

# HOMELESS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The **FREE** gift-giving and resource guide for people who want to do more than hand out money.



by **Becky Blanton**

# Table of Contents

Page 2	Table of Contents
Page 3	Holiday Gifts for the Homeless
Page 13	101 Gift Suggestions for The Homeless
Page 18	Who Are the Homeless and How Did They Get That Way?
Page 20	Federal Definition of Homelessness
Page 21	Famous Homeless People
Page 25	Four Kinds of Homelessness
Page 30	Panhandling Etiquette
Page 33	Safety & Security
Page 34	Why Homeless for the Holidays?
Page 37	Angel Food Ministries
Page 38	Mark Horvath - Making the Invisible Visible - Invisible People TV
Page 43	Hope House
Page 41	God's Pit Crew
Page 42	Run Tellman Run. Tellman Knudson - Running Barefoot Across America to Raise \$100 million dollars for Homeless Youth
Page 43	Homeless Youth
Page 44	Resources
Page 48	Copyright Notice



Along with finding a safe, warm place to sleep every night, finding a safe, clean place to shower daily or even weekly is very difficult.

Typical places to shower include health clubs, public parks, beaches, offices that provide gyms or showers for their employees and universities. Most of the working homeless, particularly those mobile ones, join a gym so they have a place to shower, so they can rent a locker to keep their towels and toiletries, and so they have a place to go at night.

Many places offer limited memberships, often for \$25 or \$30 a month (some for \$150 a year and no monthly fees) that allow members to work out three times a week. If you have a church group, fraternity, club or organization that wants to help, consider buying or matching (paying half) of a health club membership for a family or individual. Not only will a health club membership give the person a chance to work out, exercise and be around other individuals, they'll be able to stay clean, feel good and get the positive feedback and access to networking they can use to get back on their feet.

Many health clubs will require that the individual has a "permanent address," so you may have to make arrangements to provide one, to get a Post Office Box, or to convince the club owner that the member in question is "in transition."

If you belong to an organization that has a building, camp or access to showers, consider offering shower access to families or individuals on at least a weekly basis.

# Cleanliness

Next to personal cleanliness, clean clothes, pressed and presentable for work, are the most difficult to come by for the homeless. Some “drop-in” centers or shelters have washers and dryers, but it’s often difficult to get your laundry done when you’re not staying there.

Weekly laundry bills at public laundromats can be expensive, often running \$20 to \$30 a week for laundry detergent and the cost of washers and dryers (\$.75 to \$3.00 to wash and the same or more to dry a load of laundry).

A couple of ten dollar rolls of quarters, small bottles or packages of laundry detergent and fabric softener make excellent gifts. If your local dry cleaner offers gift certificates, or offers washing by the pound services, consider giving the gift of clean clothes. If you belong to a gym, a church or other organization with washers and dryers, consider having one day a week where a family can do their laundry.

If the homeless family is someone you know, trust or work with, or maybe is a coworker or neighbor, offer your home



once or twice a month for them to do laundry, have a meal, shower and get ready for the week to come. If you’re not comfortable doing that, take up a collection and put the person or family up for a night or two in a local hotel. In many small towns hotel rates may vary from \$35 to \$75 a night.

What few people realize is how much work it is to be homeless. Everything that used to be in ONE place, is now in 10. Not only do you have to go to the laundromat, the grocery, but you have to do it daily if you don’t have a place to store your things (like a car, camper or van). If you have a family, laundry and dirty clothes can be a nightmare - and a huge expense. The tendency when there’s only enough money for food, gas or laundry, to let the laundry go.

Once the clothes become soiled, dirty, rumpled, smelly, it becomes close to impossible to keep a job or get a job. You feel depressed. You feel worthless and every time you catch a glimpse of yourself in dirty clothes those feelings are increased. A shower and clean clothes can totally elevate the mood of a homeless person. Having access to regular facilities to stay clean and have clean clothes can make a huge difference to the person struggling to get off of the streets. Laundry detergent is expensive, especially in the small bottles and packets that the street dwelling homeless must use. Those living in a vehicle fare better. They can get to the laundromat, clean and store clothes in bags in the car and even use a dry cleaner for work clothes. But it’s very expensive.

# Give the Gift of Grooming

Good grooming is often the first thing to go when you're homeless. Giving the gift of grooming can be as simple as a gift certificate for a haircut.

Chain salons such as Fantastic Sams, Supercuts and other mall salons offer a shampoo, cut and style for between \$13 to \$20. Many have specials during the week, such as \$10 for men's haircut on a certain day.

Check with your local salon and see if you can arrange to purchase a quantity of gift certificates. If you're worried about the recipient selling the certificate, then simply make sure the certificate has a place for the person's name and print a disclaimer on the certificate that the person present a photo ID when redeeming the certificate. **COST:** \$10 to \$20



Yes. Many shelters DO have days where haircuts and shaves are free, but for the working homeless, or those who do not use shelters or are homeless and fear shelters, those haircuts aren't an option.

It's not an elitist thing, but the reality of families not familiar or reluctant to venture in an area of town where they don't feel safe, or don't understand how the system works.

The \$10 or \$20 they would spend on a haircut is better spent on food, gas or other items. But being clean, well-groomed and presentable is part of getting and keeping a job.

If you know how to cut hair, consider a day of hair cutting at a local church as well as a shelter.

# Light It Up



## **Solar Powered LED Light Cap** (<http://www.gofastandlight.com>)

One of the most aggravating things to keep track of while homeless is batteries and flashlights. This solar-powered cap eliminates that aggravation. Not only does the cap act as protection during the day, but the solar panel on the bill charges an LED light for use at night. It makes it easier to read, to organize your things, to find your way in the dark and for kids, to help them keep their fear of the dark at bay. No worry about batteries burning out if they fall asleep either. It recharges the next day.

**COST:** \$16.95 (<http://www.gofastandlight.com>) to \$24.95

If you're not a cap wearer, there are also LED lights that clip onto your eyeglasses, or reading glasses. If you don't wear glasses, try the headband version. Lightweight, portable - most fit in a pocket, great lights. The LED bulbs last 100,000 hours. The solar rechargeable cap is best, but even the lights that take batteries are inexpensive - usually a dollar or two at most Dollar Stores, up to \$24 at camping stores.

<http://beckyblanton.com> or <http://homeless4theholidays.com>

# Money, Money, Money



## Money Pocket Belt

Pickpockets, lost wallets and other hazards make carrying money on the street dangerous. Give the gift of increased security with a money pocket belt. Allows the wearer to keep big bills, important personal information like social security cards etc. in a place most thieves won't think of.

To remove money and keep the "secret" of the belt secure, use a public restroom or take it off in your vehicle or other private location where no one can watch, remove your money, replace the belt.

**COST:** \$11.95 to \$19.95

## Security Belt

Pickpockets, lost wallets and other hazards make carrying money on the street dangerous. Give the gift of increased security with a money belt. Allows the wearer to keep big bills, important personal information like social security cards etc. in a place most thieves won't think of.

If a regular money pocket belt doesn't have enough room for your bills, passport, personal papers etc, there are a variety of styles and colors of security belts that both men and women can wear under their clothing.

**COST:** \$12.95 to \$16.00



<http://beckyblanton.com> or <http://homeless4theholidays.com>

# Bags and CarryAlls

Whether a person is living in their car, a shelter, couch surfing with friends or in a hotel, a light-weight bag, carry-all or suitcase is an ideal gift.

Not only will a bag hold a week's worth of clothing and toiletries, it's a lot less likely to draw attention to someone on the street than a garbage bag would.

A bag keeps clothes clean, dry, folded and accessible. For someone using public transportation or walking, a bag with wheels and a handle is a lot easier to walk with.

Teen-agers in particular are more likely to hang onto a bag or backpack since it's an item their peers will also have. Prices range from \$10 to \$75.

If you're giving it as a Christmas or holiday gift, consider filling it with socks, gum, snacks, a lightweight fleece blanket, gloves, a portable alarm clock and a variety of toiletries - toothbrush, toothpaste, soap in plastic soap box, shampoo, sani-wipes, a roll of toilet paper, packages of kleenex, lip balm, washcloth etc.

**COST:** \$10 to \$75



# 12-Volt Appliances

If you know someone who is homeless and living in their van, truck or car, consider a gift of [12-volt appliances](#).



## Oven-to-Go

The Burton "Oven-to-go" is available at Amazon.com for about \$29.00, and at a variety of stores, truck stops and RV stores for \$29 to \$54. Prices will vary from store to store. This unit will cook anything from pizza to stew and runs off the vehicle's battery through a cord that plugs into the vehicle's cigarette lighter.



## 12-Volt Electric Blanket and Battery Guard

For truly cold nights, it's hard to beat a 12-volt electric blanket. Pair this gift with a device like the "Battery Guard" that alerts the driver with a low-battery charge so their vehicle battery doesn't die.



**COST for Blanket:** \$29 - \$54

**COST for Battery Guard:** \$17 to \$34



## 12-Volt Electric Razors

12-volt Electric Razors make it easier for those living in a car or van to shave without resorting to public restrooms. Cost for grooming appliances ranges from \$11 to \$24, again, depending on where you shop.

**COST:** \$22 to \$42



## 12-Volt Hair Dryers

12-Volt hair dryers can double as window defrosters, a major issue when condensation fogs up windows when you're sleeping in a vehicle.

