

THE
**HOMELESS
 VOICE**
 FLORIDAS LARGEST STREET NEWSPAPER



COSAC Foundation | PO Box 292-577 Davie, FL 33329 | 954-924-3571



Dear Mr. President Elect Trump:

I am a democrat- one that has financially supported Mrs. Clinton in the past. You are now our President and I like many will support you. Everyone must admit you ran a very intelligent campaign and you will go down as being one of the smartest political campaigners in modern history. You ran your campaign as any good CEO would, it was cost effective and very effective. If you run our Country this way and cut down on some of the other promises you said you were going to do that made many people upset you may just make America Great Again.

I am writing this letter to you because I know I will get an answer. Some thirty years ago I sent you a letter via the Trump Organization about funding an Anti-Drug movie to stop overdoses and using the song Season in the Sun redone about not using drugs. You got back to me in two weeks with a nice card saying continue my dreams but you were not in the movie business.

I have a dream and that dream is that the first swamp you will drain is the cost of the Presidential inauguration to the American people. I know you are aware that the cost of security is about 125 million paid by the tax payers and another 50 to 60 million in private donations. Yes you deserve a fantastic inauguration but I also know you want to do what is correct. I know you and your people can come up with a more detailed plan that will be less expensive but one of the best inaugurations ever done. This will set the example for future presidents as well.

If you cut the cost by 50 percent you could open up 50 new homeless hotels where they become a self-supported community not costing tax payers one cent. Most homeless people have income and they are willing to pay to stay as long as it is not expensive. Not only are they willing to pay but they are willing to let others stay for free who are not able to work, not pay and who have no disability check. This system allows welfare to run at a profit and this is what most governments have tried to do but failed. We did it and we ran for 20 years, in fact we were so profitable we were able to start several new agencies with the left over funds.

As stated I am a Democrat but when it comes to taxes that are used for not for profits I think like a Republican. Most "not for profits" have CEO's that come from the business world. Imagine if they all started businesses to fund their agencies that would cut taxes. Like I said we did all this and ran a multimillion dollar "not for profit." I would be willing at any time to show your administration how to do this, it is right up your alley. I want nothing in return.

Again Mr. Trump even if you do not care about the Homeless hotels please start draining the swamps and set the record straight from the beginning and cut the cost of your inauguration.

One last thought Sir, can you become the first president to declare a war on cancer and win that war? If not, start a national database on a website that will work on preventative care, where a person can enter their name, date of birth, sex, and any other statistic and the system will send them an email on what test they should now be having at their current age to prevent certain types of health hazards including cancer. Sir, I think you can be that man.

God Bless Your Presidency.

Sean Anthony Cononie

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The COSAC Foundation was originally established in May 1997 to partner with other social service agencies, in the area, that provided help to the homeless population. COSAC also independently feeds the homeless or anyone in need of food. The COSAC Foundation opened it's first homeless shelter in 1999 and named it COSAC Quarters (the shelter money was raised by spare change). We have grown into a multifaceted agency that feeds, shelters, and arranges for each homeless person to receive the necessary access to social and noncompulsory religious services to enable a return to a self-reliant lifestyle. And for the small percentage of people incapable of living independent lives, we provide a caring and supportive environment for their long-term residency.

Our vision is to end discrimination against the homeless population and to develop such an effective network of services that we greatly reduce the time a person or family emerges out of homelessness back into self-reliance.



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A Bronx Librarian Keen on Teaching Homeless Children a Lasting Love of Books

Nikita Stewart

Colbert Nembhard looked more like a traveling salesman than a librarian in his dark suit with his rolling suitcase on a recent Wednesday morning in the Bronx.

He had strolled 10 minutes to the Crotona Inn homeless shelter from the Morrisania Branch Library, where he has been the manager for 25 years. As he dug through the dozens of books stuffed inside the suitcase, an announcement crackled over the intercom inside the shelter, where 87 families live: “Mr. Nembhard is here to read stories and sing songs to your children.”

Mr. Nembhard made do in a small office filled with file cabinets and dated desktops that also serves as a computer lab, a children’s classroom and a community recreation room. Tacked to a bulletin board were paper plates, colored and cut into fish shapes. A “Happy Birthday” balloon, almost out of helium, floated a foot above the floor.

For the past eight years, Mr. Nembhard has turned the shelter’s day care room or its dimly lighted office into an intimate library, tapping into the imaginations of transient children with the hope of making reading books a constant in their lives.

New York City has been criticized for failing to prevent homeless children from falling behind in their education and for contributing to missed school days, often because children accompany their parents when they travel from one agency to another seeking assistance.

Mr. Nembhard’s partnership with the homeless shelter, operated by SCO Family of Services, began informally, and has served as a model for a citywide initiative to place small libraries at shelters for families.

In September, the Library of Congress recognized the city’s Department of Homeless Services for best practices in literacy for its Library Pilot Project, an initiative that has created small libraries in 30 shelters for families with children since March 2015 with the help of a donation of 3,000 books from Scholastic Inc.

The program includes the Crotona shelter, where Mr. Nembhard was already a fixture. His example gave volunteers a blueprint for how to go to shelters and read to children.

“It’s a pleasure to come in here,” Mr. Nembhard began on that Wednesday, never removing his jacket during a presentation that was just short of a Mr. Rogers routine.



He began to sing, “Good morning to you,” and followed with “Wheels on the Bus.” The children joined in with a chorus of “round and round, round and round.”

