

Hello, this is Tom Cookman with a Community Comment.

Last week my wife and I were walking through the Safeway parking lot when we were approached by an elderly woman who told us she was 86 years old and never imagined she would be in a position to be asking people for money. I usually just walk by the panhandlers as I figure that a high percentage of them are just getting money to feed their addiction to drugs and alcohol. Instead of giving money to these people and enabling them to continue in their lifestyle, I give money to my church with the knowledge that they give back to the poor through programs like The Betty Chinn Outreach Center. This elderly lady didn't look like a drug addict so we stopped to see what she needed. She told us that she needed money for gas. I was still reluctant to hand over any money without getting more information so I asked her where her car was. She pointed to an older Honda and said that the black Honda was hers. She had me, I was ready to help. I told her that I would do more than just give her a few dollars, she could follow me across the street and my wife and I would fill her car completely with gas at the Renner station. She looked at me and said that she would rather do it the other way and have us just give her money. I told her that I would rather fill her tank with gas and my wife and I walked to our car. When I pushed my shopping cart back to the store, I looked at her and said that I was willing to fill the car with gas, she completely ignored me. The panhandling in Eureka is out of control and I want to thank the Eureka City Council for passing the ordinance that makes it illegal to beg for money at certain key areas and intersections in Eureka. I also want to thank the Eureka Police Department for enforcing this ordinance. Last Thursday I saw police cars stopped at the Bayshore Mall and at the intersection of Henderson Street and Broadway clearing out

the panhandlers. This is an important step in cleaning up our streets. Moving the homeless camp is another project that is going to improve this problem. I know these people will still be in our community, but we have to aggressively enforce the laws that curtail these activities. Our tourism is taking a serious hit because of how bad the homeless problem has become. Druggies' wandering our streets is now the number one topic people from out of the area talk about. It used to be how beautiful our majestic redwoods were. When I worked at the Seafood Grotto the tourists were lined up around the block in the summer just to get some fresh seafood and great clam chowder. We cannot save our timber industry, but we can save tourism by making sure our city is safe and secure and as free as possible of what we all see on a daily basis. The Eureka City Council and Eureka Police Department have started moving in the right direction. Humboldt County is one of the greatest and most scenic places in the United States. When you stop and really look at the redwoods, the rivers, the ocean and the bay, we really are blessed to live here. I can only hope that the people in charge at the County level will quit looking at ways to give themselves a bigger paycheck and use those funds instead to improve the homeless problem.

This has been Tom Cookman with a Community Comment.