**COST:** \$11.95 to \$18.95

## 12-Volt Beverage Heaters

A 12-Volt beverage heater can heat baby food, a bottle of baby's milk, tea, coffee, soup, water or any liquid. Cost varies from \$19 to \$34.

**COST:** \$24 - \$44



# Head -To-Toe

## Socks and Foot Care Products

For the homeless living on the street, there's no greater gift than new, clean socks. Heavy white cotton is the best, but all socks are welcomed as layering silk or polyester socks with cotton helps prevent blistering.

Put two or three pairs of socks into a quart-sized zip-lock bag with a pair of toenail clippers, foot powder and band-aids, several packets of alcohol swabs. Foot care is critical - and often difficult when living on the street.

**COST:** About \$1 to \$5 per pair of socks (more for wool or hunting style socks). Foot power, clippers and alcohol swabs would also cost less than five dollars.



## Pre-Paid Cell Phones

Most cell phone carriers offer pre-paid cell phone plans. Phones cost from \$20 to \$200 and pre-pay plans allow the user to pay for the minutes they need or use as they go. **Cricket, Boost, Trac Phone** and others are good. Make sure the cell phone has an alarm function as well as a clock. Virgin phones I have had don't have that function and an alarm is critical for a homeless person. The less they have to carry, the better.

Having a cell phone allows the homeless 24/7 access to friends, family, support, emergency services and help lines. Without a cell phone number many people find it difficult or impossible to get a job interview, let alone a job. Many jobs require employees have a phone so they can be contacted by their employer. If you belong to a group or organization that wants to make a difference, consider buying a pre-paid phone and pay for minutes. If you chose to discontinue your support you just stop paying. The person with the phone can then pay for their own minutes. There are no contracts to sign and no connection fees.

**COST:** Some plans, like **Boost**, offer **unlimited, anytime minutes** with no roaming fees, and unlimited texting and walkie-talkie for \$50 a month. Other plans, including pay-as-you-go 10 cents a minute plans are also possible. For the person looking for work or with a family, the unlimited plan is the best buy.



# 101 Gift Suggestions for the Homeless/Working Homeless

These are gift suggestions for a range of homeless people - from the addict or mentally ill person on the street (socks, shoes, coats, blankets), to the family you've heard about at work, church or from a friend who recently lost their home in the mortgage crisis, or was laid off and has moved into their van, car or a trailer.

While some gifts might seem odd to give, don't forget that a coworker or good friend who has been laid off and become homeless, or single mother, or teenager struggling to get through school would appreciate the gift. Being homeless doesn't mean your life and needs stop. You still have to eat, shower, wash clothes, get your hair cut, stay warm (or cool in summer), get to work, or find a job, keep a job or care for your children and family, or your pets.

If you don't want to give gifts, then give \$2, \$5, \$10 or more each month on your electric or utility bills. Your local utility company has programs in place for a one time payment program to help keep the power on for needy families in the event of a crisis (job loss, car broke down, medical issues that kept them from making utility payments). This is an excellent way to help PREVENT homelessness since research shows its easier to KEEP someone in a home than a shelter.

1. Showers
2. Laundromat Tokens or Dry Cleaning certificates
3. Grooming - hair cut or shave
4. Solar powered baseball cap with reading light
5. Money belt (security)
6. Equipment bag or gym bag, suitcase
7. 12-Volt Appliances (stove, coffee pot, hair dryer)
8. Personal Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap etc)
9. Socks
10. Prepaid Cellphone
11. Toys for children in homeless families
12. Coat
13. Backpack
14. Small LED flashlight
15. Flip-flops (for public showers)
16. Hand sanitizing gel
17. Sunglasses
18. Bug Spray
19. Net-book
20. Rain gear
21. Clothing (sweaters, sweat pants, work clothes)
22. Stamps for mailing letters, bills, job applications
23. Foot powder and nail clippers
24. Blanket
25. Cigarette lighters
26. Candy bars
27. Beef Jerky
28. Non-perishable food items like tuna, pudding, applesauce, diced fruit etc
29. Movie tickets
30. Gift cards to restaurant, grocery
31. Motel room for the night or for a week
32. Health club membership
33. Laundromat tokens
34. Gloves and Knit Caps or Hats
35. Watch

36. Portable alarm clock
37. Sewing kit
38. First aid kit with items for foot blisters
39. Foster care for their animals if they have them
40. Payment on a small storage locker or a safe place they can access personal items
41. Tooth cleaning at their dentist or a dentist
42. Over the counter medications such as aspirin, cough syrup, vitamins, Pepto-Bismol
43. Pre-paid gift card for gasoline
44. Snack bags with raisins, gum, cheese and crackers, candy, cookies
45. Tax services - offer to help them fill out their tax forms or pay for a service to do it
46. Hand warmers
47. Electric socks (yes, they do work)
48. Hand held tear gas for women for self-protection
49. Inflatable pillow
50. Sleeping pad (as used for camping) Sleeping Bag
51. Post Office Box (\$24 to \$40 for six months)
52. Bus pass
53. Subway or Metro pass
54. Parking place. If your church or business can allow a person or persons to park in your lot overnight (arrive after 6 p.m. and leave before 8 a.m.) please do. Yes, there are legal issues and liabilities associated with this, but California businesses are doing it, so a lot of the ground work has been done.
55. Car parts and maintenance items - like oil, windshield wipers, anti-freeze.
56. Tune-up
57. Brake work and other mechanical work on a vehicle a family depends on for shelter or work.
58. Coaching in how to do your best in a job interview
59. Financial coaching - how to set up a budget - or better yet, pay or help pay for the person to attend Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University (\$59 to \$99 for life)
60. Tutoring for kids
61. Pay for an "After-school Program" for homeless children
62. Thermal underwear (tops and bottoms)
63. Pay for medication (Wal-Mart offers \$4 generic for many meds. If the homeless person is on non-narcotic medications arrange with your local pharmacy to cover medications up to a set dollar amount.
64. Diapers
65. Baby food and formula
66. In rural areas, a fishing license and fishing gear (many homeless still do fish for food)

67. Hunters, donate your meat to "Hunters for the Hungry" or, if you're not a hunter, donate money to help fund the meat processing fees. In Virginia, a contribution of 20-dollars will process 1/2 a deer (25-pounds of venison), 40-dollars will process 1-deer (50-pounds of venison), and 80-dollars will process 2-deer (100-pounds of venison).
68. A Flip camera so they can record and blog and tell their own stories.
69. Pocketknife (Swiss Army with fork, spoon)
70. Email or mail them regular notes of encouragement and support
71. Leatherman tool (has basic tools, screwdriver, pliers etc.)
72. Gel shoe inserts
73. Nicorette gum for smokers trying to quit who have already been using it & can't afford it.
74. Water bottle
75. Packages of presweetened Kool-aid or other drink mixes in individual servings
76. Inspirational literature - Small new testaments, Chicken Soup for the Soul books, or any inspirational (doesn't have to be religious) books. Children's books.
77. Pens, pocket-sized notebooks for helping keep track of things to do, lists etc.
78. Pocket calendars so they can keep track of appointments, job interviews etc.
79. Resume help. If they don't have a resume, help them create one or create one for them.
80. Manicure or pedicure
81. Order a food box from Angel Food Ministries (<http://angelfoodministries.com>)
82. Pet food
83. School supplies for teens/those attending college
84. Portable or camping cook stove
85. Portable or camping fry pan (handle folds for storage)
86. Battery powered fan (small personal fan or larger)
87. Pay for flu shots or school shots for families with kids
88. Belt with inside zippered money pocket (Money pocket belt)
89. Construction weight garbage bags. These are the VERY heavy duty trash bags that contractors use on job sites to hold industrial weight trash. They're almost impossible to tear and make great bags for the homeless who prefer to use them. They are also excellent bags for covering a sleeping bag or for using as a rain coat. Buy them by the box and hand them out singly or in three's and fours. Available at any Lowe's or Home Depot
90. Emergency candles
91. Sterno for cooking/warmth
92. Solar powered baseball cap (built in LED light charged by solar cell)
93. Clip-on reading light
94. Mosquito netting (camping stores)
95. Hair Scrunches, both for women and children

96. Bottled water
97. Snuggie or other fleece wear for warmth in cars, shelters
98. Car or other vehicle such as van, trailer
99. Bicycle with basket or means for holding personal items
100. Bandanas and handkerchiefs
101. A variety of small zippered storage bags to hold makeup, toiletries and other items.

Believe it or not, this is NOT an exhaustive list. Hundreds of organizations around the country are using their creativity, insights, compassion and gifts to find ways to create jobs and income opportunities for the homeless, to find ways to earn money to donate to the food banks and homeless shelters around their county, and to make a difference. It happens one person at a time.

Don't think you have to save all the homeless. Talk to an agency, or the director of a homeless shelter, to the YMCA or YWCA in your area, to women's shelters, to rape crisis shelters and counselors and find JUST ONE PERSON you can help and focus on. Involve your friends or coworkers or neighbors and sponsor a homeless family - make sure they have the job help, the transportation etc. they need to get back on their feet.

In some communities there are organizations that have "transitional housing" or "foster housing," where a homeless family or person is screened and placed in a home, apartment or with a family who will work with them on life skills training or other issues while they work their way towards independence.