Toddlers, fidgeting in their chairs or in their mothers’ arms, suddenly became fixated. They could not wait to flip open “Dear Zoo,” by Rod Campbell, a lift-a-flap book, to discover an elephant, a giraffe, a lion and other animals.

Mr. Nembhard with his suitcase stuffed with dozens of books. The children at the Crotona Inn homeless shelter begin to smile as they hear the sound of the suitcase rolling down the hallway.

Then came Mr. Nembhard’s magical blue glove — magical thanks to Velcro and the five monkeys attached to it — and later he brought out finger puppets. Avani Blair, 2, and Taniyah Blair, 1, stared in amazement.

“I like it, too. I feel like a big kid,” Aaliyah Blair, 24, their mother, said.

She said they had become homeless about two months ago after an eviction.

Mr. Nembhard knew most of the children by name. “You build relationships with them so that when you see them they feel comfortable,” he said.

Patricia Wright, the child care coordinator at the shelter, chimed in, “He’s seen them come. He’s seen them go.”

But Mr. Nembhard wants children to have a lifelong relation-

ship with libraries, which, he said, offer much more than books, including free wireless modems they can use at home during the school year.

In eight years, he has signed up many parents and children for library cards. “Oh, my God, I can’t put a number,” he said. “But I would say it’s a lot.”

As a teenager living in New York after his family moved from Jamaica, he saw an ad for a page position at the New York Public Library.

In college he had planned to become a social worker, but turned to library science as a career instead, earning a master’s degree in 1987.

As a branch manager, he saw the role that libraries played in social services. Many people, particularly those who are homeless, would come to the library to complete their résumés, conduct job searches and look for housing, Mr. Nembhard said.

But he said he realized that some people who were homeless did not find the library comfortable or convenient. “We bring the library to them,” he said.

For children at the Crotona shelter, the smiles begin every Wednesday morning at the sound of his suitcase’s wheels going around and around down the hallway.

“Once the kids see that rolling bag,” Ms. Wright said, “they know.”

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Adam Sennott Spare Change News
1890 was a good year for California oil baron Lyman Stewart.

His company had merged with Sesse Oil and the Mission Transfer Company to form Union Oil, Paul Rood, adjunct professor of political science and history at Biola University, said. At the time it was the largest oil company in California, responsible for one third of the state's oil production.

As co-founder, and later president, of the newly formed company, Stewart was well on his way to becoming known as "The Dean of the Western Oilmen," Rood said.

But Stewart began noticing a troubling trend. Many of the men who were coming to California looking for work were winding up jobless and hungry on the streets of Los Angeles.

The area had been largely agricultural land until the 1870s when railroads started lining the Los Angeles River, according to the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. Migrant workers started to flow in from throughout the country looking for work, and the area began to industrialize as cheap hotels, bars and whorehouses began popping up to serve its newfound transient population.

By the late 1880s the U.S. economy was in turmoil, Rood said. People were losing their jobs, Los Angeles had a growing homeless population and the term "homeless vagabond" was becoming part of the American lexicon.

"The hobo terminology first came in at that time," Rood said.

A devout Evangelical Christian, Stewart founded the Pacific Gospel Union in 1891 and began sending "gospel wagons" offering food, encouragement and salvation to the poor and homeless around the city.

The Pacific Gospel Union would later become the Union Rescue Mission, now one of the largest private shelters in the United States.

"They would get on the wagon, so to speak, and turn their life around," Reverend Andy J. Bales, CEO of Union Rescue Mission, said. "Some would slip and fall again, and they would fall off the wagon and return to struggling on the streets. But that's how we got started was the wagon on the streets."

The organization was based on Main Street, which "was the Skid Row of its time," Rood said. "Just a few blocks away from the Skid Row of today."

Stewart also set up a large tent at the corner of Los Angeles Street and First Avenue, which was known as "Hobo Corner," Rood said. Every afternoon and evening there would be gospel preaching "to be a source of help, for those who were willing to accept help."

Though Stewart later left the Pacific Gospel Union and founded the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, now

known as Biola University, his early efforts to help the city's poor took root and grew rapidly.

Within two years, the organization was serving 500 people and offering nightly revival sessions, according to the Union Rescue Mission's website. In 1907 they opened their first shelter at 145 North Main St., and by 1934, "Mission On Main Street" was offering 42 percent of all free meals provided by private charities in Los Angeles.

But despite those efforts, the problem slowly metastasized.

Today, Skid Row takes up 50 square blocks near Downtown Los Angeles and, according to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's 2016 homeless count, is home to 3,691 men, women and, despite the best efforts of advocates in the area, sometimes children. According to the count, 1,035 individuals on Skid Row live in transitional shelters, 879 in emergency shelters, 803 on the streets, 645 in tents, 272 in makeshift shelters, 42 in cars and 13 in vans.

Skid Row is a place where drug deals and violence are rampant and out in the open, and its residents often defecate and urinate in the streets.

"There is nothing like Skid Row anywhere else in the country," Bales said. "It's the biggest man made disaster in the U.S."

It's in the heart of Skid Row, San Pedro Street, where Stewart's work continues, Bales said. URM provides shelter services to up to 1,100 people along with three meals a day, mental health counseling, a legal clinic, learning center, medical clinic, dental care and a year-long addiction recovery program.

Unlike some shelters in the United States, URM is open 24-hours a day, 365 days a year, Bales said.

"People don't just come in at night and then leave in the morning," Bales said. "They're with us all day long."

This year, for the first time in the organization's 125-year history, the majority of those seeking services are women and children "by just a few," Bales said.

