

Hello, this is Tom Cookman with a Community Comment.

I work close to the PALCO Marsh and have seen the homeless camp grow to a size that is out of control over the last couple of years. I have often commented here on the radio at what an eyesore and how dangerous this is to our wonderful city. It is not only an unsafe environment for those of us who work close to this homeless camp, but it is also a very dangerous situation for the homeless people who live there. The number of homeless pedestrians that have been seriously injured or killed by vehicles on Highway 101 from Humboldt Hill to Arcata is staggering. There are statistics that rate our community as the most unsafe city in the United States when it comes to per capita vehicle pedestrian incidents. Clearing out the homeless mini city behind the Bayshore Mall is a key first step in taking our city back. It is only the first of many steps and I hope and pray that those in charge keep the ball rolling. We need to quit handing out so much money to this segment of our population. It is unfortunate that these people are in such a bad way, but handing them more tax money isn't working. It looks good on paper for us to take care of those less fortunate, but when we are simply enabling them to live on the streets it is counterproductive. The reality is that we live in a community that is generous. This generosity is known throughout the state and even the country. We attract people to Humboldt County for a variety of reasons. They come for the remarkable scenery or they come seeking their fortune in the marijuana industry or they come for the climate. The list goes on and on, but once they get here it is an easy path to just get by with all the handouts we give them. There are numerous organizations that make sure they are fed. I think that it is admirable to feed the hungry, but what happens to the tax dollar that is given to these people for food once they get a free meal

elsewhere? Is that money then used to buy drugs, alcohol and cigarettes? We all know the answer to that question is yes. We need the resources that these individuals use for their addictions to be distributed in such a way that we can make sure they are being spent on essentials. Easier said than done, but we need to have our Social Services Department focus their energy on handing out non monetary benefits. The WIC program gives food vouchers that are good for specific foods. This would be a great place to start. It is sickening to see our tax dollars used to buy packaged cookies and junk food. Ask anyone who works in a grocery store how many people buy junk food with their food stamp card and then pay cash for their cigarettes, alcohol and lottery tickets. If anyone has money for that stuff, they should be removed from the welfare program. With today's technology, we should be able to track what our tax dollars are being used for. I want to help the poor, not the lazy. If we removed the bums out of the system, we could really help the person who is just in a bad spot and needs relief for a short period of time. We could fund the rehab clinics and build new mental health facilities that could really help these people. This could all be done with the resources we already spend. Cleaning out the homeless camp is a first step in the right direction. This has been Tom Cookman with a Community Comment.