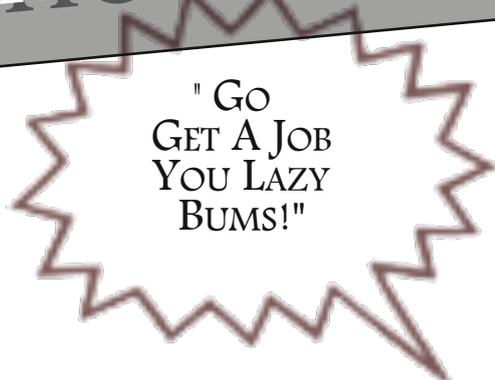


HOMELESS MYTH BUSTING!



Did you know that many homeless people do have jobs?

Nearly one third (30.1%) of respondents to the 2013 Metro Denver Homeless Initiative's Point-in-Time homeless persons count reported they or someone in their family unit had worked in the past month.

But minimum wage today cannot cover food, hygiene items or bills- let alone a place to live! Have you seen the rent prices in Colorado today? They're pretty high!

Housing Colorado explains,

"In Colorado, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$916. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities – without paying more than 30% of income on housing – a household must earn \$3,052 monthly or \$36,623 annually. In Colorado, a minimum wage worker earns an hourly wage of \$8.23. In order to afford the FMR for a two-bedroom apartment, a minimum wage earner must work 88 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. Or a household must include 2.2 minimum wage earners working 40 hours per week year-round in order to make the two-bedroom FMR affordable."

Did you know that some people ACTUALLY THINK that homeless people WANT to smell bad and be dirty?

Isn't that ridiculous?! There is a disturbing lack of hygiene facilities where homeless people can actually go to take showers. The Point-in-Time report done in 2013 found that there were nearly 5,000 homeless people in Denver. There are only a few places where these folks can take showers, each with different requirements regarding their use.



For some people homelessness may be a choice, but in order to understand the deeper truth we must ask what other choices the person had.



For instance, a teen could CHOOSE to become homeless because their family dynamic is more miserable to deal with than being homeless, so they leave. Or someone may "choose" to be homeless rather than keep striking out in their efforts to land a job, or knowing any job they might get will not pay enough for them to afford housing.

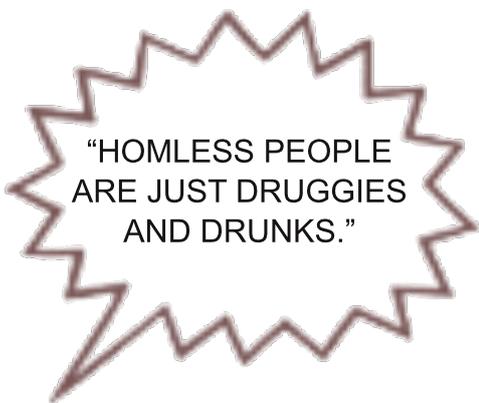
Or being homeless may seem preferable to continuing in a job where they are overworked, underpaid and mistreated. There is Section 8 housing, but Denver only opens its Section 8 housing choice voucher list once a year, and then it's a lottery and only a small percentage gets picked, and then many of them can't find an apartment that falls within their rent limit, and that will rent to a Section 8 voucher holder. Also the requirements to get housing exclude anyone who has had a felony--even if the charge is from ten or even forty years ago.

HOMELESS MYTH BUSTING!

 There are many reasons why people become homeless, and many reasons why they tend to stay homeless. People become homeless because of foreclosures, job loss, family problems, burglary, and bankruptcy. In fact, the most common reported reasons for homelessness in Denver are loss of a job, housing costs and breakup of the family. If these people could have kept their job, kept their family together, or paid for housing, you can be sure they would never have "chosen" to experience homelessness!

 34% of people experiencing homelessness have a physical or mental disability and either receive no income or their disability income is insufficient to pay for housing. Those receiving SSI payments--usually \$733 per month--receive less than the average monthly rent for a 1 bedroom apartment in Denver. Widespread, chronic homelessness emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in part a result of mental institutions across the nation shutting their doors or reducing their beds, and relying on community based housing and services to fill the gap. What has been provided has proven woefully inadequate to meet the needs. As a result, thousands of people in Colorado with serious mental illness are bouncing between the streets, jails, and emergency rooms, and only a very ignorant person would call this a CHOICE!

 People whose homelessness can be attributed to their drugs or alcohol use most likely did not CHOOSE to be alcoholics and addicts. Substance use dependency is a serious mental health disorder according to the DSM-V (the "bible" of mental health practitioners). What those who suffer from this disorder need is not our condemnation but rather HOUSING AND TREATMENT--with housing being a form of treatment in itself. Saying they CHOSE to be addicts and alcoholics, and therefore CHOSE to be homeless, is like saying someone with cancer CHOSE that disease.



 Only 18.3% of homeless people counted in the 2013 Point-in-time count have a substance abuse issue.

 According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, an estimated 20 million Americans age 12 or older used an illegal drug in the past 30 days. This estimate represents 8% percent of the population age 12 years old or older." Housed folks have substance abuse issues too. The biggest difference is that housed folk can use their substances indoors where they are not seen by the public.



64% of all homeless people counted in the 2013 Metro Denver Point-in-time survey were members of families with children under 18 and 42% of homeless people in the Denver metro area are women.



"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win" - Gandhi



coloradohomelessbillofrights.org

info@denverhomelessoutloud.org

720.940.5291

