

“Get a Job!”

Tony Schefstad, PhD, LCSW, 12/13/09
Executive Director

I left Subway after eating my five dollar “foot long”. For a few extra dollars I turned it into a meal with a bag of chips and soda. As I left Subway I saw a woman approach another female sitting in a truck. I had seen the woman that was approaching the truck many times before walking the streets of Daytona Beach and Holly Hill. I have never asked her her name. The woman in the truck had just left Subway with her order. I then heard the woman from the truck yell, “Get a job like the rest of us!” The woman that had approached the truck was clearly startled. She first backed away from the truck. Then she quickly walked away. Her head down; eyes looking at the ground. The truck screeched as it pulled onto Mason. “Get a job!” I heard coming from the truck again, “Get a job!”

Where have I seen this woman? It came to me. I have seen her in the labor halls. She arrives in line by 5:00 a.m. Stands quietly among many. She rarely talks. She enters the labor hall. She registers. She then sits on the bench. She waits for her name to be called. She waits for an hour. She never hears her name. She leaves, going to another labor hall just down the block. The process is repeated; day after day. Her name is never called. By 8:00 a.m. she begins wandering the street. She passes the time by walking from corner to corner, meal to meal. Obscenity after obscenity yelled from passing vehicles.

This woman is not employable. Her sandy blond hair is parted in the middle. There is no shampoo bounce or curl. It is combed straight, matted over her ears. She presents with little affect. She has a face that has been exposed to the outside elements. She wears no make-up. On days that are chilly she wears a knit cap and a coat. If you are lucky enough to get close to her you might detect a slight smile on occasion. Her eyes are bloodshot from the chronic stress of the streets. She walks slightly leaning forward. Her gait is measured. Steady, not swift. It is time she has to pass. There is no-where quickly she must be. There is no job to be had. No employer would hire her. No labor hall would put her on a ticket.

Those that make up the homeless are many. For most, the pathogenesis of homelessness is a downward spiral. It is a process that began many months

ago and for others many years ago. Rarely do people wake up and find themselves homeless. It is a process that happens over time; it is a result of poor decisions, poor choices and, yes, sometimes, poor circumstances. This means poor financial decisions, poor choices of using drugs or alcohol and for many, mental illness. Many homeless have either given witness too, or have been victims of violence. Many experience this violence as young children. These things all contribute to homelessness.

“Get a job!”, echoes in my mind. I can’t seem to shake the women’s voice yelling from truck. I can hear the anger and frustration in her voice. The screeching of the tires rebound in my mind . I see the startled woman walk quickly away from the truck. “Get a job!” echoes and echoes and echoes in my mind. I shake my head as if to shake off this thought and feeling of despair. “Housing first!”, I mumble under my breath. “Housing first!” Let’s get this women housing with supportive help. Supportive help that will give bounce to her hair and swiftness to her step. Supportive housing that will regain her affect she perhaps had as young girl. Let’s get this woman Housing First. Then it would make sense to hear, “Get a job!”