Don't over extend yourself. Get in this for the long haul and don't get burned out. If you're a teacher, teach kids that sometimes bad things happen in life and talk about homelessness in a positive way - as a life lesson for what can happen no matter how you plan for it not to. Teach respect. Have your students experience "homelessness" by letting them "live" in a box in the classroom. Older teens can spend the night in a parking lot at their school or church (supervised of course) to experience a bit of what being homeless is like.

There are college courses that have students spend 24-hours on the street to see what homelessness is like. Experiencing even a few hours as "homeless" will change your perspective.

I encourage you to go a week without showering in your own home, but finding places around town where you must shower. Put yourself in the shoes of the homeless (without the full risk) for a night. Sleep in your car in the driveway. Dress in old clothes and push a shopping cart around downtown. If the reactions of others doesn't shock you, the awakening will make you more compassionate for sure.

# Who Are The Homeless And How Did They Get That Way?

No one plans to become homeless. It happens. They may see it coming, or fear it, or find themselves spiraling towards it as a result of bad decisions, or unexpected events, but no one sits down and says, "Gee, I think I'll go be homeless and destitute for a year or so."

Yes, there are people who opt to travel, to live out of a van, to drive across country on an adventure, another kind of "homeless." But no one in their right mind wants to live on the street, moneyless, starving, cold, hot, lonely, attacked, belittled and disrespected.

The homeless become homeless because people become addicts. The majority of active alcoholics will eventually lose their families, their jobs, their loved ones and everything they own - unless they're independently wealthy and somehow manage to retain their financial independence.

Drug addicts - the same thing. Addiction destroys. Stay addicted long enough and chances are very good you'll become homeless.

If you have a mental illness, or physical illness and are unable to work, to pay your bills, your rent, your mortgage,

you will eventually become homeless if you can't find someone who will meet those obligations, or you can't find the program, welfare, or part-time jobs where you can afford some sort of shelter.

If you lose your home to fire, flood, tornado or a hurricane, you will become homeless - perhaps for a night, or a week or a month until you can find a new home. But if you don't have the financial resources to do that, or a family to fall back on, chances are you will become homeless as well.

Anytime you get upside down with your bills (you owe more than you can pay and cannot meet your rent or mortgage payments) you will become homeless. You may have a fight with your spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend or significant other and have the police tell you to leave the residence for a night, or a week.

You may run away from home, or away from an abusive spouse or parent. You may have a medical condition where your medication costs more than your rent and you have to choose whether to live in an apartment and die, or live on the streets and have your medication. Tough choices.

Are you starting to get the picture now? You may be a college student who can't afford an apartment, dorm or room and continue to stay in school. One day you hear about someone who lived in a van and never paid rent all through school. Do the math. You can pay a semester's worth of classes for what it costs to rent a place. All of a sudden it makes sense to move into your car - until you do.

You may be a construction worker, truck driver, traveling salesman. You get behind on your bills and opt to give up your apartment to save money. You live in a hotel most of the time anyway, why not? Then one day you lose your job and can't afford to keep staying in hotels. You're suddenly homeless.

I've met doctors, lawyers, engineers and computer programmers living in their vans. The doctor said his wife had frozen all his bank accounts and credit cards in a divorce and all he could do was sleep in the van until he figured out what to do (days maybe). He didn't want his friends to know, so the van and a week of homelessness was a solution.

Women escaping an abusive spouse, teens running away from abusive parents, all have very good reasons for living in their cars and becoming homeless. Few women in those circumstances have the financial base to simply leave and start a new life. Most have been kept from having jobs - especially jobs where they could earn a living wage.

I've met women on disability and oxygen who lived in their van so they could afford their medication.

Families, fathers and mothers with children, both parents lose their jobs, are laid off, and rather than risk a cross-country drive to another area to look for work, they stay in the same town - hoping to find another job. After all, they reason, they have unemployment and three months emergency funds. But the savings they have runs out and they find themselves living in their cars.

The common perception is that all homeless people are mentally ill, addicts and alcoholics. The attitudes of some shelter workers, used to seeing a majority of homeless who are addicts, perpetuates that.

The media doesn't bother [until lately] to point out that people are homeless as no result of their own decisions in many cases [the economy], or because they made poor decisions, or made the best decision they could at the time.

So yes, there are homeless people who are addicts and mentally ill, or are criminals and sex offenders. But there are families, children, students and women who become homeless because it was the best or only option they had. Before you condemn all homeless - find out their story.

If you have been homeless at one time, share your story. You, more than anyone else, can help others understand it can happen to them as well. In the following pages are facts and info about the homeless and a few of the thousands of organizations who are helping the homeless.

# What is the definition of “Homeless.”

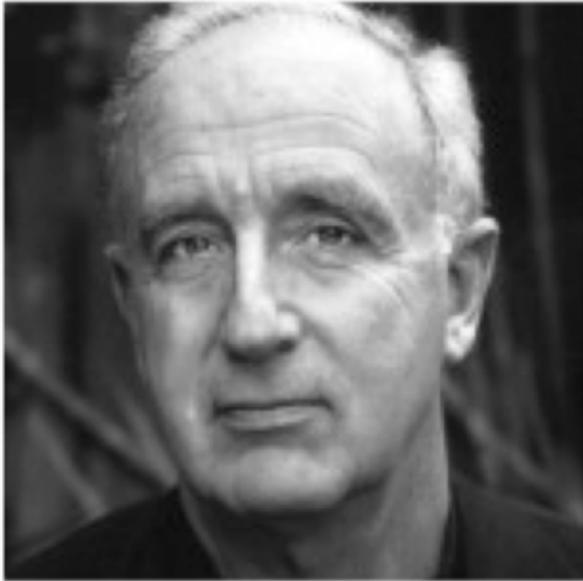
In Title 42, Chapter 119, Subchapter I, of the United States Code, homeless is defined as:

## §11302. General definition of homeless individual

### (a) In general

For purposes of this chapter, the term “homeless” or “homeless individual or homeless person” includes—

1. an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
2. an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is —
  1. a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
  2. an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
  3. a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.



## STEVEN PRESSFIELD

*"It is one thing to study war, and another to live the warrior's life."*  
- Pressfield

Any military man/woman knows his name, especially the Marines. Steven Pressfield, is the author of what most military experts, officers and non-com's call the military bible, the book, "The Gates of War."

Pressfield, a Marine and author was also once homeless – living in his Chevy van with his cat. He struggled to the top of his field, but is firmly planted there after writing "The Gates of War, The War of Art, and The Legend of Bagger Vance, among others. His website, his philosophy and his books are well worth the read.



## CARY GRANT:

This Oscar-winning actor slept rough on the streets of Southampton, England during a summer in his youth at the time of World War I. (According to the book, *Cary Grant: A Biography*, by Marc Eliot, 2004)

On page 31: "Archie then volunteered for summer work as a messenger and gofer on the military docks, often sleeping in alleys at night if he didn't make enough money to rent a cot in a flophouse."



### **JIM CARREY:**

Jim Carrey, actor, writer, producer and comedian is no stranger to van dwelling or homelessness. Jim lived out of a VW van in various locations across Canada with his older brother John Carrey, older sister Rita Carrey, and his parents Percy Carrey and Kathleen Carrey as he was growing up.

Also camped in a tent with his family in the backyard of the home of his older married sister, Patricia.

### **KELLY CLARKSON:**

Grammy Award-winning singer; American Idol television talent show 1st-season winner 2002 Kelly Clarkson was once homeless. Clarkson lived out of a car and in a shelter, with her female roommate, after a major structural fire forced them out of a 71-unit apartment building in West Hollywood, California in March 2002.

In an interview with Inside Edition television news magazine, September 5 2002, her roommate, fellow Texan, actress/singer Janet Harvick was quoted as saying, “It was really, really rough because we had just moved here, and we had just moved in on the day of the fire. We knew nobody here—I mean nobody, so the night of the fire, the next day, and night, we stayed in our car.”

**US Weekly** magazine, September 23, 2002; print story: “‘My apartment [building] burned down; my car got towed twice,’ recalls Clarkson, who, with nowhere to go, lived in a homeless shelter for several days.”





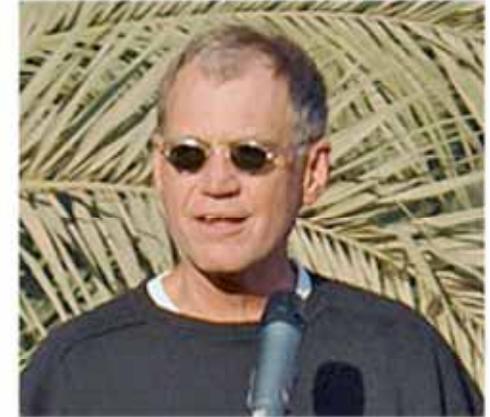
### **DJIMON HOUNSOU:**

Djimon Hounsou is a West African-born (Beninese) Oscar-nominated actor and model.

Before being discovered and becoming an actor however, Djimon slept on the streets and in subways near the Eiffel Tower for two years beginning at age 13 before being discovered and offered a modeling contract.

### **DAVID LETTERMAN:**

This Emmy Award-winning television writer, comedian, author and host of the television talk-show Late Show with David Letterman spent time living out of his Chevy pickup truck while struggling to establish his career.

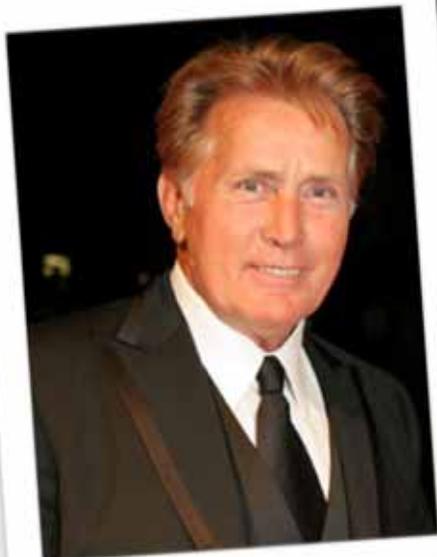


### **CHRIS GARDNER:**

He's not worried about money now. But once upon a time multimillionaire stockbroker (net worth \$65-million (2006)) Chris Gardner couldn't afford a room for himself and his young son. Now he's an author; stockbroker and multimillionaire.

The 2006 movie "*The Pursuit of Happyness*," starring Will Smith, was based on his life. He slept in subway stations, trains, bathrooms, and a church-run shelter in California with his son.

<http://beckyblanton.com> or <http://homeless4theholidays.com>



### **MARTIN SHEEN:**

Emmy Award-winning actor, director and producer; slept in New York City subway while a young struggling actor. Ramón Gerardo Antonio Estévez, (born August 3, 1940) better known by his stage name Martin Sheen, is an actor best known for his performances as Captain Willard in the film *Apocalypse Now* and President Josiah Bartlet on the television series *The West Wing*. As well as the critical acclaim he has received as an actor, he has become known as an activist. Born and raised in Ohio, United States, with Irish and Spanish parents, Sheen is also an Irish citizen.

He is the father of actors Carlos Irwin Estévez (Charlie Sheen), Emilio Estévez, Ramón Estévez and Renée Estévez, and is brother of the actor Joe Estevez.

### **HILLARY SWANK:**

In 1989, when she was 15, Swank and her mom packed up their Oldsmobile Delta 88 and, with just \$75, headed to Los Angeles. They lived in the car until a friend [eventually] gave them a place to stay. Swank's mom used a pay phone to book her daughter for auditions. (*Readers Digest*)



# FourKindsOfHomeless

There are four kinds of homeless people. There are the alcoholics, and drug addicts. There are the mentally ill. There are what I call the "Life Happens Homeless," those who are homeless because of situations or circumstances in their lives - loss of a home, job or family etc. and there are the homeless who are homeless by choice.

## Addicts and Alcoholics

Homeless drug addicts and alcoholics become homeless because of their addiction, or those who are already homeless become alcoholics and addicts because they are homeless. When you're down and out, depressed and hurting from life on the street, the temptation to drink or drug your pain away is strong.

" We have a home. We just don't have a house to put it in. "

-unknown

The addict is usually easy to spot - most stay high or intoxicated. Without professional intervention and a desire to get clean, most will die on the streets. There have been many who have overcome their addiction and gotten off the street. So they are not hopeless. But it's a long, hard, painful road for most.

## Mentally Ill

According to **Mike Nichols**, "40 to 50 percent of the estimated 744,000 people who are homeless on any given night have a serious mental illness.

*They suffer from a variety of Axis I mental disorders which include: Anxiety Disorders, bipolar disorder, clinical depression, and schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorders, and severe personality disorders.*

*Between 150,000 and 200,000 of the homeless have schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. This is the equivalent to the population of any of these cities:*

- *Dayton, Ohio*
- *Des Moines, Iowa*
- *Fort Lauderdale, Florida*
- *Grand Rapids, Michigan*
- *Providence, Rhode Island*
- *Richmond, Virginia*
- *Salt Lake City, Utah*

*Mike is bipolar and has an anxiety disorder himself and blogs about mental illness and the homeless at his blog:*

<http://anxietypanichealth.com>

Along with the mentally ill are sexual predators - homeless because they can't find anyone who will rent to them, or homeless because they can't afford an apartment because they can't get a job because they are sexual predators. State laws often allow even violent and dangerous sex offenders to register as homeless as long as they give an area where they sleep.

## **Life Happens**

Life happens. And, when it does, homelessness is often the result. Parents die, your

spouse beats you and you run away. Or, you lose your job, you're diagnosed with a terminal illness or cancer, or

something that requires medication that costs more than you pay in rent each month. You have to choose between medication and a place to live.

Or, your car breaks down and you can't afford to repair it or buy a new one and you lose your job. You're laid off and eventually evicted or forced to move out because you can't afford rent. Maybe you're one of the thousands of teenagers whose parents kick them out because they can't afford to feed you.

Maybe you graduate from college and can't find a job and friends get tired of your couch surfing. Maybe you're in an abusive relationship and decide to leave, even though you can't afford a place of your own, either with or without a job.

More than 20,000 teen-agers "age out" of the foster care system every year. About one-quarter will become homeless.

Not only do these 18-year olds lose their home, their medical

**"Being homeless is not a crime someone commits. It's a condition someone experiences."**

*- Becky Blanton*

benefits and the support of the foster-care system, they're released into a world for which they are little prepared and have little or no family support to fall back on for guidance.

The reasons for "Life happens homelessness" ranges from job loss, foreclosure, illness, abuse or natural disaster - fire, flood, earthquake (Katrina for instance), domestic abuse, the economy, stock market failure, falling victim to identity theft, bad investments, and so on.

### **Homeless By Choice**

While it may be inconceivable to some, thousands of homeless people are homeless by choice. This homelessness can last for days, weeks, months, years or a lifetime.

Some of these homeless are adventurers - living out of a camper or van or car while they travel the country in search of work, or while they surf, play or camp.

In states like Oregon, Washington and California there are many surfers (wind surfers and ocean surfers) who live out of their vehicles.

Another population of those homeless by choice, are "Van-dwellers." They live in their vans or cars and "city camp," by parking on city streets, in parks, at Wal-Marts, or rest areas or wherever they are able to blend in.

They work at being invisible, making their vehicles as stealthy as possible so they can live, work, eat and sleep on the streets without being hassled by police or other

agencies. They are often able to afford an apartment or home, but chose not to live in one. The lure of the road and the lifestyle appeals to them.

Some apartment and home owners may even be "Van dwellers" part of the year, living out of their vehicles to save money while they travel.

Students at many colleges may opt to live out of a van to save housing costs while in college. They keep a locker on campus, shower and eat on campus while attending classes, but sleep in their car.

Musicians, construction workers, truck drivers and those with jobs that keep them on the road most of the year may also chose to be homeless, living out of a hotel or their vehicles.

At the other end of the spectrum are the homeless who don't want to come off of the street and don't want to be "helped" into an apartment or even a shelter. Some may be mentally ill, and some just don't want the responsibility of having to hold down a job and keep up an apartment. The hand-to-mouth existence of living on the street is preferable to having regular employment.

### **The Face of Homelessness**

Homelessness is the worst stigma in America, worse than being fat, than being unemployed, than being a person of color, than being mentally ill or being a criminal. Homelessness is the equivalent of being all those things at one time.

But homelessness is no respecter of persons. Racially, the mix is almost equal. The very rich are as susceptible to “losing everything” as anyone else.

Don't believe it? Ask **Simon Cowell**, judge for “American Idol.” Simon once lost everything at the age of 30 when the company that owned Fanfare went bust. He said, “I effectively lost everything and had to move in with my parents.”

He was lucky. Many of those who do lose their homes have family to move in with until they get back on their feet.

The point is, even being a millionaire doesn't ensure you won't or can't become homeless.

And once homeless, society labels you as despicable, criminal, insane, lazy, worthless, filthy and non-human creature imaginable in the eyes of most Americans!

Yet - the week before you were homeless you may have been an engineer making \$100,000 a year, or a computer programmer or a police officer, or an attorney, or a writer, or artist, or nurse.

In a flash you become totally “less than” and suspicious. If you can't maintain an apartment or house, people reason, you must be untrustworthy, and criminal. And somehow that seems to make it okay for others to

bully you, attack you, humiliate you and treat you as a non-person.

A person who would never be cruel or vicious to a stranger often feels like it's okay to lean out a window and scream “Get a job!” to a homeless person.

Those window hanging, bullying bastards are just that. They don't realize that 40-50 percent of the people they are screaming at are mentally ill and not capable of getting or holding down a job. They don't realize that the chances are very good that they know someone who is homeless, or has been homeless.

While violence against the homeless can come from anywhere, statistics show that white males are the most common predators of the homeless - beating, killing and abusing them.

Part of the reason this is possible is because Americans have permitted the homeless to become less than human. Our society perpetuates the stereotype that the homeless are worthless, stupid, criminal and not valuable.

In seeing the homeless as an infestation or problem to be eradicated instead of solved, police and governments become part of the problem.

Yes - half of the homeless on the streets today are mentally ill. Many are sexual predators, many are criminals. Treat them as such.

Arrest them for crimes, put them in facilities, warehouse them or deal with them for the behavior they exhibit, but not simply because they are homeless.

Being homeless is not a crime someone commits. It's a condition someone experiences.

And remember the other 50 percent - the working homeless, those who have jobs, or lost jobs and are looking for jobs and simply no longer have a house or apartment. Or, as one woman put it, "We have a home. We just don't have a house to put it in."

They are the families, the women, the men and the children who have lost their home for a variety of reasons and are struggling to survive on the streets.

They want desperately to not be homeless. Many of them find temporary shelter in the homes of family or friends. They "couch-surf," staying with friends or families for a night, a week, months or years at a time while they save money for a car, an apartment or look for a job.

Many are working, or looking for work. But on a minimum wage salary, it is very hard to save money for an apartment deposit, first and last month's rent, a utility deposit, or a car to get to and from work. Since most don't have health insurance, medical bills, medication and health needs may take up a large portion of their income.

Chances are they lost their car if they lost their jobs - making it even more difficult to get another job, or to get a job that pays well enough to save money. Many don't have the financial skills or know-how to save or to make wise financial decisions.

More than that, start pushing your local governments for affordable housing. It's the number one reason for homelessness among the working homeless or working poor. And it's third behind addiction and mental illness for homelessness in America.

# panhandlingetiquette

“Should I give a panhandler money?” I say “No.” Don’t do it. Others will say “Yes,” be compassionate.

“How should I deal with panhandler’s?” is often one of the first questions I hear when I talk to people about my year as a homeless person. They either assume I “panhandled” or asked for money at some time, or they wonder if I did. I never did. I worked full-time. If I ran out of money, as I often did, I did without - without food, without gas, without showers or whatever I wanted or needed until pay-day. I might feel differently if I’d had to panhandle.

So I am not an expert on panhandling or panhandling etiquette. I know that I preferred to work, or do without, as did most of the other working homeless I encountered.

That said, I will tell you that the homeless people I met who did panhandle, were willing to share their tips about how to be good at it, with me. Most of the tips involved how to pick out “easy marks” and those most likely to give money; and how to avoid being beaten up by other panhandlers. My impression is that while there are definitely some people who need the money for gas, who

will use the money for food or a hotel room, the majority won’t. It’s up to each of us to decide who to trust and who not to trust.

The majority of the people I met who panhandled admitted they used the money for alcohol or drugs, and only occasionally for food. They bragged about making from \$50 a day to \$400 a day.

I could pass those tips along about how they did it, but most involved scams, how to cheat, how to lie, how to con. But then again, these are people with nothing, doing what they can to literally survive. I can’t judge them, but I can tell you what I would do.

People who ask me this are really asking, “How can I say no? Should I say no? Is it safe? How much should I give? How do I know they’re not going to use it for alcohol or drugs? or Will they try to rob me if I say no, or if I only give them a few dollars? Will they keep pestering me for money every day if I give them money one time?”

I think guilt is a major motivator for our even thinking about what to do. We feel guilty for having so much when

others have none, yet we also don't want to give money that will only be used for alcohol or drugs.

Who are we to judge? The fact is, I believe most of the money you give the average, **aggressive panhandler** will be used for drugs or alcohol. That's coming from a former homeless woman who never panhandled, but did extensively interview and talk to those who did.

That said, I believe your interaction with any panhandler puts you at personal risk for your own safety. **Those who panhandle** tend to be mentally unstable, on drugs, or addicted or mentally affected in some way. I think you take your life in your hands, particularly if you're a woman, elderly or disabled, to interact with the homeless who approach you on the street, asking for money. A lot of people will disagree with me. Why this ebook if I'm saying don't give to people on the street? Because I'm being practical.

The bigger the city, the more aggressive the panhandler and the more likely you are to agree with me. I think your money is better spent through donating to a charity that feeds, houses and clothes the homeless, that deals with their addictions. I guarantee if you're homeless you know within a week where the shelters are.

Within a month you know where all the food banks are and how to work the system. I worked because I could - I was fortunate enough to find work. I don't know what I would have done if forced into the circumstances so many of the homeless are in. I don't. Given that the majority of the street homeless are mentally unstable, likely to be

influenced by drugs more than social norms or mores, it's up to you of course, but be careful.

Treat them with the respect, tone and attention you would anyone, but say no and keep walking. Don't stop. Don't engage. If you have been homeless, worked with the homeless, are in a group of people and you want to stop and engage a homeless person, that's up to you. You have an idea of what to look for, what you're getting into. There's a difference between going up to a homeless person and engaging with an aggressive panhandler.

Homeless are people with no permanent address. Some have mental health issues, some are sexual predators and some are addicts. Some work, some don't. Some are looking for work. They're not bad because they're homeless. They're not dangerous because they're homeless. Some of the homeless definitely act like animals, but so does a large part of society who do live in houses. Rise above the urge to scream "Get a job!" Be respectful. But understand.....

Aggressive panhandlers WILL try to engage you in conversation to make you stop. Don't. You may get an angry response, but that's their problem, not yours. Just don't engage them. If you do encounter a homeless person you know, believe or think is "safe," or legit and feel compelled to give to them follow these rules. Do NOT pull your wallet out in front of them and sort through your stash to find an appropriate denomination to give them.

If they say, "I need money for gas," then offer to follow them to a gas station and fill their vehicle up for them. If

they say it's for food, get them a sack of sandwiches instead. The fact is, most of the time the money is for drugs. If you feel comfortable aiding their habit, go for it.

**Phil Elmore**, a ghost-writer (The Executioner series) and martial artist who lives in New York state, is even more adamant than I am about security and protecting yourself from the aggressive panhandler. He has written a free, and **very strong report** on how to protect yourself from the homeless aggressor.

Aggression among panhandlers is growing, as evidenced by many cities who are passing stronger laws and arresting panhandlers whose requests for change borders more on robbery and intimidation. My opinions are also colored from having graduated from a police academy in '83 and having worked security for Wackenhut, for several corporations and in large cities.

If you truly want to help the homeless living on the street, go through a social worker, organization, shelter, church, or a group or individual who has experience working and interacting with the homeless. Yes, there are people out there who really can use your help, so make your contributions where they'll help the most - go through an organization or group who best knows the homeless.

But don't toss your common sense out the window. Those homeless who depend on street theatre, or playing music for donations - are not the aggressive panhandlers I'm talking about. Be as cautious with the homeless as you would any stranger. Being in need doesn't make someone

living on the streets more safe, and quite often makes them less safe.

There are a lot of sad, defeated homeless people on the street. Help all you can, but be safe when you do.

# safetyandsecurity

If you've ever been approached by a homeless person asking for money, begging for a handout, or being aggressive, verbally abusive or demanding for any reason, chances are you're not likely to feel a lot of compassion for the homeless. While the "invisible homeless" work, remain largely, cleaned, clothed and don't beg, they aren't the homeless the public usually sees.

**Phil Elmore**, who says he has been soundly criticized for his stance that people need to protect themselves from the homeless, stands by his [PDF](#) about how to defend yourself from the homeless. I agree with him. A police academy graduate and one who has lived and walked among the homeless, I've seen extreme mental illness, aggression, and violence among the homeless who live on the street. While there are a lot of assaults on the homeless, there are a lot of assaults and crimes among the homeless on other homeless.

Homeless women are raped, beaten and victimized more than anyone realizes - and few will report the assaults because of fear of the police response or non-response. Phil writes:

*"According to **Healing Hands**, the publication of the HCH Clinicians' Network that I cited earlier, 84% of the homeless are single men ages 25-54. (Another 9% are over 55, while just 7% are between 19 and 24). Men comprise 77% of single homeless adults, but only 15% of adults in homeless families. (Also, if you care about the race breakdown, 41% of homeless adults are white, 40% are black, 10% are Hispanic, and 8% are Native American.) About one third of homeless men are veterans — but that's the same representation as found in the population at large, so the myth of the homeless vet is just that, too.*

*Stop and think about those statistics for a moment. The overwhelming majority of the homeless are single males aged 25-54. According to the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, single males in that age range (especially those 35 and younger) were among the most likely groups to commit violent crime. **That means the very group that makes up most homeless people is also the demographic group most likely to assault you.**"*

Elmore is a martial artist and professional writer whose work has appeared in a variety of print and virtual publications. He is not a lawyer, a police officer, or a member of the military. He is a private citizen who believes your rights to your life and your property are inalienable.

The publisher of *The Martialist™: The Magazine For Those Who Fight Unfairly*, Phil has published numerous books about self-defense. These include the Paladin Press titles *Street Sword* and *Flashlight Fighting*, as well as the Booklocker.com text *Shorthand Empty Hand*. For more information, visit Phil online at [www.philelmore.com](http://www.philelmore.com) and [www.themartialist.com](http://www.themartialist.com).

# Why Homeless 4 The Holidays?

In March 2006 I was a newspaper editor at a small town paper in Colorado. My father had died of brain cancer that February, and after a stressful month at work I decided to quit my job, travel and freelance, while grieving and dealing with his death.

For a lot of reasons his death hit me hard. Not only had he been my father, he had been an abuser. I was awash in grief and anger and emotion with his death.

My father's one regret in life was that he had worked until the end, and had never traveled and done the things he wanted to do. I vowed not to do the same.

So I bought a 1975 Chevy Van, put everything in storage, took my Rottweiler and my cat and moved into the van. At first things were great, but then everything went wrong.

Things didn't work out as I thought they would. The result was a year of homelessness for me as I refused to give up my pets, and chose to live in the van instead.

My story, as it was written and as it first appeared in design mind, a magazine published by the global innovation firm frog design, <http://designmind.frogdesign.com>, is at the end of this catalog if you haven't read it yet.

Anyway after having experienced homelessness firsthand, I became deeply empathetic with the plight of the homeless, particularly with the working homeless, but also the disabled, the mentally ill, and families and children.

