

This is Anthony M with your CC

Old Town Eureka is a disaster zone. Two weeks ago I discussed the homeless, and since that radio broadcast, the following has happened:

I had to ban another hobo from entering my store because I witnessed him dumpster diving. I have a rule, I see you in the trash, you do not get to touch my merchandise.

Something else last week, I had to restrict the access of a hobo named Dan. He has been buying guitar strings from me for years, but I read in the paper that he was busted for smoking meth. I confronted him about the problem and he responded that it's not a big deal, he just likes to smoke a little meth once in awhile. Well, Dan, it is a big deal. And from now on, he can only come up to the front door, if he wants to buy strings. If he presents any more problems, then I probably will have to ban him, too.

I once again witnessed "hobo Jake" walk by my store. He shoplifted two headphones last year. In response I pressed charges last year and I called all the pawn shops and music stores and recommended they not do business with him. Unfortunately he is still getting services from our local charities.

Over this last weekend A hobo stopped by, who I have not seen in a long time. He got in trouble with me last year because he brought a buddy who I had banned for a violent attitude.

So all of that in just the last two weeks. But I have been working in old town for 8 years, and just think, I deal with the homeless an average of once a day. Similar stories. Hundreds of examples. We have become masters of keeping out the bad apples and mitigating the threat of those that we do let in. But the whole thing is ridiculous.

Let's break it down. The homeless population consists of three, distinct groups. That is, #1 LifeStyle Homeless. #2 The Mentally Ill and #3 those Down on their luck

The LifeStyle Homeless are the biggest threat, because these people don't want to follow any rules. They are not interested in housing if that means taking on responsibilities. LifeStyle homeless are bums, who want to do nothing but bum around. Giving them money only multiplies their number. Giving them money only enables them to get their next fix.

And they waste resources that should be going to the other two groups. 25% of the **homeless** suffer from some form of severe **mental illness**. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, Even if those with mental illnesses are provided with housing, they are unlikely to achieve stability, they are unlikely to remain off the streets unless they have access to continuous treatment and services. The only way to make it work with the mentally ill is to keep funding it. But It's impossible to properly fund this effort if the money is being siphoned away on the "lifestyle" homeless.

As for group #3, those that are homeless because they are down on their luck. Statistically, I believe they are the smallest group, and that our local charities are doing a great job scooping them up. Unfortunately the lifestyle homeless are getting in the way and are denying critical services that could help.

We must stop looking at the homeless as one homogeneous group. That strategy is a failure. We must stop giving money and services to lifestyle homeless, and only focus our efforts on the mentally ill and those that deserve a hand up.