Though there are children living at the URM, Bales said there are few on the streets of Skid Row.

"For a long time, me and the county made sure that no children were on the streets of Skid Row," Bales said. "But they slip in now."

Bales said one such exception was a mother with a two year old who initially refused to come in to the shelter.

"It took us weeks to get her off the streets," Bales said. While hope is a hard thing to find on Skid Row, Bales said the organization has seen its share of success stories. About 18 percent of URM's staff are either former guests at the shelter or went through URM's programs, Bales said.

Among those success stories is a former guest named Alex, who came to the URM about 11 years ago to sign up for the shelter's one-year recovery program in order to escape a jail sentence, Bales said. After graduating from the program, Alex



reunited with his family, got married and now serves as one of URM's major donor representatives.

"We have many stories like Alex," Bales said. "I get to see walking talking miracles."

URM's YouTube page features 79 videos of testimonials from people such as Alex as part of their series, "stories from Skid Row."

While the URM is one of the largest private shelters in the country, it isn't the only faith-based mission on Skid Row.

The Midnight Mission has also been offering services to those living on Skid Row for more than 100 years, Joey Weinert, community events coordinator of the Midnight Mission said.

Midnight Mission offers three meals a day, Monday through Saturday, and breakfast and dinner on Sunday, Weinert said.

One of the goals of the organization is to create a sense of community that will enable the homeless to "look at the Midnight Mission as somewhere they can call home," Weinert said.

Residents of Skid Row are allowed to list the Midnight Mission as their address so they can receive letters through the shelter's mailing center, Weinert said.

"That's very important for people that don't have an address that are possibly trying to take advantage of any social services or maybe even try to get a job, or even just to let your family know where you are," Weinert said.

The Midnight Mission also offers a courtyard and a day room "where people are allowed to come in and just kind of hang out throughout the day," Weinert said.

The day room has several flat-screen TVs that were donated to the Midnight Mission, Weinert said. It gives the people a place to pass the time.

"They'll sit there and watch TV and hang out, whether they're waiting on housing or waiting on their next check, wherever that may be coming from," Weinert said. "Some people are waiting on their next hustle, some people are just probably just sitting there waiting for... they don't know what's next."

At night, the chairs in the day room are replaced with 32 cots, Weinert said. Those seeking a cot must sign up for one in the morning, and be in the day room by 8 p.m.

"We call that safe sleep," Weinert said.

The shelter is limited to only 32 cots in the day room "because of the possible spreading of tuberculosis," Weinert said. "The one requirement of safe sleep is they have to have their TB card from one of the county facilities in the area."

About 150 people also sleep in the Midnight Mission's courtyard every night in sleeping bags, on blankets, on cardboard or just on the ground, Weinert said. They must arrive

before the security guard locks the gate at 9 p.m., but once they arrive, they have a safe place to sleep.

"Once they're in, they're in," Weinert said.

The Midnight Mission also offers a recovery program for men battling addiction, Weinert said. The program is so intense that its newest participants are only allowed to leave the shelter to attend pre-scheduled meetings at night.

"The first couple of months you're here, that's the only way you're leaving here is by going to a meeting," Weinert said. "Once you've been here for 60 or 90 days, I believe, you're able to start taking passes so you can go check in on your family, maybe handle some legal issues or whatever the case may be, and focus on your treatment plan."

Everyone that enters the program gets a "work therapy" job designed to teach them to be accountable, Weinert said. There are a wide range of jobs available throughout the shelter, including kitchen work, security, building maintenance and administration work.

Participants also have access to the organization's education department, which helps with G.E.D. training and computer literacy, Weinert said.

After a year, if graduates have not found a place to live, they are allowed to stay a little longer in two-man dorm-style apartments on the shelter's third floor, Weinert said.

"We have 14 of those, and they cost \$250 a month," Weinert said. "Which is an awesome price for any guys that's working towards maybe getting something better."

About 26 percent of the men who complete the program have a job, have reconnected with their children and families and are back to being productive members of society a year after they graduate, Weinert said.

"If you look into any rehab or healthy living program or anything like that, [26 percent] is a substantial amount," Weinert said.

Despite the valiant efforts of both missions, the sidewalks outside and along nearby streets are lined and dotted with tents and makeshift homes for people who were unable or unwilling to sleep inside.

One such resident is Tracy Mac, who said she has been living on Skid Row for about five years, but she mostly keeps to herself.

"I don't talk to anybody," Mac said. "I kind of just stay to myself; I don't want to talk to nobody."

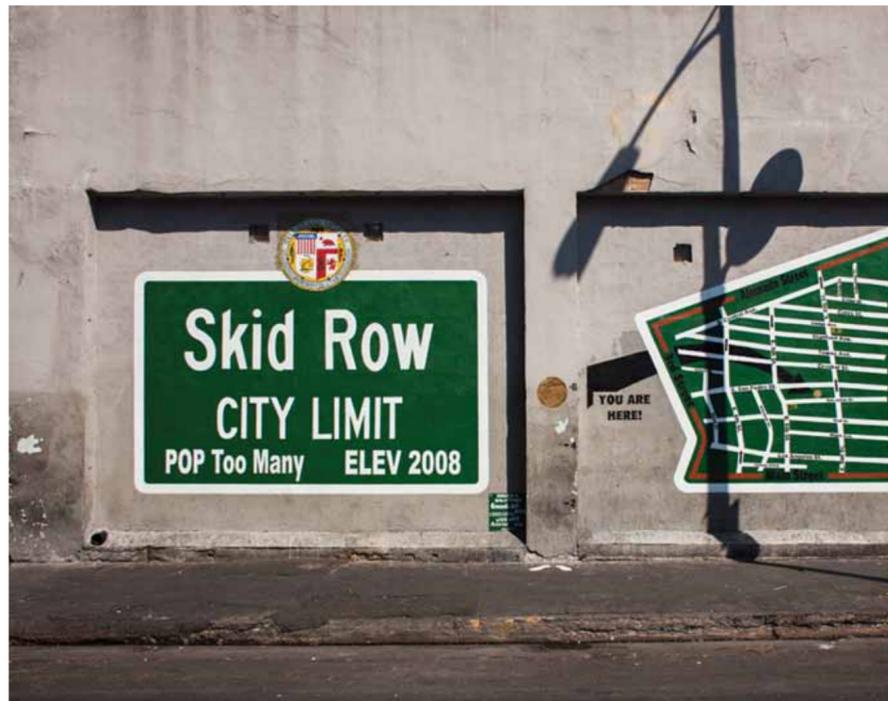
Mac said that she was living on her spot on East Third Street because "over here I don't smell so much raw sewage."

One of the reasons why Skid Row smells of raw sewage, Mac said, is because at night there aren't any bathrooms for people to use.

"During the daytime, there's a public [restroom], and then at night time we pretty much do it out here," Mac said. "That's what goes on at Skid Row."

Skid Row resident Anthony Fox said he wants "to get the hell out of here as soon as possible" and that the area often smells.

Life on Skid Row



"It's like a toilet bowl," Fox said. Despite the smell, homeless people from all over the country wind up living there Fox said.

"There's a lot of people that are homeless here that are not from California," Fox said.

He's said he's met people from Ohio, Indiana, Florida, Texas, Las Vegas, "and they say people over there don't tolerate none of this," Fox said.

Fox said it has recently become much easier to get housing. Pretty soon, he said his wish to leave Skid Row will come true. "They're going to house me in Hollywood, two blocks away from Runyon Canyon," Fox said. "I'm going to be rubbing elbows with the movie stars."

Fox's friend, who identified himself as Johnny Rox, has been living on Skid Row for about six years and said it's become his home.

"It's my neighborhood," Rox said. "I wouldn't want to go anywhere else... I came from a nicer community, but when I go back to that community now, I don't feel a part of that because this is who I am today."

Along the way, Rox said he's gotten to know nearly 200 people living on Skid Row.

"I like to call everybody my friends," Rox said. "Just every street I know a lot of people."

Rox also said that it has become easier to get housing. "Everybody's signing up for housing now," Rox said. "You used to walk the streets around here and it would be packed with people, and now there's a whole lot less people on the streets."

Rox also said the city is offering emergency shelter to the homeless as well.

"If you don't want to be homeless you don't have to be at all," Rox said.

Though he does like Skid Row and he appreciates the relationships he's developed there, Rox said he's also planning on signing up for housing.

"This week I'm going to be signing up and going the way of many others," Rox said.

While some of the residents have formed friendships and a sense of community with one another, Bales cautioned against romanticizing Skid Row.

It's a very dangerous place, Bales warned. Predators and gang members gather there, and women are routinely molested, robbed and beaten.

"It's hell on earth," Bales said.

Drug dealers target the area and prey on the vast amounts of people suffering from addiction, Bales said.

"Gangs prey on the addictions, and they brutally collect on the money owed to them," Bales said.

One night, as he was leaving the shelter, Bales said he witnessed a man he described as being six-foot-six and built like a NFL nose guard beating a woman on the street. When he rolled down his window and told him to stop, the man looked up and

said, "she owes us money." Bales tried to tell the man that "that's no reason to beat on a woman," but it was no use.

"Before I could get the words out, he was on my car punching, but I've got the window up so he was punching my window," Bales said. "That's a picture of what life is like on the streets of Skid Row."

This past April, the Los Angeles Police Department arrested 19 people and seized \$2 million in cash, 13 kilograms of cocaine, 22 pounds of methamphetamine, 20 pounds in heroine and nine firearms in a massive drug bust targeting dealers on Skid Row, the LAPD said in a press release.

Among those arrested was Derrick Turner, an alleged 48-year-old drug kingpin who had 600,000 \$1 bills, proceeds from selling cheap hits to homeless addicts, the LAPD said.

"Let me make this perfectly clear, Los Angeles will not tolerate anyone who will prey on some of the most vulnerable people in the city," Mayor Eric Garcetti said in a statement.

While Bales witnesses the dangers of Skids Row and the toll it takes on those living there everyday, he said it's also why he gets up in the morning.

"I want to change that, and I want to see the transformed lives," Bales said. "I hustle to work every morning because I get to see walking miracles, people

who were once stuck, addicted on the streets, who've escaped that threat."

While those "walking miracles" give Bales a reason to get up in the morning, they're also a continuation of Stewart's legacy on Skid Row.

Every fall Bales and Rood get together and honor that legacy by walking the eight blocks from the shelter's first home on Main Street, now City Hall, to the Union Rescue Mission's current home on Skid Row.

"We use the historic landmarks of this old, fascinating part of Los Angeles to tell the stories of how the problem of homelessness, joblessness, addictions and neglect came to rapidly urbanize Los Angeles and how the early compassionate business leaders and Christian lay workers established networks of support and life transformation for their fellow men and women in need," Rood said.

"From the gospel wagons and tents to the earlier URM rescue missions on Main Street, we see how these seeds of compassion have grown into major institutions serving the souls on skid row today," Rood said.

Drug dealers target the area and prey on the vast amounts of people suffering from addiction- Gangs prey on the addictions, and they brutally collect on the money owed to them-

91-year-old man knits hats for the homeless

Brent Ashcroft

When you reach the end of your life, what will go through your mind? Which areas of your life will you scrutinize and take inventory? Will you evaluate whether or not you were a good son, sibling, father and friend? Maybe you'll think about the accomplishments you accumulated or, perhaps, some of the failures and shortcomings.

Others may focus exclusively on the end, lean on their faith, and concentrate on what they believe is to come in the afterlife.

Morrie Boogaart knows he's nearing the end of his life. The 91-years old is currently a resident at Cambridge Manor assisted living facility in Grandville, Michigan. He's barely mobile, spending every day bedridden. Family members visit him regularly, but when they leave, Morrie is left with his life-long memories to stimulate him.

A well-worn bible sits innocently on his nightstand, and hanging on one of his walls is an 8x10 photo of his wife Donna Mae, who passed away 16 years ago.

"I had a good life," said Boogaart, while he slowly wraps yarn around his spindle. "I have always accepted what I had in life, and this is now what it is for me."

Right next to Morrie's nightstand is a pile of brown boxes stacked on top of each other. None of the boxes can be closed because each one is overflowing with more yarn.

"I just like to do it," said Morrie, as he continued knitting. "My eyes aren't as good as they used to be, but I can still do this."

Boogaart wakes up every morning and starts knitting. He doesn't stop knitting until he falls asleep at night. This happens all day, every day.

"This is my life," said Morrie. "I have always liked to help people, and I'm not going to stop now."

"We all need a sense of purpose."

Morrie knits hats, and since he started doing it nearly 15 years ago, he claims to have knitted at least 8,000 of them.

"That's why most people call me the 'Hat Man,'" he said.

Word of the Hat Man's creations began circulating far beyond the four walls of his room at Cambridge Manor a while ago. As people learned of his hobby, they began donating yarn.

"I would come visit him and there would be piles of yarn in his room," said Karen Lauters, Morrie's daughter. "The donations have been coming in from not just people visiting the nursing home, but from around the community, including several Churches in the area."

When asked what he wanted as gifts each year for Christmas, Father's Day and his birthday, he'd ask for only one item - Yarn.

"What else do you give him," Lauters said, jokingly. "Yarn is truly all he needs, and what he's doing with it is truly amazing and inspiring."

Knitting hats isn't just a hobby for Morrie. He has made it certain that every hat he knits gets donated to a homeless shelter in West Michigan so people in need

can have a warm hat to wear.

"When people heard the reason behind why my dad was making the hats, social media grabbed a hold of it, and yarn started being shipped to us from all over the world," said Lauters. "We received yarn from as far away as Australia and we heard that people were discussing it on Twitter in China."

Rick Snyder, the Governor of Michigan, was informed of what Morrie was doing. The governor took the time to write, sign and mail Morrie a letter.

"I can't believe the amount of attention this has received," added Lauters. "It's all sort of rejuvenated his spirit for life."

Morrie hopes to knit hats for as long as his health allows, but his health has been failing in recent months. He was diagnosed with skin cancer in the summer of 2015. The cancer started to spread, and a mass has shown up on his kidney.

"We put my dad into Hospice care a little over a year ago, after he had acquired pneumonia on top of the cancer," said Lauters. "As a family, we didn't think he was going to recover, but he recovered from the pneumonia and was taken out of Hospice care."

"His health hasn't worsened over the course of the past year, but the cancer will likely eventually claim his life. Surgery was presented as an option to our family by doctors, but it was determined at his age he probably wouldn't survive any extreme medical procedures, so we've all accepted the situation for what it is."

While Morrie has spent the better part of the last 18 months enduring his own cancer battle, he lost his son Russell to the disease in November 2015.

"Russell died just six months after he was diagnosed," Morrie said. "That was very hard on me because I wasn't able to make it to his funeral and properly say goodbye."

It's been constantly knitting hats that has kept Morrie going, and continuing to focus on living rather than dying. Knowing that every loop he makes on his hoop is going toward helping those in need, while helping him discover some purpose.

"Some days are good, and other days aren't so good, but I don't ever want to quit doing this," said Morrie. "There's too many homeless people out there who need others to care about them."

Karen Lauters visits her father often, but there are other times when her visits are strictly business. Sometimes, her sole purpose in visiting is to take all of the hats Morrie has finished knitting, box them up, and deliver them to homeless shelters that her dad suggests.

"He would sort all the hats into the boxes and would write on them where he wants them to go," said Lauters. "Some boxes would be labeled 'Mel Trotter' and others would say 'Salvation Army.'"

Karen loads 8 to 10 boxes of hats into her vehicle at a time, then personally drives them to the shelters. On this day, she delivered several boxes to Mel Trotter Ministries in downtown Grand Rapids.

"We get donations dropped off here all the time at Mel Trotter," said Abbey Sladick, director of communications for Mel Trotter. "Rarely do we get to see the faces behind the donations,



but when we learned about Morrie and what he was doing, he was somebody we wanted to meet."

Abbey and Karen emptied all the hats from the boxes and spread them on a table near the entrance to the cafeteria. As residents of Mel Trotter lined up for lunch, Sladick directed them to the table where they could select a hat to keep.

"A winter hat means a lot to people here," said Sladick. "Knowing that they have something on their head that keeps them warm, and was knitted with love, I think is wonderful."