I've since learned that this year over 1 million teenagers will experience homelessness.

Every 24 hours, 13 of those homeless young people will die alone on the streets. But it doesn't have to be this way. You can make a difference. You can save a life.

That's what this catalog is for - showing you what you can do to make a difference in the lives of the homeless-many of whom really are just like you - with families, jobs, and dreams.

*“Like war,  
homelessness  
is an economic  
battle, not a  
moral one.”*

*- Becky Blanton*

Unlike you they lost their home in the mortgage crunch, got scammed, were slammed by the stock-market, laid off, had a family member suffer a devastating illness, or like many teens and those in foster care - hit their 18th birthday and lost their foster family due to state and federal laws.

They don't need or want a handout. They want a helping hand. There's a difference.

Last September, 9/9/09 [Tellman Knudson](#) started running barefoot 3,200 miles across America. He is now crossing one of the 50 states between Battery Park, NYC and Santa Monica, CA.

His goal is to raise \$100 million to donate to the shelters, organizations and on-the-ground volunteers across the country that help homeless teens get food, get shelter, and rebuild their lives.

Tellman will/has run 3,200 miles barefoot by the time you're reading this... but he needs your help to help provide for the homeless youth across America.

Mark Horvath, homeless twice himself, started his executive career at the top.

He was once responsible for the worldwide distribution of **Wheel of Fortune**, **Jeopardy**; **Married with Children**; **21 Jump Street**, plus many other syndicated shows. His video distribution has changed dramatically.

Now, with just \$45, a laptop, a camera and social media, Horvath wants to show that knowing homelessness exists is just half the problem; the other half is showing how we can help.

We all suffer as a result of this country's greed and drive to deny low-income housing, small square-footage housing, and regulations that prevent or discourage alternative energy, off-grid living and lifestyles that do not feed the county, state and federal coffers.

Like war, homelessness is an economic battle, not a moral one. The causes of homelessness are strongly related to the economics not of the homeless, but of the county, state and federal agencies that create it.

Regardless of the causes, focusing on solutions rather than blame is most critical. Finding alternatives, providing food, shelter, water, showers, jobs and counseling is most critical now.

As a reporter every holiday I covered the stories of volunteers who "give up" their holiday to spend the day dishing out turkey and mashed potatoes, pumpkin pie and warm socks to the "poor, unfortunate homeless."

The focus is usually on the volunteers, rarely on the homeless, except to get a quote about how grateful they are for a hot meal. How stupid. But it makes people and viewers/readers "feel good" and so this story repeats itself around the country.

I thought it was time to do something different. And this is it. I hope you find it enlightening and helpful.

I am NOT asking for money or donations. I am asking you find and support an organization in your town or city that feeds, houses or helps the homeless. If there's not one, then start one.

We're all in this together. As the economy and Bernie Madoff showed us - ANY of us could be homeless at any time. Help change the perception of homelessness while you still have a home, a job, a family and hope.

There's no guarantee that you or someone you know will never be homeless. But there's a good chance that you or someone you know could become, even for a few days, homeless.

# AngelFoodMinistries

Angel Food Ministries provides food relief and financial support to communities throughout the United States. The program began in 1994 with 34 families in Monroe, Georgia and has grown to serve hundreds of thousands of families across 35 states.

Each month's delivery (for \$30 per box) includes both fresh and frozen items with an average retail value of approximately \$60. Generally, each box can help feed four people for about one week or a single person for almost a month. There are no limits on the boxes a person may receive, and no applications to complete.

## Sample Menu (\$30 for all the items below)

- \* 4 lb. IQF Leg Quarters
- \* 4 oz. Beef Back Ribs
- \* 1 lb. 80/20 Lean Ground Beef
- \* 2 lb. Breaded Chicken Tenders
- \* 1.5 lb. Bone in Pork Chops  
(4 x 6-oz.)
- \* 1 lb. Ground Turkey
- \* 18 oz. Stuffed Manicotti (Cheese)
- \* 12 oz. Smoked Sausage
- \* Betty Crocker Seasoned Potatoes
- \* 7 oz. Cheeseburger Dinner
- \* 16 oz. Green Beans
- \* 16 oz. Baby Carrots
- \* 2 lb. Onions
- \* 1 lb. Pinto Beans
- \* 1 lb. Rice
- \* 7 oz. Blueberry Muffin Mix
- \* 10 ct. Homestyle Waffles

# invisiblepeopletv



Mark Horvath gives homeless people a voice, a face and hope. Once homeless himself, not once, but twice, Horvath started his executive career with the worldwide distribution of **Wheel of Fortune**, **Jeopardy**; **Married with Children**; **21 Jump Street**, plus many other syndicated shows.

Horvath's Hollywood executive background is in stark contrast to the role he finds himself in now. He was once responsible for the worldwide distribution of some of America's best-loved TV shows. Now, with just \$45, a laptop, a camera and social media, Horvath wants to show that knowing homelessness exists is just half the problem, the other half is showing how we can help.

So he's back on the streets, talking, interviewing and video-taping the real stories of the homeless. And he posts them on his blog, <http://invisiblepeople.tv>. Mark's Road Trip U.S.A. tour is cosponsored by **Ford**, **Hanes** and **Whrrl**, but is always looking for more sponsors.

## About Mark Horvath and InvisiblePeople.tv

Mark has over 30 years of leadership, management and marketing experience with the last 14 years being in the nonprofit sector.

He now uses his media and non-profit reach to self-fund his InvisiblePeople.tv project to offer a voice to America's homeless.

He is always looking for corporate and individual sponsors to help him get the message of the homeless out to the world.

If you'd like to contribute to Mark's programming, contact him here:

### Contact Information

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213.245.1519

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# AboutMark

I once heard a story about a homeless man on Hollywood Blvd. who really thought he was invisible. But one day a kid handed the man a Christian pamphlet. The homeless guy was shocked and amazed, "What! You can see me? How can you see me? I'm invisible!"

It isn't hard to comprehend this man's slow spiral into invisibility. Once on the street, people started to walk past him, ignoring him as if he didn't exist... much like they do a piece of trash on the sidewalk. It's not that people are bad, but if we make eye contact, or engage in conversation, then we have to admit they exist and that we might have a basic human need to care. But it's so much easier to simply close our eyes and shield our hearts to their existence.

I not only feel their pain, I truly know their pain. I lived their pain. You'd never know it now but I was a homeless person. Fourteen years ago, I lived on Hollywood Blvd. But today, I find myself looking away, ignoring the faces, avoiding their eyes — and I'm ashamed when I realize I'm doing it. But I really can feel their pain, and it is almost unbearable, but it's just under the surface of my professional exterior.

For years I've used the lens of a television camera to tell the stories of homelessness and the organizations trying to help. That was part of my job. The reports were produced well and told a story, but the stories you see on this site are much different. These are the real people, telling their own, very real stories... unedited, uncensored and raw.

The purpose of my vlog (video blog) is to make the invisible visible. I hope these people and their stories connect with you

<http://beckyblanton.com> or <http://homeless4theholidays.com>

## Invisible People TV

by Mark Horvath



and don't let go. I hope their conversations with me will start a conversation in your circle of friends.

After you get to know someone by watching their story, please pause for a few moments and write your thoughts in the comments section, or maybe email them to a friend and link back to my vlog . By keeping this dialog open we can help a forgotten people.

The invisible guy didn't intend to become homeless. I didn't plan on living on the street. Everyone on the streets has their own story, some made bad decisions, others were victims, but none of them deserve what they have been left with, and it is a reflection of our own society that we just leave them there.

Please always remember, the homeless people you'll ignore today were much like you not so long ago.

# HopeHouse

Homeless children are one of the most neglected and vulnerable populations on the streets. The average age of a prostitute in the USA is 12 years old. Often, children turn to prostitution to escape the streets. Or, they are kidnapped and forced into the sex trafficking trades.

**Emily Fitchpatrick** is helping those children change their future and avoid a life on the streets. Fitchpatrick, the director of **Hope House** in **Asheville, North Carolina**, isn't a just a "I want to help," kind of person. She's been in the rough places victims and addicts go.

She recovered from alcohol and drug addiction nine years ago, and became determined to help others do the same. Fitchpatrick said she believes God can help her rescue women who have fallen prey to sex trafficking.

While sex trafficking crimes have gotten national attention, Fitchpatrick says "People think this (sex trafficking) happens in other countries, and they don't want to see that it happens here," said Fitchpatrick. But it does.

To learn more about On Eagles Wings Ministries, which runs Hope House, visit [www.emilyfitchpatrick.com](http://www.emilyfitchpatrick.com). OEW is not a church, it is a parachurch ministry made up of individuals from several denominations in the Christian faith.

Email us at [emily@emilyfitchpatrick.com](mailto:emily@emilyfitchpatrick.com)  
Write to: PO Box 9737, Asheville, NC 28815  
Toll Free Help Line: 1+ 877-276-8023

<http://beckyblanton.com> or <http://homeless4theholidays.com>



There are food banks and disaster relief crews, but perhaps none is as well known in Virginia and across the Southeast as “**God’s Pit Crew.**” More than 300 volunteers respond to major disasters around the country, bringing food, clothing, medical care, counseling, construction workers and all manner of **help to those who have become homeless and displaced through natural disasters.** They now post the videos of their assistance efforts on YouTube, but you can also read about their relief efforts at their website:

God's Pit Crew is a non-profit, faith based, group of volunteers who wish to serve others in their time of need. The mission of our disaster relief team is, with God's help and direction, to fill needs and bring healing to hurting people. One goal is to teach and demonstrate Service, Teamwork, and Self-esteem into the lives of young people.

