

*in search of a solution for*      *1 for one*

Homelessness has been a problem ~~for~~ a long time in our city and County. I do not think it's getting better; in fact, the other day when some speakers highlighted their research saying that it ~~was~~ getting better, a large percentage of the audience sighed in disbelief, ~~including me~~. The homeless seem to be everywhere, holding signs, and pleading for a hand out, pushing shopping carts and hanging around the Bayshore Mall. Speaking of the Bayshore Mall, I support Chief Mills' actions pushing campers out of the so called Devil's Playground. Why? They were creating a lot of crime, ~~they were~~ damaging the businesses around the mall in many ways; they were creating a public health hazard ~~by camping in a place not suitable for camping~~, and they were endangering the free usage and enjoyment of that area for many ~~persons~~ <sup>citizens</sup>, for example, the many ~~who would like to get a little exercise and enjoy the beauty of Humboldt Bay by using walking or biking along the Chicksau Trail~~.

I am also appreciative to the chief for the insight: those on the far right and far left have no viable solution to the problem of homelessness. On the far right, these people want to push the homeless out of the city, county. —or maybe into the Bay. That's not a good solution because it ~~devalues the worth of all the homeless~~ <sup>amounts to</sup> treating them as less than human. If ~~their~~ <sup>their</sup> lives are not to be valued, then all our lives can be devalued. On the middle right, you have some who seem to care about the homeless, "just don't put them in my back yard," and make them work or ~~else~~ starve. Fine, but a lot of them have neither peers nor parents who have modeled a work ethic for many years. They need a hand up! ~~not endless handouts~~.

On the far left are people who say, leave the homeless alone, homelessness is not a crime, and let these happy people do whatever they want—pitching their tents wherever they please, never mind the consequences for businesses, homes or tourists or the local economy. That is unhelpful, because it's a kindly but misguided form of indifference. Let them alone because they are happy campers. I beg to differ; people who are living outside all the time, many of them buying and selling drugs, committing and instigating crimes, and engaging in nothing of social utility to the society as a whole, are not happy campers. They are living in purgatory, <sup>get involved</sup> and need help getting out, ~~for their own good, as well as that of the larger community~~. On the middle-left, there are advocates for the homeless who want them to have the right to toilets, clean water and a place to sleep. Who could argue with that, unless we ask, who's supposed to pay for it? !

In sum: any lasting solution to homelessness will not come from either the far right or far left. It will have to come from the broader middle section of citizens: people who care about the homeless, but who also want to help them join ~~the~~ society rather than camping on its margins. It's the people in the middle who can help find a balance between the rights of the one, and the common good of the many. It's the people in the middle who can take the risk to extend friendship across the social and economic borders that tend to divide the haves from the have nots. Rather than marching and lobbying ~~and~~ asking the government to solve the problem, ~~we~~ <sup>we</sup> ~~volunteer~~ <sup>PA</sup> ~~It's enough people volunteered~~ <sup>would</sup> with places like the Rescue Mission, St. Vincent De Paul, the Betty Kwan Chinn Center and countless others ~~who are helping the poor every day~~, we can lick the homeless problem. We just have to ~~care~~ <sup>get enough people to care</sup>.

*so we can turn homelessness into a problem that's been solved.*

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment