



The Voice Indianapolis



September 2015

SPONSORED BY: THE CREATIVE CHANGE PROJECT

HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome!

By: Us

Welcome to the Voice, a newsletter by the homeless voices of our community.

Welcome back to another issue of "The Voice." Like always, if you have missed any of our pervious issues click the following link to our website and find them there (www.creativechangeproject.com). On the Home page of our website you will see a designated box for the newsletters, click, and you are there.

The purpose of this newsletter is to raise awareness and educate the general public on real homeless issues and the truth about living homeless.

Our hope is that we can persuade readers to facilitate or attend a Cultural Competency Presentation which will profoundly change the way you view homelessness.

We hope you enjoy our work!

What's Inside:

- Welcomepg 1
- In The News.....pg 2-3
 - ❑ **Banning homeless from sleeping outside Unconstitutional.**
- Special Thanks.....pg 4
 - ❑ **Indy Reads**
- Perspective.....pg 5-6
 - ❑ **Camille Rivera Deputy Commissioner (NY)**
- Charting The Way.....pg 7
 - ❑ **Cost of Incarceration for the homeless.**
- My Homeless Experience (Alumni)pg 8-9
 - ❑ **Sharing my experience**
 - ❑ **Extras! (below)**
 - *Job Fair*
 - *Homeless Graphic Art*
 - *A bit of Humor.....*
- Next Cultural Competency.....pg 11
 - ❑ **September 26, 2015**
- Next Homeless Experience.....pg 12
 - ❑ **November 20, 2015**
- Food For Thoughtpg 13
 - ❑ **Origins of Homeless Camps**



Making a difference

How the homeless issue is being approached in other cities. (Page 4)



My Homeless Experience

A Homeless Experience – "Testimony" (Page 6)



Sleeping outside challenged

Constitutional or Unconstitutional? (Page 2)

IN THE NEWS!

It's unconstitutional to ban the homeless from sleeping outside, the federal government says.....

The Atlantic
By: *Emily Badger*
August 13, 2015

We all need sleep, which is a fact of life but also a legally important point. Last week, the Department of Justice argued as much in a statement of interest it filed in a relatively obscure case in Boise, Idaho, that could impact how cities regulate and punish homelessness.

Boise, like many cities — the number of which has swelled since the recession — has an ordinance banning sleeping or camping in public places. But such laws, the DOJ says, effectively criminalize homelessness itself in situations where people simply have nowhere else to sleep. From the DOJ's filing:

When adequate shelter space exists, individuals have a choice about whether or not to sleep in public. However, when adequate shelter space does not



exist, there is no meaningful distinction between the status of being homeless and the conduct of sleeping in public. Sleeping is a life-sustaining activity — i.e., it must occur at some time in some place. If a person literally has nowhere else to go, then enforcement of the anti-camping ordinance against that person criminalizes her for being homeless.

Such laws, the DOJ argues, violate the Eighth Amendment protections against cruel and unusual punishment, making them unconstitutional. By weighing in on this case, the DOJ's first foray in two decades into this still-unsettled area of law, the federal government is warning cities far beyond Boise and backing up federal goals to

treat homelessness more humanely.

"It's huge," says Eric Tars, a senior attorney for the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, which originally filed the lawsuit against Boise, alongside Idaho Legal Aid Services.

[Lifting bans on sleeping outside won't stop criminalization of homelessness]

According to a NLCHP report last year that surveyed 187 cities between 2011 and 2014, 34 percent had citywide laws banning camping in public. Another 43 percent prohibited sleeping in vehicles, and 53 percent banned sitting or lying down in certain public places. All

of these laws criminalize the kind of activities — sitting, resting, sleeping — that are arguably fundamental to human existence.

And they've criminalized that behavior in an environment where most cities have far more homeless than shelter beds. In 2014, the federal government estimates, there were about 153,000 unsheltered homeless on the street in the U.S. on any given night.

Laws like these have grown more common as that math has actually grown worse since the recession.

"Homelessness is just becoming more visible in communities, and when homelessness becomes more visible, there's more pressure on community leaders to do something about it," Tars says. "And rather than actually examining what's the best thing to do about homelessness, the knee-jerk response — as with so many other things in society — is 'we'll address this social issue with the criminal justice system.'"

It's also easier, he adds, for elected officials to argue for criminal penalties when the

public costs of that policy are much harder to see than the costs of investing in shelters or services for the poor. Ultimately, though, advocates and the federal government have argued, it's much more expensive to ticket the homeless — with the court, prison and health costs associated with it — than to invest in "housing first" solutions that have worked in many parts of the country.

Criminal citations also compound the problem of homelessness, making it harder for people to qualify for jobs or housing in the future.

"You have to check those [criminal] boxes on the application forms," Tars says. "And they don't say 'were you arrested because you were trying to simply survive on the streets?' They say 'if you have an arrest record, we're not going to rent to you.'"

NLCHP's goal, Tars says, isn't to protect the rights of people to live on the street, but to prevent and end homelessness. That means adding a lot more shelter beds and housing options in

places like Boise — which has three shelters run by two nonprofits — so people have options other than the street.

The DOJ's argument is based on the logic in an earlier Ninth Circuit decision, striking down a vagrancy law in Los Angeles, that was ultimately vacated in a settlement. That logic specifically says it's unconstitutional to punish people for sleeping outside if there aren't enough beds for them to sleep indoors. If there are, the constitutional question would be different, although the moral and policy implications may remain the same.

"Homelessness never left town because somebody gave it a ticket," Tars says. "The only way to end homelessness is to make sure everybody has access to affordable, decent housing."





Indy Reads is a not-for-profit organization that relies on volunteers to provide basic literacy tutoring to illiterate and semi-literate adults.

Our mission is to promote and improve the literacy of adults and families in Central Indiana. We believe that everyone should have an opportunity to learn to read, and our goal is to make Indianapolis 100% literate.

Our programs include one-on-one tutoring, small group sessions, English as a Second Language instruction, and "Literacy Labs" at neighborhood centers.

Indy Reads engages in community outreach and is available to speak about the economic, social, and health benefits of reducing adult illiteracy. If your Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, sorority or fraternity, PTO/PTA, or any other volunteer organization, service organization, or business would like to learn more how you can help reduce adult illiteracy in central Indiana, please contact us today.

For more information follow the link below:
<http://www.indyreads.org/>



A Homeless Perspective...

By: Camille Rivera, Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Homeless Services (NY)

HOMELESS FACTS

80%

Eighty percent (80%) of our homeless population suffer from mental health issues.

60%

Sixty percent (60%) of the homeless population have jobs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



Being homeless, is more than just not having shelter or somewhere to sleep. It's about not having a home -- a center of connection, a foundation of community and a source of support. It is our responsibility, as a community, to be compassionate, understanding and helpful to those facing these obstacles and challenges.

Over the last year, working for the City of New York and alongside many others, I find myself surprised at the general media narrative that creates a misunderstanding of homelessness and poverty. When mainstream media feeds us negative stories about homeless, it's easy to buy into the stereotype, especially when it comes to those living on the street or in shelter. But, despite their appearance or inability to

live under a roof they can call "home," it's important to understand many of these individuals don't choose this life or wish to remain this way. You see, not everyone who is homeless is on the street and not everyone who is on the street is homeless.

Homelessness is a consequence of many factors that plague our society and our communities -- from gentrification, to low wages, to issues of mental illness and family crisis. Yes, these myriad issues manifest themselves in our shelter system and the solutions are never easy. Homelessness is just one example of the vast inequalities that exist that are part of a rippling problem created by the choices we've made as a city, as a country.

Despite these inequities, what I can say, is that I am proud and heartened by this administration's commitment to utilizing every tool and resource it has to stem the tide of this very challenging issue. And in spite of the clouded, and negative, media narrative surrounding homelessness, we are always heartened by the little-told success stories of people who have overcome seemingly insurmountable adversity and are now on the road to getting back on their feet.

I understand there is no clear cut answer. But what I do know, is that homelessness, and all the complexities that accompany it, is this Administration's top priority. Finding effective, long term solutions to helping solve this crisis is our goal. But it will require work. It will require the full commitment and involvement of not only the multiple city agencies, the City administration and our community partners, but yours as well -- neighbors, friends, colleagues. As we strive for this, let us remember that while these

individuals face many challenges, many of them also want change. Real change. Change that will help them get back on their feet, get the help they need to move forward, off the streets and out of shelters, and that can't happen without a real effort from us all.

CHARTING THE WAY:

Source: Below

Researchers tracked **37 Homeless people** arrested **1,250 times** over 10 years for **61,896 total days of incarceration**. Here's what they cost:

\$130,000



Booking costs



\$4,951,680



Jail costs



\$1,336,225



Mental-health care in jail

= \$6,417,905

Source: The 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress

Mother Jones

Homeless Experience – Alumni

By: Leslie

My Homeless Experience:

Hi, my name is Leslie, and I took part in the Homeless Experience in May 2015. My experience was truly eye opening!

At church, the Homeless Experience was presented, and the congregation was asked to sign up after church if you were interested and wanted more information. This seemed pretty interesting, so I signed up. The time had come for the experience, but there were a couple of factors that did not allow me to participate. I still wanted to do this, so I signed up again. I told my co-workers what I was planning on doing for the weekend. One co-worker told me that that was something she always wanted to experience. I asked her to join with me, but the date conflicted with her child's baseball schedule. She asked me to let her know if I plan on doing it again because she was definitely interested.

Other co-workers were scared of the fact of being homeless for a weekend. I was not scared. I actually looked forward to the experience. Others told me that they loved the comforts of their beds and lives to give them up. They asked me to please fill them in on what happened and my experience when I returned to work on Monday.

So I told my family about what I was planning on doing. My sister said, "Really?!" My mom did not like the fact that I would be homeless and sleeping outside on the streets. She was worried that her baby girl would be in harm's way to other homeless men. I did not let anyone's comments keep me from doing this. I prayed about it and had COMPLETE peace about being homeless and being protected for the weekend.

