

Perhaps you have seen, as I have, an increasing number of homeless in Humboldt the past few years; and that on top of the fact there were plenty of homeless here *before* the past few years.

There are also increasing numbers of voices that either think we are doing too much to help the homeless or too little. Some are saying that if we provide many services for the homeless we will attract homeless people from outside our area. ~~Some~~ ^{One person} says that the amount of persons ^{in our} on General Relief has declined the past decade; others dispute those figures.

I would say, whether or not we provide public services to the homeless, those on the lower end of the economy are going to come here. Poor people simply can't afford to live in Sausalito or San Francisco. Rents are cheaper here and that explains why lower income people tend to collect in rural areas like ours. Good paying jobs have also become scarce in Humboldt, which doesn't help!

As long as our nation holds to Judeo-Christian values, there should be a consensus that we need to help those in need. I would also say we ought to help in ways that are neither patronizing nor enabling. The best kind of help offers a hand up so the poor can walk on their own two feet. Betty Chinn has been doing just that for almost thirty years. I have seen her give thousands of sandwiches to the hungry, find shelter and reconnect homeless with long lost families—and perhaps most importantly, treat the people on the streets with dignity and kindness. Betty has provided hundreds of bus passes to those who were otherwise unable to get home; seldom have those persons returned to our County. Betty gets kids ^{empowered} to school who would not otherwise attend. Betty has boosted the confidence of some who were ~~enabled~~ to go to school and begin a meaningful career.

In cooperation with Catholic Charities, Betty is planning to open a shelter in Eureka that will help those who need a hand *up* not a hand *out*. Those who know Betty are aware of her passion to help the poor; some might not know that she is not only compassionate, but shrewd. She is capable of disciplining the biggest and burliest of those who are on the streets—acting as a surrogate Mom to many who probably did not have good parenting. She encourages her clientele to clean up after themselves, as, for example, they have done at the showers on 3rd Street, which were provided with Maria Shriver's help.

Two days before Thanksgiving I was helping Betty Chinn and others feed about four hundred at the St. Vincent de Paul Kitchen. Among them were four or five teens who had nowhere to go. Betty said when I open my house these kids will have a safe place to stay.

The Betty Kwan Chinn Homeless shelter will not fix homelessness, but it will provide one step toward a solution to a homeless problem caused by a sagging economy, scattered families, mental illness and chemical addictions.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment