

HOMELESS INSIDER

October/November 2019 Edition

A message to our supporters

Thank
You

We at Homeless Insider pride ourselves on being a company of integrity. We want to be a resource to the Lancaster Community, but we can acknowledge that we are part of a bigger picture for change that needs to take place in this community.

We would like to take the time to acknowledge all of the people who have impacted our lives, and the lives of individuals going through these hard times, by simply spreading our vision through their support and compassion!

(Listed in alphabetical order)

Antelope Valley Health Neighborhood
Bob's Too Market
Desert Vineyard
Harvest Market
Grace Resources
Lancaster Public Library
Laurel Crest Apartments
Mental Health America (MHA)
Operation Give Hope
Street Company
Valley Oasis
Wesley Health Center, Lancaster
Wonder Supermarket

Thank you for your continued love and support for our cause of raising awareness in this community!!

And thank you to the unnamed heroes of Lancaster who spread our vision through word of mouth and taking a copy to pass to friend!!

You inspire us to be better as a company, and as a peer group!!

Thank you from the Homeless Insider Team.

Why did this issue take so long ?



I would like to apologize for the lateness of this issue.

Due to unforeseen Internet related issues we were not able to get this issue out at the end of October. So we decided, just this once, to combine the October and November issues.

We will do our utmost to get future issues out on time, as we planned and promised we would.

Thank you for your patience, understanding and support.

Written by Marco van den Heuvel.



EVERYONE COUNTS.
NO MATTER WHERE
THEY LIVE.



One morning in January of this year, hundreds of volunteers sought out into the deserts and other places that homeless people are known to frequent in order to get a count of just how many homeless people there are in the Antelope Valley.

Although it is impossible to get a 100% accurate number, volunteers were as thorough as possible and finished the count over the course of a few days.

The numbers became available in June and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, or LAHSA did a presentation for the homeless count for all of Los Angeles County.

Cities are divided into what are known as Service Planning Areas, or SPA's, The Antelope Valley is SPA1.

Overall the Antelope Valley has seen a 2.8% increase of homeless people in comparison to last year, 2018. And Los Angeles county overall saw an increase over 12% percent from last year, this may sound like a large increase, however, Ventura County saw an increase overall of 48% from last year and Orange County has roughly 7000 homeless individuals counted for 2019, there are no accurate numbers from previous years in Orange County.

Research and statistics do suggest that the efforts put forth to address the homeless issue in Los Angeles county are making a difference. Last year 21,631 were housed in Los Angeles county.

In the Antelope Valley, there are 3,293 sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals. Men are the majority of that with a total of 1,801 which is down 8% from the number of homeless men last year. There were 1,443 homeless women which is a 17% increase from last year. There are 1,930 homeless people between ages 25-54.

Los Angeles County as a whole has 58,936 homeless individuals, the Antelope Valleys homeless population is 5.59% of the County's total.

Statistics and numbers are an excellent means of monitoring the progress and/or failure to bringing an end to Homelessness, however, please remember those numbers are people. It is going to take more than a politician's input to make a dent in the number of homeless people out there. It's going to take a much deeper understanding from members of the community as well as community leaders in combination with homeless people opening up to accept help.

This is especially true now that seasons are changing, night time weather will sometimes drop below freezing and this is very dangerous, which we will discuss in the next month's Homeless Insider.

Written by Sarah Odum.

Homeless Insider is a newsletter by the homeless community of Lancaster published by Street Company. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions or article contributions please send an email to info@streetcompany.org. Street Company is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization created by homeless people and their supporters.

A big thank you to all of our donors, supporters, contributors, family, and friends.

A multi-part story from the life of a homeless person



On a typical morning, we make it down to the cafeteria for an 8 o'clock breakfast prepared by the staff from the Salvation Army. I always say thank you because I do appreciate them cooking for us.

As we sit down to eat, some of us discuss our plans or appointments we have made as the day approaches. After breakfast, the showers and washroom open up. While many of us prepare for the morning, others wait for the day-room to open up. After the cafeteria has been cleaned up, everyone makes their way to the day-room (in other words, the television room). It is probably the only familiar, past time we all enjoy, watching a movie together with the ones we love. Other things we do in the day-room are play dominoes, read a book, or play pool.

My experience with the mentally ill at the shelter has been enlightening. Many people don't know what it is like to receive a hug and be told they are loved. They can't experience falling in love, get married, or enjoy friendships in their condition? It's like their life has been suspended, they are unable to live life as we do, and to my surprise, they know this, and this is why some people may have an attitude about how others treat them.

Managing their mental illness is a struggle, they are as confused and embarrassed as we would be about the behavior this illness brings to their lives. It's not like they can pick up a 'how-to' manual. So they try to make something of the life they didn't plan for. This is what the mentally-ill have taught me at the Lancaster Shelter.

I returned to the shelter and entered the day-room to relax and watch a movie. I saw Ray and sat by him to ask him how his day went. Ray and I were having a heart-felt deep conversation about how he missed his life before he became homeless, and tears welled up in our eyes, I shared with him how much his children love and miss him. He said 'how do you know that about my family', and I said 'I don't know but God does'.

There was a sweet aroma in the air, the Holy Spirit was in the day-room. Vicky must have been listening, she was sitting in front of us in the day-room. She got up, looked at Michael and hugged him, after that Michael was sitting next to her.