"Morrie teaches everybody that no matter how old we are, or what medical condition we may have, we can all give back in some way."

"We can all learn from Morrie Boogaart."

Karen Lauters knows her father is in the sunset of his life, but she's beyond thrilled and is extremely proud of how he's found purpose and meaning in the face of his terminal illness.

"We should all be as driven as my dad," said Lauters. "What he's done [knitting all the hats and donating them to homeless shelters] has touched a lot of people, and it's been the best thing that could have ever happened for him, given his circumstances."

If his health allows, the Hat Man will continue knitting hats from his bed at the Grandville assisted living facility. His goal will continue to be to start and finish three hats per day, insuring that his 'end' might be a 'beginning' for those in need.

"If you take this [knitting hats] away from me, my life is over," Morrie said. "Please don't take it away."

I don't ever want to quit doing this," said Morrie. "There's too many homeless people out there who need others to care about them

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With small budget, UCF group brings health to homeless

Naseem S. Miller

With budget blood pressure monitors, \$1-a-pack wipes, and dozens of eager volunteers, a new UCF student organization is reaching out to Orlando's homeless population intent on improving their health.

"I said we're not doctors, we can't do blood tests, but what we can do is offer a blood pressure screening opportunity to them and tell them a bit about what heart health is about," said Andrew Aboujaoude, a premed student at UCF.

Aboujaoude founded Hearts for the Homeless Orlando with Alexis Ghersi, also premed, and Jennifer Carvel, who's planning to study clinical psychology.

Since August, the trio and their pack of volunteers have been going to food-sharing sites in downtown Orlando one or two nights a week for a few hours to offer blood pressure screenings to homeless people who drop by for food.

"At first, we had maybe one or two people come up to our table," Ghersi said. "Then eventually they realized that we're here to help, and more and more people came. Now they talk to us; now they enjoy the service."

The program teaches volunteers how to take a blood pressure reading and how to use the blood pressure chart by the American Heart Association. They write down the blood pressure numbers on a sticky note.

"Some of them do come back and bring the sticky note and that really shows you that they care," said Nicole Guevara, a premed student and one of the



officers at Hearts for the Homeless. "We might not know exactly the extent of what we're doing here, but we try to add that extra awareness."

The group says it has provided more than 100 blood pressure screenings to homeless individuals. Those whose blood pressures are too high or too low are referred to Grace Medical Home, a free clinic in Orlando, to get diagnosis and treatment.

Hearts for the Homeless started small. First, with less than \$50 from a UCF professor who believed in their cause, and then with a \$2,500 grant from the national nonprofit Resolution Project, which the group met at the 2016 Clinton Global Initiative University in April at U.C. Berkeley.

We might not know exactly the extent of what we're doing here, but we try to add that extra awareness

The group is now establishing its first chapter outside of UCF, at the University of Florida, and talking to another Florida university about the program.

There's no shortage of volunteers. And in its short existence the program has proven to be so much more than volunteer hours and health screenings.

"It's an emotional experience coming here," said Guevara, who was participating at a screening event in downtown Orlando on a recent chilly evening. "Every time you come here, your heart is full, because you know you're doing something good ... and the majority of time you realize that people just want to have a conversation with you. Just being there and listening to them is enough."

Tampa News

Extraordinary Ordinary: Officer Justin Lee



Walter Allen

A chance encounter between a Tampa police officer and a homeless man changed both of their lives forever.

For John Singleton, a typical shopping trip to Home Depot with his wife and 2 grandkids means a whole lot more than just another errand. He's shopping to start his lawn mowing business, but also a chance to shop with the man who put him on the path to a better life.

That man is Tampa Police officer Justin Lee. Lee found the family in a park after hours and was originally going to go with routine and tell them to move on. But after a little conversation, he learned that

that park is where John, his wife, and three grandkids called home.

"Something about them tugged at my heartstrings a little bit and I wanted to find out a little bit more about them. After John told me that they were homeless after getting displaced by one of his own family members, and had custody of his three grandchildren, I thought this was a great opportunity to get them on the right path," said Officer Lee.

So using his own money, Officer Lee put the family up in a hotel for a couple of nights then got them into Metropolitan Ministries.

"It's not something that we can look away from. The state isn't going to tolerate children on the streets. I personally won't tolerate children on the streets. I had a duty and a desire at the same time to make sure they are at the right place and are safe." Justin Lee told FOX 13 News.

Through donations, John now has bikes and trailers to carry equipment, and even door

hangers to advertise his new business. It all started from a routine park check, and an officer whose kind heart incited action.

I had a duty and a desire at the same time to make sure they are at the right place and are safe.

Homeless Man Rents Out Beds In 'Paradise' Home Under L.A. Freeway

Nina Golgowski

A resourceful homeless man has become a local celebrity after constructing an elaborate compound beneath a Los Angeles freeway that appears to have all the amenities of an ordinary home.

Ceola Waddell Jr. welcomes viewers to his roadside abode in a Facebook video that has been viewed more than 1.5 million times as of Sunday. "You have now entered Paradise Lane," the 59-year-old man quips in the two-minute video.

The residence features two toilets, two refrigerators that serve as "jacuzzi" bathtubs when filled with water, a guest bed and a snack bar. (The toilets, he says, rely on plastic bags to collect the waste.)

There's also a canopy bed, living room set, zebra-print blankets and sheets and a tent lined with pillows and blankets that has a "FOR RENT" sign attached. Waddell said he rents out his spare beds for about \$25 a week or \$10 a night.

A later video shot by Fox 11 News shows that the space has a small shower as well.