Since its first mission in May of 1999, God's Pit Crew has delivered over 4 million pounds of supplies into areas that have been devastated by natural disasters such as floods, tornados, and hurricanes. They have responded to 33 major disasters in 11 different states. They've worked side-by-side with people who have lost everything, helping them to restore their homes, their hopes and their dreams. The organization has its own trailers, trucks and tractor trailer rigs to haul supplies wherever they are needed. To view the crew in action watch their videos at:

**God Tube** (<http://www.tangle.com/godspitcrew>) or at **YouTube** (<http://www.youtube.com/godspitcrew>).

They are a non-profit organization and accept donations from around the country for their work. They’re also always looking for volunteers so they can expand their reach. While their work is with people who have been displaced and are homeless due to natural disaster, the most compelling thing about this group is their perspective of the homeless they work with as people in need...as are all homeless actually. They tackle things on a community wide level, showing those displaced that recovery is possible, that people do care.

Read more about them at: [www.thegodspitcrew.org/](http://www.thegodspitcrew.org/)

# runTellmanrun

*by Tellman Knudson*

The people who set outrageous goals are usually the only ones who meet them. That includes Tellman Knudson, who started running across country to raise \$100 million dollars for homeless youth.

Tellman has never really cared what people said was possible or not. He had plans and dreams and goals and hasn't let anything stop him.

Tellman grew up in Enfield, NH, a self-admitted geek with ADHD and a crippling leg condition called femoral antversion.

The condition made it difficult even to walk. As with any thing that makes a kid different, the bullies noticed Tellman's condition and he was picked on constantly.

He struggled in relationships with his divorced parents and took refuge couch surfing in friends' homes.

In a scene right out of Forrest Gump, Tellman decided to try out for the cross-country running team in high school. It was ugly – he could barely run a quarter of a mile. But Tellman found solace in running and he threw himself into it, running 7 miles to school in the morning and then 7

miles home again after practice.

The running strengthened his muscles and corrected his femoral antversion. In two years Tellman was breaking school records and competing for the state title.

He learned that with persistence and dedication he could overcome anything. It stuck. Tellman worked his way through college by selling home-made salsa from his dorm room.

After focusing on the narrow field of Altered States of Awareness, Brain Waves, and Peak Performance at Marlboro College, Tellman launched a series of 5 different businesses that all struggled and eventually closed. But he didn't lose the lesson. Tellman gathered a lot of valuable insight from his failures.

Tellman's success came when he set out to market his products on-line. He relentlessly pursued experts in the field of internet direct marketing and acquired an advanced skill set and insight that proved to be marketable.

He launched "Listcrusade," a successful attempt to develop an email list of 1 million people. This established Tellman as a successful on-line marketer. Now companies

*"The people who set outrageous goals are the only ones who keep them."*

*- Knudson Supporter*

and individuals pay Tellman to provide consulting and insight for their web-based direct marketing campaigns. Tellman is now CEO of <http://overcomeeverything.com> and several other internet direct response marketing companies. He is still highly ADHD, but thrives on the challenge of solving multiple problems and starting new ventures.

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## Homeless Youth

More than one million teenagers will experience homelessness this year. Every day 13 of those teens will die on the streets. That's almost 5,000 teenagers.

Some are homeless because of the death of one or both parents. Some run away from abusive home situations. Some have been kicked out of the house because their parents can't afford to feed/clothe them, or can't manage them.

Some are kicked out of the home because their parents find out they're gay or pregnant. Some will run away with a boyfriend and end up breaking up and afraid to go home. Many of them couch surf with friends, or sleep in their cars - all while attending school.

Unlike the streets, school is a safe, warm place to be for 8-10 hours a day. They can be with friends and aren't hassled by police. they also tend to not eat well, or get the sleep they need or do as well on the tests they need to pass to graduate.

In Massachusetts teens used to receive a cash payment of \$303 each month while they were in school, but former Governor Mitt Romney vetoed that benefit



Tellman Knudson

and now teens in Massachusetts are on their own.

For teens with no job history, no street smarts and no support or understanding, the options for them on the street are few - prostitution, drugs, drug dealing and crime.

Some will join the military, but the majority are left to their own resources to find work, an apartment, to build credit and to maintain a home - often on minimum wage.

Teens who are also pregnant, or are single mothers have an even harder time. Many will marry just to get off of the street.

# Homeless Resources

## The National Alliance to End Homelessness

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonprofit, non-partisan, organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. Their website offers information, statistics, tools, training, data and research, state by state data on homelessness. It's considered one of the best resources on the web for information about the homeless and ways to make a difference.

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/>

## The Homelessness Resource Exchange

The Homelessness Resource Exchange is a one-stop shop for information and resources for assisting people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The HRE provides direct links to information on HUD's housing and homeless programs, links to other federal agencies' homeless assistance programs, a direct link to HUD's HMIS.Info website; CoC grant application materials, Frequently Asked Questions, e\*SNAPs, a calendar of homelessness training events, and a feature to locate assistance organizations near you.

<http://www.hudhre.info/>

## The Ugly Quilt Project

Since 1985 "My Brother's Keeper Quilt Group" has been making quilted sleeping bags for the homeless. The group is comprised of individuals and groups who want to help the homeless by making emergency sleeping bags from recycled fabrics and distributing them free to people who are cold on the street. Their only goal is to help the homeless on the street be warm until other groups and organizations "can help or heal them." **Email Address:** [mbkqg@epix.net](mailto:mbkqg@epix.net)

**MY BROTHERS' KEEPER QUILT GROUP**  
R.R. #1, Box 1049  
Hop Bottom, PA 18824  
(570) 289-4335

<http://www.uglyquilts.org/>

## Hunters For The Hungry

Hunters for the Hungry is a non-profit organization that distributes deer donated by hunters, processes the meat, and then gives the meat to food banks across each state. The food banks in turn distribute the meat to families and individuals who have shown a need for it. Every state has its own organization and contact information. Please Google "Hunters for the Hungry" and your state to get your local contact information.

If you're not a hunter, donate money to help fund the meat processing fees. In Virginia, a contribution of 20 dollars will process 1/2 a deer (25-pounds of venison), 40 dollars will process 1 deer (50 pounds of venison), and 80 dollars will process 2 deer (100 pounds of venison).

## Homeless Helping Homeless (HHH)

Homeless Helping Homeless is the voice of the homeless. Since 2001, members of the homeless community have, through HHH, advocated and organized politically for themselves. Facilitated by the Urban Ministry Center as part of the Community Works 945 project, HHH demonstrates civic concern, honesty, and genuine commitment by and on behalf of the homeless in Charlotte, NC.