Then a woman across the room saw what was going on and wanted a hug as well, so Vicky walked over to her and they shared a hug!

Then quickly, Ray and I look at each other, pleasantly shocked, and said, "did this just happen?" She felt the love in the room too! Then Vicky looks in our direction and I motioned for a hug and she gladly came and gave us hugs too!

Vicky is the young girl that talks to herself and appears to be lonely. There is nothing like the human touch. I met her at the shelter 3 months ago. She is a wonderful young lady. She is very sweet, helpful, and eager to meet new people. I have spoken to her many times, invited her to lunch, and we have become friends. She talks to herself, she tells wonderful, sometimes scary, stories. And as you get to know her the stories change and other stories she tells just don't seem to make any sense, but that's OK with us, the residents at the shelter.

Written by Janet.

The Homeless Narrative

Prop 47

California Proposition 47, the Reduced Penalties for Some Crimes Initiative, was on the November 4, 2014 ballot in California as an initiated state statute. The measure was approved.

Introduction

The initiative reduced the classification of most nonviolent property and drug crimes—including theft and fraud for amounts up to \$950—from a felony to a misdemeanor.

What did the measure do?

The initiative:

- Classified certain crimes as misdemeanors instead of felonies unless the defendant has prior convictions for murder, rape, certain sex offenses or certain gun crimes.
- Permitted re-sentencing for those currently serving a prison sentence for any of the offenses that the initiative reduced to misdemeanors. Under Proposition 47, 10,000 inmates were eligible for re-sentencing, according to Lenore Anderson of Californians for Safety and Justice.
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- Required a review of criminal history and risk assessment of any individuals before re-sentencing to ensure that they do not pose a risk to the public.
- Created a Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund. The fund was set to receive appropriations based on savings accrued by the state during the fiscal year, as compared to the previous fiscal year, due to the initiative's implementation. Estimates ranged from \$150 million to \$250 million per year
- Distributed funds from the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund as follows: 25 percent to the Department of Education, 10 percent to the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board, and 65 percent to the Board of State and Community Correction.

Which crimes were affected?

The measure required misdemeanor sentencing instead of felony for the following crimes:

- Shoplifting, where the value of property stolen does not exceed \$950.
- Permitted re-sentencing for those currently serving a prison sentence for any of the offenses that the initiative reduced to misdemeanors. Under Proposition 47, 10,000 inmates were eligible for re-sentencing, according to Lenore Anderson of Californians for Safety and Justice.
- Required a review of criminal history and risk assessment of any individuals before re-sentencing to ensure that they do not pose a risk to the public.
- Created a Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund. The fund was set to receive appropriations based on savings accrued by the state during the fiscal year, as compared to the previous fiscal year, due to the initiative's implementation. Estimates ranged from \$150 million to \$250 million per year.
- Distributed funds from the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Fund as follows: Distributed 25 percent to the Department of Education, 10 percent to the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board, and 65 percent to the Board of State and Community Correction.
- Grand theft, where the value of the stolen property does not exceed \$950
- Receiving stolen property, where the value of the property does not exceed \$950.
- Forgery, where the value of forged check, bond or bill does not exceed \$950.
- Fraud, where the value of the fraudulent check, draft or order does not exceed \$950.
- Writing a bad check, where the value of the check does not exceed \$950.
- Personal use of most illegal drugs.

I was just reading an article about Prop 47. The article is about how theft has increased, and people are blaming the homeless population in the cities of San Diego and San Francisco, and other small towns Bay Area upscale diverse cities, cities where you would think that "homelessness" would not exist.

According to the article, the thefts are increasing due to the "idea" that if you steal less than a certain amount of money's worth of items, you will not get prosecuted, and store owners are now "eyewitnesses" of people stealing pants and creating a drug ring?

The article can be found at:

<https://www.foxnews.com/us/california-prop-47-shoplifting-theft-crime-statewide>

No, I'm not lying, it is in a "Fox News" article. Apparently the homeless are stealing from stores to create jobs for drug dealers! A "sophisticated" drug ring, is what is being said.

They call the cops and know that, according to the law, they cannot arrest these individuals. And so, they don't call them, they take the losses, and complain that the homeless individuals of certain ethnicities are the culprit.

Even though in these Bay Area cities, you would "think" they would have cameras to catch these "sophisticated" drug-rings, consisting of individuals that they are thought to be homeless, but yet there is no footage available from these cameras.

I think something is wrong with this "Homeless Narrative". I have met the citizens of Lancaster, the homeless ones, and I know these individuals by name, their families' names, and their back-stories. And I often share my tragic tale of living with the "Insane Clown Con-artists".

This narrative does NOT sound like any homeless person I know. To me, this sounds like people who could be working and are using the system's flaws for personal gain and just being lazy. Sure !! I know those types of people, personally. But not the people I'm fighting to get into Transitional Housing and Rehab programs.

Unfortunately, America does not care that there is a difference in the mentality of individuals who NEED help, and those who are just LAZY!!

I want to help those in need, so please, my fellow citizens, do what you can, to help the cause for which I fight hard in my powered wheelchair. I spend my time fighting injustice, educating the masses, and trying to see how we, as a community, can get more housing, food and clothing services for those who need it.

Please do not be this narrative, I hope you all stay warm and be safe!

Written by Tenina "Melo.T" Johnson.