

# Voices From the Crowd: Yesterday, Today, and Future Homelessness

By Kimberly Brandt

Our family arrived in Oregon over a year ago. We have seen so much since our decision to vacation for three months while my husband and I tried to see who could obtain work. The idea was for him to retire and mom, (being me), would go back to work. This plan didn't go as we had hoped. In a way it has been enlightening.

I have wondered over the past three years where people were going after the banks foreclosed on their homes. We have now met many of those folks. I have also talked with and listened to many people over the years. Many think homeless people are lazy--just looking for handouts and don't want to work. I have to say even I have viewed the homeless in a similar way-- as those that didn't wish to face the challenges of alcohol or drug abuse and maybe even mental challenges. My view came from the news and how they portray homelessness. It also came from how my parents viewed the homeless, people they called hobos.

That was yesterday's homeless. Today we have a new homeless. I didn't see it until our trip to Oregon, after our plan to relocate didn't go as we planned. Today's homeless are renters, the unemployed, people whose homes have gone into foreclosure. The younger and older generations who can't afford a home. All mixed with yesterday's homeless.

The sad part is some of us have income and can't get into a home. We have also had bad experiences with home owners who foreclosed on homes we rented. Many of us have paid off bills in hopes of relocating to an area where we could own a home only to find out banks are holding on to homes and not loaning funds to buy even a used home. So we find ourselves listed as homeless.

It cost a bit more sometimes to camp than rent but the feeling of security we have knowing we won't be losing our shelter outweighs the costs.

The new homeless are good folks just trying to make it. The sad part is many of us are labeled as those who may not want to make it. The future homeless are going to have even more people like us. Until one experiences homelessness one can't even understand how it feels. Just being called homeless or to hear someone refer to someone as being lazy due to being homeless still hurts.

We knew the economy was a mess. We believed that moving and starting over was a good idea. We have met some really good people. When one is camping one blends in with other campers. We didn't hear ourselves referred to as homeless until the church and school labeled us as homeless. So if one doesn't live in a home that is attached to solid ground one is homeless in the eyes of today's people. Many seniors today live in mobile homes as they did when I was a child. Many of them serve as campground hosts due to the high cost of living in a home. So we are looking into to being camp host. Our only issue is we still have school aged teens; we would like to stop moving so they can finish school. Our youngest is done with school in five years.

Our hope is still to own a home with land to pass on to our kids and grandkids. It is pretty sad that our government has let things get this out of hand. During the Great Depression the President signed a law which didn't allow property or land to be taken until the economy and jobs recovered. That was very smart as taxes continued to be paid, farms continued producing crops and people were able to find work. Today we are just increasing the problem; banks, loan companies and realtors don't pay property taxes until a property is sold. So jobs will continue to be lost and homes foreclosed on.

Many people think that someone going through foreclosure is walking away. Many don't understand how people ended up in foreclosure. Renters are also now being affected. Our family were renters—we owned our own home and sold it fifteen years ago when we needed a larger place when a family member needed to stay with us. Then the house we were renting went into foreclosure.

Some people might ask how can homeowners not see foreclosure coming? But I believe the more important questions are why is this happening in our country? The answer—because we all trusted that we as Americans (our assets, how companies operate, control of monopolies) were being watched over. But we have been fooled—had the wool pulled over our eyes. Whatever one wants to call it—we lose. What can we do to fix it? Stand up, educate ourselves and our youth and vote.

Our family has tried many things, advertising on Craigslist that we would help a family if they had a second home on their land they could rent, or park our trailer and help them pay their mortgage so our family had a place to stay and at the same time help them save their home. We have not had any takers. We continue to go month by month hoping something might change. Our prayer is that no one else has to go through what our family has had to go through.

Yes, it has been an adventure. We have been helped and have helped others too. We have met some really special people. I have fished with many good hearted folks and even had a good friend come and stay with us a few nights. That made our temporary home really feel like our home. So at times I have not felt homeless. We have logged many volunteer hours while not working, which makes us feel like we are part of the community.

Do you truly know what it means to be called homeless or to be homeless? Would you even know if the person next to you was homeless or about to be homeless? If it was your friend or family--what would you do? How can you help the homeless or jobless folks today? Do you even wish to?

Do you believe the homeless are lazy and don't wish to make it or just wish to survive?

Our family does appreciate what we have even more than before. When fruits and veggies, or even sugar and toilet paper are treats, one really starts to think. What is truly important--what others think or how we feel about ourselves?

Homelessness isn't something one plans on or even wishes to be in today's world. And it is different today than it was yesterday.

## Columbia County Hires Interim Director of Juvenile Justice

Columbia County is pleased to announce that Stacia Tyacke has been appointed Interim Director of the Columbia County Juvenile Department, effective October 1, 2011.

Tyacke has fifteen years of experience in the field of Juvenile Justice. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science from Oregon State University, Tyacke worked for the Oregon Youth Authority at both MacLaren and North Coast Youth Correctional Facilities. In 1999, Tyacke

came to Columbia County as a Juvenile Court Counselor/PO. In 2009, she was promoted to Lead Juvenile Probation Officer and has been directly involved with the management of the department. Tyacke represents the department on the local Multi-Disciplinary Team, sits on the Board of Directors for the Amani Child Abuse Assessment Center and serves on the Legislative Committee of the Oregon Juvenile Department Directors Association.



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