbors around such an area will associate alcohol as the chief cause of the fighting and avoiding the underpinning reasons for why our homeless are consuming alcohol in the first place.

There is much pain in our homeless community. The solution is not an Open Container Policy- arresting our homeless after watching them with binoculars for consuming alcohol in public when all else is fine. The drinking just goes under the radar screen- it does not go away. The state of homelessness is still in our very community causing the homeless to consume alcohol. *Students* may become *angry* about the Open Container Policy and perhaps purchase alcohol permits for the homeless who may want to drink responsibly so that our homeless can avoid harassment from the police! I would encourage students to learn more about the dangers of the Open Container Policy. If students became more politically active and voted on city politics- we could be more progressive for our homeless. **I want to say that I am a fan of the homeless courts- a court which allows a homeless person to avoid a fine or jail time for a minor violation by doing community service.**

Our homeless need accessible mental health care and access to housing. I am talking about rent free housing and a stable job in construction or other fields. Investing in a non-profit like *The Spare Changer* which allows a homeless person to provide an issue of *The Spare Changer* in exchange for a donation is a great idea! **The biggest need in the homeless community is housing and employment. Davis businesses please hire some of our homeless!** And for the "rich" community member, I say why not cut a check for 50,000 dollars to your favorite homeless non-profit, so that more homeless folks can get on their feet instead of fighting and getting arrested by the binocular possessing police?!

Editor's Comment: When this was submitted, I laughed and laughed and laughed and then... I stopped laughing.

Homeless On Wheels

By Casey and Mr. Gage
(Reprint August 2005 TSC)

I got hurt on the job, forced to live in an RV, and basically found out it was illegal to sleep. A garbage truck backed into a pickup truck- trailer while I was standing behind the trailer. It knocked me down and rolled

over me. I sustained multiple injuries including broken shoulders, fractured cervical vertebrae, a concussion. I'm post and pre-surgery. My rotator cuff needs repair. I have a 28' completely contained motor home, which I share with my 2yr. old male Labrador retriever, Mr. Gage. He's my family. My son!

I first came to Davis a month ago, although I've passed through Davis a hundred times or more. I've lived in California all my life. It was in April of 2004 that I got hurt. I've traveled in the RV since then, but stopped in Davis this time because of all the trouble I've had elsewhere. I couldn't park anywhere I could afford. Understand that I went from earning 35 hundred a month as a flooring installer, to 666 dollars and 68 cents a month and being disabled, over night. I "may return to work, but may not use right or left arm." Sure. Right. Gotcha.

I lost the apt. I'd been renting in Petaluma. My boss bought me the motor home. He's a great guy. I taught him how to lay flooring thirty years ago, and now he is rich and successful. He's got a store, a dozen salespeople and ten to twenty installation crews. I don't know where I would be if Mr. Gage and I didn't have the RV; parking it has been the problem.

Petaluma is where the accident took place, and

it was the beginning of my homelessness, too. My RV was parked on private property where Mr. Gage was playing unleashed. **The police came onto the private property and impounded my dog on the third such visit, in three months.** He was released after my boss/friend paid 380 dollars and I was given a citation notice to correct within ten days: "Neuter (the) male dog." That was outrageous. I left, driving straight to Mt. Shasta City. I broke down and was legally parked, but my motor home was impounded because it was there too long (more than 72 hours) and was "interfering with a business." **I was threatened with citation and arrest "if (they) caught me sleeping in it while it was there."** I got the motor home out and in fact found private property on which to stay...for five months, for a friendly 100 bucks a month. This was fortunate because my doctor, my surgeon, and my physical therapist had offices walking distance on the same street. Later, I went to Reno to help a friend, but from there I came back to Rancho Cordova where my sister owns a 56 unit apartment complex.

Guess what? No RV's, no pets, no parking on the whole street, Four miles long built between Sunrise and Folsom Blvds. An exception was made for me for about a week but after that she said, "You gotta go, too many complaints." From there I went to Santa Rosa, where a friend said I could park on her street. In a six-day period, the Santa Rosa police, Sonoma County Sheriff's Deputies and the CHP,

warned verbally and by written notice that I was to move. "Can't park here in the unincorporated parts of Santa Rosa." I left.

I ran out of gas in Davis near Pole Line Road Baptist Church.

Later that night one of the Deacons, Mr. Blain, met me at the Arco station nearby and purchased 30 dollars worth of gas. Basically my rent, since I live in an RV. I have to keep moving it. And then something happened: A Davis Police patrol car pulled into the station. Mr. Blaine went over to talk to him. They both walked over to me. **This Sgt. Pul Doroshov I think it is, ran my license plate and the man told me it was ok, and actually put a message out to other law enforcement agencies in our area, that I'd been checked out, and will be sleeping in my motor r home this night; he gave me tips on where I could park.** He also gave me the address of the local Davis Community Meals Shelter Program and its Resource Center for further assistance!

I mean this guy... I couldn't believe how.... *opposite* he was from other

cops: kind, empathetic, polite and helpful. It was here at 1111 H Street that I was approached directly by The

Spare Changer to tell my story and give me a chance to say "thanks!"

The housing I have now is affordable. My legal case is pretty much open

and shut. I'll get a rather large settlement, and as long as I don't have to keep "moving along," I'll be Mok. Like if I'm in a church parking lot, and I have permission. **I mean, even if the law says I can park but NOT sleep, this[Davis] isn't the kind of place where the cops come knocking on my door at 3 am to see if someone's home (less) or not.** I'm not looking for trouble; I'm just trying to survive, recovering from my injuries. Besides, Mr. Gage loves the canine community here. We're going to be fine now.

Editor's Note: I had very much wanted to include our one line captioned Political Cartoon and Humor As You Walk sections, a tradition here at The Spare Changer. Sadly, there was just not enough space. I'll try to do better in the future. I'm still learning.

Editor's Comment: Ok, so I had a little trouble finding my Funny Files! I had trouble finding my mind this month, what with the excitement of moving from the streets to my own crib. These are exciting times for me personally, and exciting times for The Spare Changer! See you next issue!

**** I love poetry that makes me... feel!****

More now... *from the mind of henry7*

ghost people: the lament of the lost

E11649, whispers the marker in potter's field
john doe and jane doe lay side by side
spectral afterthoughts from the corner of the
eye
"honey, don't give them money; they'll only get
high."

facin' eternity, alone for the ride
society's blind-spot, shopping-cart chauffeur by
day

beggin' an hoin' and dopin' an dyin'
runaway child, runnin' wild
planted by the acre, but nobody's cryin'
anonymous gravestones devoid of flowers
march, unconsecrated, across this unholy mile

tox'city's untouchable no-men
treated as less than you an i
marginalized men, women, an children
outcasts whose existence is neglected an
denied
junkie/pariah/throwaway/subhuman

minds can fail an fortunes crumble
come see about me pleadins' from 6 feet under
should individual fate falter or stumble
we could all be ghosts, "botched an bungled"

ignored, ridiculed, neglected, an reviled
if destiny decides that your number is next
there, but for the grace of god . . .
ghost people
askin' god . . . why, why, why?

henry7reneau,jr.©

Next Issue:

**Cesar Chavez Plaza Revisited:
Truly Affordable Housing**

**Interfaith Rotating Winter
Shelter of Davis: Local Faith
Community Form Non-Profit to
Aid Un-sheltered Poor in Winter**

**DCC Lockers for the Homeless:
Delayed/Suspended**

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Visit thesparechangr.org God Bless and
Thank You for your continuing
support! It's been great!**