I drove downtown and parked my vehicle. I met up with Maurice and the others that were doing this experience. As I walked away from my vehicle, I smiled. I smiled through the entire homeless experience, even when I was laying my sleeping bag on the curb in a downtown alley. From the time I got there until the time I left, I was amazed at the people I encountered. The sense of community in the homeless community was amazing, the amount of support from volunteers to help feed or provide essentials for the homeless was uplifting, and the people themselves were so nice and kind.

I don't ever want to be homeless, and I am so thankful for what I have, but I TRULY enjoyed the homeless experience. I would like to do the experience again in the future and take other friends and family with me. It has pushed me to do more for those without and be more compassionate for the homeless. It has also helped me to appreciate even more, what I do have.





Job News
Indianapolis.com



INDIANA STATE FAIR GROUNDS

• Job Fair •

**Tuesday, October 6, 2015
10a – 2p**

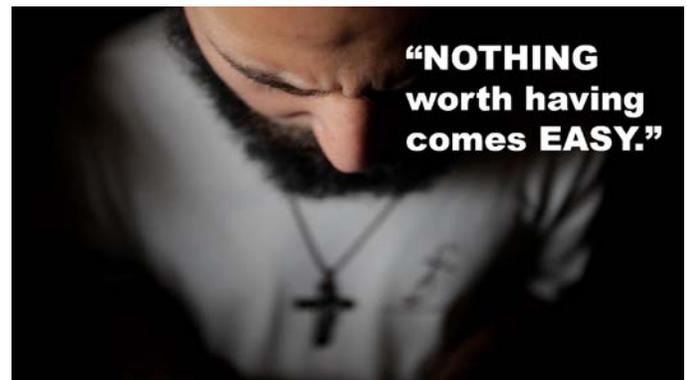
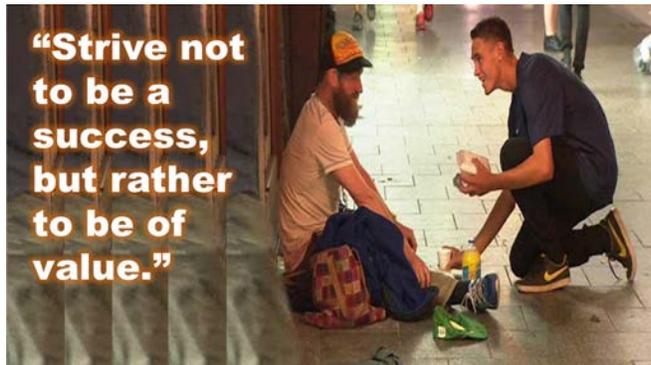


Job News Indianapolis Job Fair

Tuesday, October 6,
10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

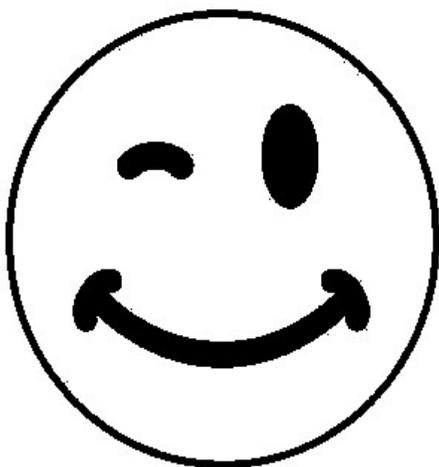
Indiana State Fairgrounds
1202 E 38th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46205

Homeless Graphic Art



Check out our Facebook page to see more: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Creative-Change-Project/303593586466151>

a bit of Humor....





how to help the HOMELESS



What do you really know about Homelessness?



September 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			



SATURDAY



September 26, 2015

BridgeWay Community Church

12945 Parkside Drive

Fishers, IN 46038



<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cultural-competency-presentation-tickets-17084718854>



Child Care AVAILABLE



The **HOMELESS** EXPERIENCE



DATE: Friday, November 20, 2015

TIME: 4pm Friday (Begin) – 2pm Sunday (End)

LOCATION: Downtown Indianapolis



Have you ever wondered what it's really like to be homeless and live out on the streets? Come see firsthand the situations that homeless individuals face daily by "Walking a Mile in my Shoes." This new program will allow you to:

1. Engage with the homeless of our community
2. Meet those who serve the homeless community
3. Acquire knowledge regarding the growing crisis of homelessness and
4. Become aware of the public's attitudes towards people who are homeless

Space is limited, so visit our website to sign up for this rare experience. A general itinerary is listed on our website for preview.
<http://indy26aug.wix.com/indyhbr#!form/c6rr>



About Camps: Homeless encampments often reflect the lack of adequate housing or shelter in the community. Research indicates that in addition to the simple lack of available beds, the shelter system often does not meet the needs of homeless individuals, especially over the longer term. For example, inability to accommodate couples; requiring families to separate; safety concerns; restrictions on storing belongings; and opening and closing times that conflict with work schedules can deter individuals and families from shelters. In some instances, tent cities can offer individuals and family's autonomy, community, security, and privacy in places where shelters have not been able to create such environments. (nlchp)`

The
Voice
Indianapolis

Downtown Indy
Indianapolis, Indiana
46202



CreativeChangeProject.com



The Creative Change Project

125 W South Street, #2927
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206