

This is Lieutenant Roger McCort from The Salvation Army in Eureka with today's Community Comment.

Last week, police deployed to a public park in El Cajon, cracking down on a group of heinous lawbreakers engaged in the nefarious activity of providing food to people who were hungry.

Those who participated in this event concealed what they were doing by distributing their donated goods under cover of broad daylight. The police located them by looking in the open, where the perpetrators of this feeding were concealed by standing next to tables laden with food, water, and hygiene products.

“Great googly-moogly!” you are probably crying out. “Thank goodness that the forces of justice have prevailed in the face of such dark deeds!”

Honestly, you may well be saying that, though without the goofy superlatives or the sarcastic overtones. Because most folks are not enthused by the idea of feeding the

homeless. The two problems they have with such feedings are trash and people who are homeless.

“We must stop public feeding because it creates trash!” say naysayers. In their minds, not feeding the hungry will result in pristine parks with litter-free lawns. Alas, it only takes a pair of working eyes to see this is not true. Plastic bags, cigarette butts, and fast-food wrappers abound in our public spaces, no matter if anyone had recently been handed a sandwich and a pair of socks there.

Yes, groups which provide food for the homeless and hungry should also provide trash bags and a cleanup crew who does a walk-through when those cups of soup return to being just cups. But if we are going to use litter to determine that someone shouldn't be fed at a certain location, we will need to shut down our fine fast food establishments and every grocery store as well.

No, no, say others. Handing out meals creates and enables homelessness! If we simply stopped feeding people

on the street, they say, then there will soon be no people on the street!

Yet this objection is more spurious than the first! Even if we ignore the dark hope of this idea, namely that if you don't feed people, they will die and cease to bother anyone, we are still faced with a ridiculous claim. Sandwiches do not cause homelessness, people!

One night, I was confronted by a shopkeeper, who insisted that people were becoming and staying homeless because of the food I brought them. I pointed out that the sandwiches my outreach team provided were made of two pieces of dry, week-old bread onto which we had carefully pasted a single slice of deli-thin bologna and one, small square of pasteurized yellow cheese food product. NOONE is saying, "Goodbye, friends and family! I'm heading out to live the life of a pariah, hated by society, exposed to the elements, sick, and addicted to substances which do little to dull my pain! In exchange for crumpling my dignity and living in squalor, I will receive - once every week or so - two

slices of bread wrapped around something resembling something which looks like it may have been meat at one point.”

The reality is that agencies who do street feedings need to do so responsibly, readily sharing information and referrals which help someone escape from the trap of homelessness. Those sandwiches are the entry fee.

We need to stop legislating against the people trying to help end homelessness and start working on providing real solutions, because that guy living under the bridge isn't going away without them.

Grace and peace to you. This has been Lt. Roger McCort for the KINS Community Comment.