It's not clear who shot the video. The woman who shared it on Facebook on Nov. 3 could not immediately be reached.

According to the Los Angeles Times, fans of Waddell's handiwork have since gathered to take selfies before his compound. Waddell told the paper that he's enjoyed "the hype" over his decorating skills but otherwise doesn't understand the public's fascination with his outdoor residence.

"I refuse to let the city beat me down to what they think a homeless person's profile is, living on cardboard," he told the newspaper.

According to the Times, Waddell has lived beneath the freeway for the last six months. During that time, the city's sanitation crews have dismantled his compound several times, he said.

During one recent instance, after the video was posted on social media, crews removed a refrigerator they described as packed with an "abundance of rotting food." They also

I refuse to let the city beat me down to what they think a homeless person's profile is, living on cardboard



Photo cred Cynthia Mumba Farr

removed "explosive materials," a sanitation spokeswoman told the paper.

It's not clear how much of the camp remains beneath the freeway today. The city's homeless services authority could not immediately be reached for comment.

Bureau of Sanitation spokeswoman Elena Stern told The Times that the city has offered Waddell homeless services, including temporary housing, but he's refused.

Waddell, however, told the paper that he indeed wants housing. He further acknowledged the dangers of living

beneath an overpass and shared that he was once robbed at gunpoint in his bed.

Los Angeles has the second-highest population of homeless individuals of U.S. cities, with about 43,800 people reported homeless, according to a report released by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development this month.

The city's Homeless Services Authority offers a number of resources to homeless individuals and families, including emergency services and transportation, shelter referrals and outreach services, according to its website.

What's the best way to help the homeless? Former homeless people share their advice

Katie Dowd

"I was homeless a few years ago for a couple months. I was quite lucky in that I was very resourceful and street smart as well as clean and sober. I slept on the beach sometimes and in an underground parking lot other times. I eventually figured out the shelter system and that helped me get better access to food and resources. I remember getting help with free food like day old bread and free fruit/sandwiches etc as well as free clothes and I was grateful for all of it.

"What I remember most though are the people who saw past the mental illness, past the skittish, scared girl and into the human being underneath. The hotel clerk who let me charge my phone and gave me free coffee, no strings attached; the police officer who told me about shelters instead of writing me a ticket; and the shelter worker who chatted with me about some silly show on tv.

"I always remember those people and when I now work with homeless and disadvantaged people I always look for their humanity even when it is hard to find." — Pyid

"I was 18, finally leaving abusive parents. I could only get part time work, and it just wasn't enough to have a roof over my head and food at the same time. A thing that really helped me was this wonderful woman who came up to me while I was panhandling in the rain - she gave me a backpack, and a heavy wool coat. The backpack was full of socks, gloves, hand-warmers, a beanie, toiletries, and a letter from her saying everything would be OK.

"In one fell swoop, she gave me warmth, and dignity." — Capt_Gingerbeard

"My boyfriend was homeless for a period of his life

because of an abusive parent. He was lucky enough to have friends and family that helped to pull him out of his situation, but it obviously had a huge impact on how he lives his life.

"He always carries a few pre-made packs with toothpaste and a toothbrush, deodorant, disposable razors and shaving cream, socks, hand/feet warmers, etc. When he sees someone who needs help he gives them a pack and cash if he has it on him.

"But the best and most truly invaluable thing he does for the homeless people he meets is he stops and has a real conversation with them. He listens and shares stories and treats them with respect and dignity...

"He always tells me that it's not the money people need, it's normalcy. A daily routine and normal social interaction. Brushing your teeth, combing your hair, saying hello to your neighbor, and spending your day doing normal things and feeling normal. Too many cannot find this normalcy and so they turn to drugs and alcohol to escape their reality. Because they think they'll never feel normal again." — jproxduh

"There needs to be more opportunities for homeless or otherwise desperate people to do community oriented work. Where I live there used to be a program that had street people volunteering to pick up trash and hang holiday decorations and such. It was only for an hour or two at a time and in exchange they got access to laundry and showers and such, in addition to a daily meal available for all.

"People don't realize that the toughest part of being homeless isn't going without food. Of all the struggles, food is the easiest. Other things, like bathing, sleeping, s-----g, are a little tougher, but you learn to take care of your needs fairly quickly. It's the time that gets you. You're outside, somewhat uncom-

fortable, maybe asking for handouts, being told to move along, get a job, etc, for hours and hours. Feeling totally useless messes with your head. The idea of getting wasted is very appealing. You start to resent "housies." Other homeless people are the only ones you relate to. It becomes a trap. If you don't have a safety net out there you eventually lose any desire to rejoin society.

"So just about any low pressure activity would be really helpful for homeless people to snap out of their rut and build some kind of connection to the community." — moreLSDplease

"It's community things that help best, I find. I got put on a program for homeless teens where someone came and checked on me every week and took me to a community

house thing. We'd do things like learn simple practical or social skills like learning how to cook and fix things or learning how to tie a tie. They'd talk to us and build up friendly relationships. They never tried preaching to us or anything, we were never forced to join in, we could spend the day just being there and watching everything if we wanted. But they treated us like people so everyone always did something.