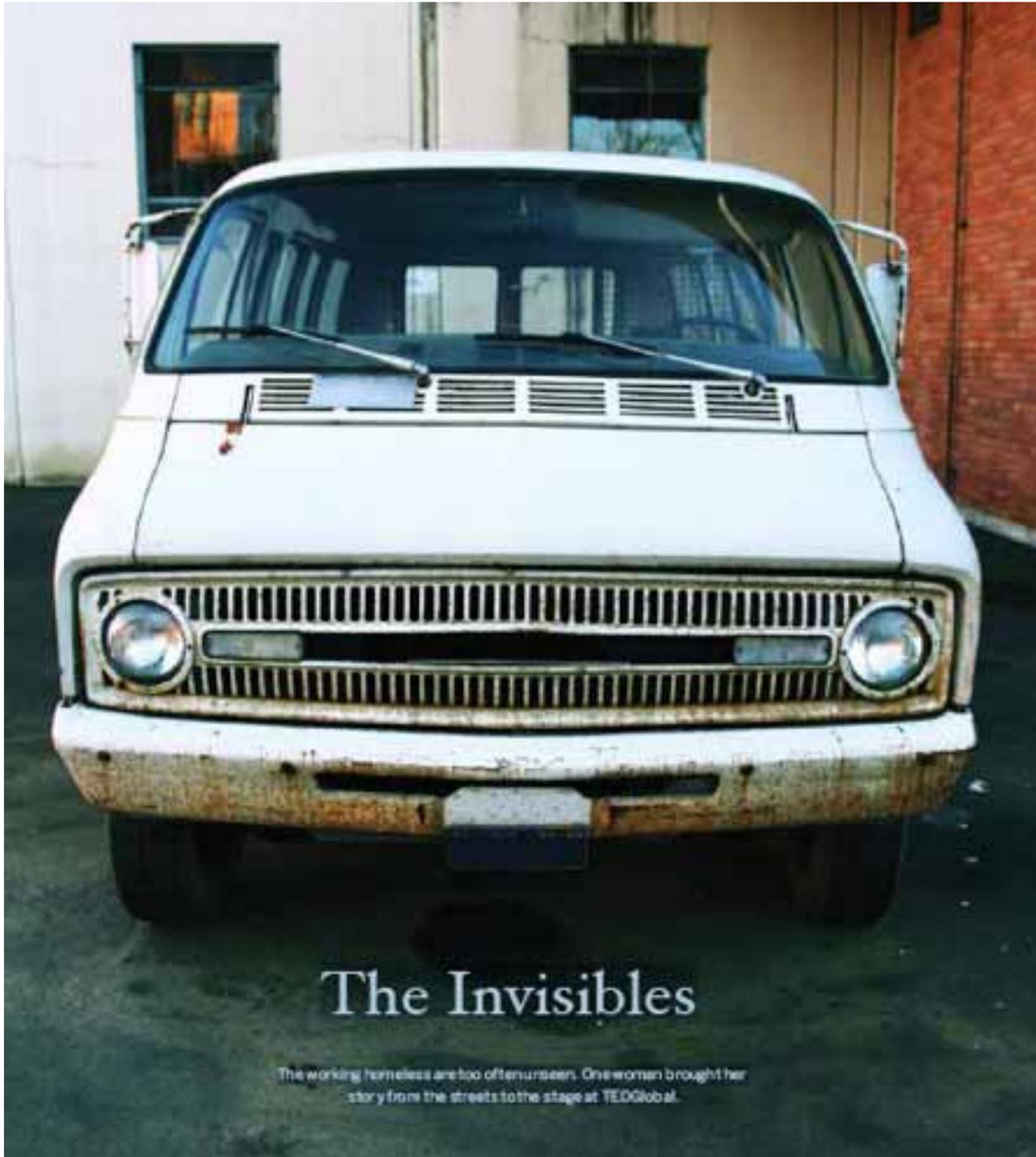
<http://www.hhh945.blogspot.com/>

## Artists Helping The Homeless

Artists Helping The Homeless is a non-profit 501c3 public charity organization that raises money through Art to help individuals who need a new beginning. They sell art created by members and donate a portion of the proceeds to provide opportunities for those less fortunate. Their major initiatives include providing housing and serving meals weekly at the park in Kansas City where the organization is based.

<http://www.artistshelpingthehomeless.com>

<http://beckyblanton.com> or <http://homeless4theholidays.com>



Three years ago, I was living in a van with Rottweiler and a housecat in a Walmart parking lot in the US. By July 2009, I was speaking at TEDGlobal in Oxford, England.

Physically, the journey from “homeless” to an international stage was a rough one, but the emotional and mental challenges were greater. I was one of the lucky ones.

We all make bad choices. But when I decided to quit my \$50,000-a-year job as a small town newspaper editor in 2006 to deal with my father’s recent death from cancer, I had no idea I was deciding to become homeless.

I thought I was doing something good for myself by taking time off to travel and see the country. My father, a man who had physically, emotionally, and sexually abused me throughout my childhood, had died in February of that year, and his passing hit me hard.

No matter how much you’re told about how the death of an abuser may affect you, no one can prepare you for it. So when that emotional storm hit, I ran. I retreated into the one world I felt safe in — camping and traveling. I told myself I was “taking care of me.” How wrong I was.

Although I was freelancing, and sometimes working a second part-time job, the co-workers, employers, police, and

people around me considered me homeless and “less than,” because I lived in my van and not in an apartment. At a time when I needed friends, encouragement, and understanding,

I got harassed, shunned, and shamed. For more than a year I bathed in employee showers and truck stops, washed up in public restrooms, parked in different lots each night to avoid police hassles, and struggled to keep my clothes cleaned and presentable, and my job intact.

I sweated in the heat, froze in the cold. When I was sick, I used a bucket and trash bag for a toilet. I went without food so I could afford gas, and I risked my health, safety, and security every day.

The only difference between me and my former colleagues at the newspaper was that they paid a mortgage or rent on a home. I paid rent on a storage unit.

My depression deepened, and eventually someone referred me to a homeless health clinic. I went. I hadn't bathed in three days. I was as smelly and depressed as anyone in line; I just wasn't drunk or high.

When they realized that, several of the homeless men, including a former university professor said, “Why are you really here? You aren't homeless.” Other homeless people didn't see

me as homeless, but I still did. The professor listened to my story and said, “You have hope. The real homeless don't have hope.”

At some point someone told me that the journalist Tim Russert had included an essay I wrote about my father before he died in a new, best-selling book. At first, I laughed. Was I a writer or was I a homeless woman? I went into a book store and found Russert's book. I stood there and reread my essay and cried. I knew then the answer to my question. I was a writer.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that 2.5 to 3.5 million people — about the population of Denver, Colorado — experience homelessness each year in the United States. That includes 600,000 families and 1.35 million children. Many of them live in a family vehicle because they are able to find and maintain a job, or had a vehicle before their crisis hit.

Studies show the most economically efficient way to end homelessness is to prevent it in the first place. The most common cause of homelessness is a lack of affordable housing; it accounts for 50 percent of all reasons given.

Emergency assistance (including rent or mortgage and utility assistance), which helps provide time-limited housing subsidies until families

become financially stable, can help prevent homelessness and is more financially effective than getting someone off the street.

So instead of handing a homeless person \$5 or \$10, contribute \$10 or \$20 to your local energy company when you pay your utility bill each month. It will go towards helping someone keep the home they already have. Donating to businesses or groups that can provide car repair, transportation, rent and food, or medical care to people in need can also help.

Rather than volunteer at the local soup kitchen on Thanksgiving and Christmas, why not help set up a crisis clinic or donate time at a free health clinic?

Pity isn't a solution. Practical, political expediency is. Providing safe parking, allowing the homeless to use public resources such as parks, showers, transportation, and libraries will help thousands of families get off the streets or out of their cars quicker. Getting your local government to decriminalize homelessness is harder than spending the morning at a soup kitchen, but the payoff is so much greater.

After realizing I had a skill I could use, I moved back home to Tennessee, alternated between living in my van and couch-surfing with friends, and I

started writing. By the following summer, I was a working journalist, winning awards and living in my own apartment, no longer homeless or invisible.

It's superficial, but society equates having a permanent address and a permanent structure to live in with having value and worth as a human being. I used to not believe that society was so superficial.

I believe it now..

*"This article first appeared in design mind, a magazine published by the global innovation firm frog design: <http://designmind.frogdesign.com/>*

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The website, <http://homeless4theholidays.com> is a site dedicated to information about homelessness, resources for the homeless and links to a variety of sites about homelessness.

I have attributed, credited and linked all information, photos and information in this ebook to their proper authors and photographers under the “Fair Use Act.” Unless otherwise indicated, information about each individual was written by that person, or taken directly from their “about” page on their website and lightly edited to fit space requirements for this book. This is not an end-all, be-all book. It’s an introduction to the problem of homelessness along with some basic information, resources and links to other sites that deal more exhaustively with homelessness than I alone can. I hope you find it helpful!

<http://beckyblanton.com> or <http://homeless4theholidays.com>



For more information about homelessness, how to survive on the streets, how to live out of your vehicle, laws, resources, and other tips on getting out of homelessness, finding food sources etc. visit our website: <http://homeless4theholidays.com>

# Acknowledgments

No great thing happens without the help of many, many people. My journey from homelessness to TED to [“Homeless4theHolidays,”](#) (both this book and the website) was possible because of a hand up from dozens, if not hundreds of people. From the folks at [Yahoo.com](#), where I won the laptop I’m writing this on; to [Smugmug](#), the most wonderful photo hosting/storage site in the world; to **Phil Hamby** and **Denice Thibodeau** who let me couch surf for weeks and fed me; to [David Benjamin Knopp](#) who designed the cover of [Homeless 4 the Holidays](#) and my websites and logos “for the cause,” (he so rocks as a person and graphic artist); to [Jodi Kaplan](#), [Jule Kucera](#), [Bernd Nurenborg](#), [John Furst](#) (who has been a steady rock, mentor, source of inspiration and email marketer for me); [Patty Newbold](#), and [Judy Vorfeld](#), for their edits, suggestions, patience, inspiration and guidance; to **Bonnie Larner** for a place to park the van; to all the members of [Seth Godin’s Triiibes](#) and to [Seth Godin](#) himself, who blogged about traffic magnets and helped push the vote. To [Daniel Pink](#), who held the contest for [Johnny Bunko](#) that grabbed my attention, and got me to **TED**. To [Ed Brenegar](#), who joined me in the Johnny Bunko contest and became a friend; To [Megan Elizabeth Morris](#) and [Marty Whitmore](#) who created [the Johnny Bunko comic book](#), and who blog about my experience. And to all the folks at **TED**. And to my agent, [Colleen Mohyde](#) (the full-length book is coming) for her patience and belief in me.

To anyone reading this who is homeless, or struggling or fearful. Don’t give up hope. Hope is all you might have, but it’s all you need to get out.

If you work with the homeless, have compassion for them, or donate to them, thank you. As Christ said, “If you do it to the least of these, you have done it for me.” Regardless of your beliefs, or non-beliefs, compassion is the gift that keeps on giving. Thank you for your work, whatever it may be. You are making a difference.

## Merry Christmas

<http://beckyblanton.com> or <http://homeless4theholidays.com>

“This book is packed with great ideas that can make a real difference in a homeless person's life. The suggestions are practical, realistic, and inexpensive solutions (not just handouts). Bravo!”

*Jodi Kaplan, Kaplan Copy*

Do you have a heart for the homeless? If so, this ebook will help you put your money where your heart is. Beautifully blended with wisdom and wit, and lavishly sprinkled with creativity.

“Homeless for the Holidays” is the eBook of choice for every agency supporting the needs of the homeless, and every publication that roots for the homeless.

*Judy Vorfeld*