

Downie, Chelsea

From: Deborah Barnes <lifesaversb@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 17, 2012 9:22 AM
To: sbcob; Farr, Doreen; SupervisorCarbajal; Lavagnino, Steve; Wolf, Janet; Gray, Joni
Subject: Today's meeting

Dear Board of Supervisor Members,

Today I am writing to you in deep concern over the "mentally ill" of our community. I work solidly as the only full-time outreach server in the "trenches" 5 days and 4 nights per week. As always, I invite you to join me along with my 100% volunteer team anytime. When people ask me, "how many mentally ill are on our streets?" I tell them every person on our streets is mentally ill. You cannot live on the streets like a criminal and animal and have self worth or value. Nomads crack. You start acting like you are indeed an animal and criminal and it changes your mental stability. Then we have those that are born with or through accident, are mentally ill.

If you had attended last Thursday's meeting called **STREET FEAT: Impossibly possible: Empowering our homeless community**, you would have met a wonderful man named Richard LeMieux who was very wealthy and lost it all. In spiraling down, he lost his self worth and became mentally ill having to seek help from a mental health facility in Seattle area. He spoke eloquently about his life and the chances he was given, how a hand up provided him an opportunity after almost 4 years on the streets. he was given the opportunity we do not provide here.

Additionally, we had **Downtown Streets Team** of Palo Alto speak about their franchise that comes and creates jobs for our community and has an incredible track record in taking the highest risk street nomads and helping them turn their lives around into tax paying citizens. We heard from several of the formerly chronic homeless who now are employed full time and have normal lives again or for the first time.....no programs, no detox, no shelters, no SSI or SSDI.....but hard work everyday earning food vouchers and more, until they earned levels to gain a room.They worked until they earned a support letter to go get a regular job because they re-gained their self worth. What a breathe of fresh air to see them and meet them and congratulate them.

I have invited the Downtown Streets Team here. They are making a proposal now for their franchise to come to Santa Barbara. We simply have to provide solutions for a HAND UP not a HAND OUT. oobs and volunteerism are the answers.

Further, it is my belief having worked on the streets for almost 4 years, that not one person that I have met should be getting SSI or SSDI nor really needs it or deserves it. What I have seen is not fair to those who deserve these incomes. The issue is no ability to work with our current lack of jobs and no self worth. Our state is bleeding handing out these free incomes and they don't require a payee. This is folly and destruction. They simply abuse the funds and live as they have been living, failing at housing and then sitting with free incomes on the streets again. The cycle is horrendous and not stopping.

It is my strong belief that:

- 1) Every person receiving SSI/SSDI needs a payee by law so they are required to pay rent and bills first before they drink or abuse the funds (I have many stories of abuse I can share with you)
- 2) All people on SSI/SSDI should be required to **volunteer** for a job 5 days per week (we have identified this work and there is plenty of it)
- 3) The Urban Nomads on the streets will soon have the opportunity to work and earn and be provided with steps to raise themselves up off the ground into citizens they are meant to be by Downtown Streets Team or an agency similar.
- 4) Immediate need is necessary for jail release, to provide them with immediate sign ups for volunteer work- we have numerous kinds of work according to their skill set or capacity.
- 5) If they are passing through SB, they will not stay. If they live here, they will know the requirements of them.

The buck has to stop here! We cannot afford to continually allow this abuse of state, county and local funding to be wasted. We **MUST** create a requirement of "invest back to us that have invested heavily in you". Help us by requiring this work ethic and help them by giving them self worth again. They are needed and need to be needed.

The message will be loud and clear!

Please join me in this change.

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DEBORAH BARNES
WORTH
street reach
servicing & inspiring urban nomads
805.331.0865
LifesaverSB@gmail.com
www.worthstreetreach.com
each one reach out to one