"I didn't really realize it at the time, but looking back that extreme amount of kindness helped a lot. People who didn't know me went out of their way to help me and make sure I was alright just out of the kindness of their heart." — BlueCarmine

But the best and most truly invaluable thing he does for the homeless people he meets is he stops and has a real conversation with them

God Will Make A Way

Lydia Preston

Society seems in a mess
Mothers cry, while Fathers stress
to be polite is a disgrace
as children mock you to your face

every day the papers show
that crime and rape did upward go
the things done in laboratories
are stashed away in lavatories

drugs and sex aren't hard to find
it seems as if the worlds gone blind
for what the people fail to see
is messing up society

as Dads no longer head their home
and kids all sit, and chat by phone
what once to all has been a home
is looking like a war torn zone

no longer do you find that kids
are playing in the park
for its become a hideout place
for gangsters after dark

what once was right now seems so
wrong

no more joy and no more song
as what this all was meant to be
lies buried in a cemetery

by telling you these things my aim

is not to make you mad
its just to tell another truth
which soon will make you glad

amidst the chaos of this world
of hurt, despair and pain
and hate along with treachery
all done for selfish gain

theres this one thing I know of
believe with all my heart
that when I bend my knees to pray
my God will make a way

TOO RICH TO BE POOR, TOO POOR TO GET BY



BY LILI HOLZER-GLIER

A line of wilting people snakes across the busy Brooklyn sidewalk. Families cluster beneath a few sparse trees and flatten themselves under narrow awnings, some sinking to the ground, seeking a sliver of shade. Most people have been waiting two to three hours to pick up a small bag of groceries at the Brooklyn Faith SDA Church food pantry in the East Flatbush neighborhood. "Trust me," says pantry director, Barbara Joseph, "People would not be here if there wasn't a real and pressing need."

The New York State unemployment rate fell to 4.7% in May 2016, its lowest level since 2007, but many families are still struggling to find enough full-time work to keep a roof overhead and food on the table. Some 1.4 million New Yorkers struggle with food insecurity, and although Food Bank For New York City delivers 300,000 pounds of food per day, that is still not enough to close the yawning meal gap.

"About 60% of New York City residents who are using food pantries are also getting SNAP benefits," says Food Bank For New York City Vice President for Research and Public Affairs Triada Stampas. "It's just that they need a food pantry when their benefits run out, because those dollars are just not getting them through a whole month." Of the other 40%, many are not poor enough to receive food stamps, but need to come here nonetheless.

For a family of three to qualify for food stamps, their gross monthly income must be at or below 130% of the poverty line. In 2016, in order to qualify a three-person family must make less than \$2,177 a month, or about \$26,100 a year.

In a slowly recovering post-recession economy, many low and middle-income families earn too much to receive government assistance but bring in barely enough to meet basic needs. In places like New York City where the cost of living is high, families just above 130% of the poverty line must depend on emergency sources of food like pantries and soup kitchens in times of need.

According to the Hamilton Project's paper A Dozen Facts About America's Struggling Middle Class, "In 2012 more than 24 percent of struggling lower-middle-class children ages twelve to seventeen (or approximately 1.7 million children) lived in a household identified as being food insecure." Most of these families struggling with food insecurity are working families. According to a recent study by the USDA, in 2010-2011, 75 percent of food-insecure families with children had one or more working adults – 60 percent had an adult working full-time. There are twice as many employed adults – many of them college-educated – seeking emergency food assistance than there are homeless people. And many working families, whose small paychecks preclude savings, are one lost job or serious illness away from financial disaster.

"We're in an economy that has been upended and restructured by the recession," says Food Bank For New York City's Triada Stampas, "Low-wage work is no longer a guarantee against hunger. This sector is called emergency food because

the purpose was considered to be the resource you turn to in an emergency – you lose a job or some misfortune happens in your life and you find yourself temporarily in need. The truth of the matter is, we are no longer exclusively providing emergency food, our network, our system is serving chronic need."

-Filecia Pedley Brooklyn, New York I'm a mother of four children. I work for the City – for the Department of Consumer Affairs. I've been there for 14 years. I'm married; my husband is self-employed as a computer programmer. Even though we're both working and I'm working full-time, we still have to go to the food pantry in times of need – usually once or twice a month.

People really depend on the pantry. I see hundreds of people just pouring in every time I'm there. I see lots of people that have good jobs like nurses that are still going to the pantry...really it's people from all walks of life. There have been times that we've gone to the pantry and there's nothing there. The shelves are empty, maybe just enough there for one dinner. The demand sometimes is just greater than the supply.

Food cost is expensive in New York City. I've never gotten help with my kids as far as vouchers, food

stamps, daycare. Every time I applied I got denied because they told me I was above the minimum to qualify. And I'm like, what's the minimum? Because once I get done paying rent and bills there's nothing left. Why do they deny parents that are working? It's unfair in some ways because I want to work and make a living so why can't I get assistance with daycare? Why can't I get assistance with food? Why is it only people that aren't working are getting this help?

Sometimes people say to me, 'You're working, you shouldn't be going to the pantry.' But what am I supposed to do when I go to the supermarket and I can't afford anything there?...If paychecks went up at the same rate food costs go up I don't think so many people would be depending on these pantries.

If I fall behind on my rent the first thing I do is run to the pantry and make sure there's food in the kitchen to get these children fed. After we pay for rent, utilities, credit cards, phone, cable, insurance, gas, Metrocards, and food we're close to \$4,000 per month. I make \$40,000 a year and my husband is freelance so that's all of our money. We have nothing at the end of the month to save. We try to cut everywhere we can. My husband got rid of his cell phone – we just share one now. We cut down to basic cable. We leave the lights off as long as we can every night. It's always a struggle.

In a slowly recovering post-recession economy, many low and middle-income families earn too much to receive government assistance but bring in barely enough to meet basic needs.

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