

'These are normal blue-collar Americans'

Front man Jacoby Shaddix talks about why the issue of homelessness is close to his heart

BY WILL METCALFE
STREET NEWS SERVICE

Papa Roach front man Jacoby Shaddix is not an average rock star though black spiked hair and multiple tattoos suggest otherwise. Offstage Shaddix's role is a complete contrast. "I'm a humble guy but the place where I'm not is on stage - that's where I do it. When I step off and put my feet back on the ground I'm just another human being in the human race."

Besides his career with one of his generation's most commercially successful metal bands, Shaddix spends his time helping the homeless - a cause especially close to his heart. "The first year of my family's life we were homeless. We lived out of a van and a friend had a screened-in porch so we stayed there for a while. It sounds kind of ridiculous but we even lived in a teepee for a while."

Shaddix admits that his is not the most harrowing of tales of homelessness yet it has had a profound effect on his life.

His father, he says, was "destroyed" by Vietnam: a war that left a generation of Americans with a "social disease" whose effects can still be seen today. "Writing our new record and looking at our community we saw a lot of folks getting kicked out of their homes and we're not just talking about junkies and derelicts or the mentally ill."

"These are normal blue-collar Americans. A lot of the time, people look down on the homeless like all of them are just derelicts and junkies and yeah, some of them are but a large percentage of them are Vietnam veterans and I've got a personal affinity for that."

Through his connections with homelessness and the realization that action is more effective than celebrity posturing, Shaddix became involved with the homeless

charity Loaves and Fishes. Working on the food lines amid Sacramento's homeless community is as important as the work he does with the band. "One of the ultimate acts of life is service - to people, to others. I think that's fulfilling in a huge, huge way."

During the recording of the band's latest record, *Metamorphosis*, many of Sacramento's homeless shelters were forced to shut down and the city was faced with large numbers of people with nowhere to go.

"All these news broadcasters from across the country came in saying things like: 'It's

tent city, it's like the great depression down here.' So the mayor opened up an old fairground and let them camp there but when the media had gone away he shut it down."

After much searching, Loaves and Fishes' lawyers found a legal loophole and following a highly publicised march on an abandoned piece of ground a permanent site in the city for the homeless was secured. The site provides residents with clean water and bathroom facilities.

Papa Roach may no longer be the major concern that it once was but the band has

continued working hard and released their sixth record earlier this year. *Transition* is, Shaddix says, at the very heart of what he does, both with his personal life and as a musician.

"We went from four kids making music in an abandoned meat locker to traveling the world and selling millions of records. Musically, stylistically we've always evolved and right now we're really finding our niche."

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