

An open letter from the streets this Christmas

My name is Wayne Stump, and I've been homeless for a while. I'm sure you don't remember me because you pretend you don't see me when you walk by. There are some things I think you should know because you believe there is no way you could ever end up like me, but the funny thing is I never thought I would be homeless either. I've made a lot of friends out here, and they talk about their life before they were homeless, and you really do have a lot in common.

I remember what it was like window shopping and tapping my toes to the music about Old Saint Nick and riding in a one-horse open sleigh. I see how excited your kids are by all of the lights and piles of toys in every store; there is no way to keep them close by, holding their little hands. Your family looks like one of those Christmas cards people send out to everybody. Take plenty of pictures with them because I can tell you when they are gone, Christmas is very different.

Gosh, how I miss those days! Maybe someday I'll be able to have a normal Christmas again. I would love to celebrate the holidays like it used to be and just forget about how my life is right now. Sometimes I just wish there was no such thing as Christmas, birthdays and special holidays because when you're homeless, it's more like a fairy tale meant for other people. I would never let my family see me like this, and I can't make myself call them because they act so worried on the phone.

Some of my friends out here are grandmas and grandpas and mothers and fathers, and

they say the same thing. There is Christmas music playing everywhere we go, and people carrying their shopping bags are laughing out loud. We used to do the same thing, too, ya know. Before we were homeless, we were just like you. Let me guess – you have some terrific advice for me, and if I would have done that in the first place, I would not be homeless now, right?

It's OK, Mister. I understand you just don't know what to say to me, so go ahead and keep walking with your family over there; most people act like I'm invisible anyway. I keep thinking someday I'll get used to it, but I know I am a descent human being, and we aren't supposed to feel like we don't even exist. Somebody called me a bum this morning just because I told him Merry Christmas! I didn't ask him for anything, and I was only being nice. He didn't even want to know my name.

Sometimes I catch myself staring at someone across the way because they remind me so much of how my life was not so long ago. Children can't help but stare back at me the whole time they are walking by because they just can't understand why I'm sitting here like this. I watched a mother lean down to her child with a pointing finger, and I could only imagine what she must have been saying: When you grow up, you can be anything you want – but don't you even dare become homeless!

– By Wayne Stump

Set's me Free

Brent B. Lusted

Well, now I am homeless
and down dirt poor!
But I've been worse off
I've died once before!!

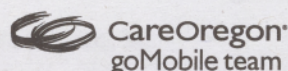
For some damned reason,
I was brought back to Life again
and I think that God told me
You need to do what I command!

Oh, and it sets me free
When I can help anyone who is in need.
Thank you my Lord when you set me free
'cause then I won't be in pain – even when I bleed.

I'm homeless, but I'm happier
than most rich people will ever be!
Because they are controlled
By an Evil Thing that's called money!

And if all the super rich
Ended up out here on the Street
I'd do whatever I could for them
I'd get them somethin' to eat.

Oh, and it sets me free
When I can help anyone who is in need.
Thank you my Lord when you set me free,
'cause then I won't be in pain – even when I bleed.



OHP Navigation Clinics

CareOregon and our partners make Oregon Health Plan navigation easy! We offer help with:

- Medicaid medical, dental and mental health appointments
- Medicare eligibility for disabled and elderly adults

Find us at these locations:

Central Library, SW 10th Avenue Ave
Dec 29.....5:30-7:30 p.m.

Holgate Library 7905 SE Holgate
Jan 8.....2:30-4:30 p.m.

City Team, 526 SE Grand Ave.
Dec 30.....8-10 a.m.
Jan 13.....8-10 a.m.

Midland Library 805 SE 122nd Ave
Jan 6.....4-6 p.m.

Clackamas County Transition Center
1024 Main Street, Oregon City
Dec 29.....1-3 p.m.
Jan 12.....1-3 p.m.

Portland Rescue Mission, 111 W Burnside
Dec 31.....8-10 a.m.
Jan 7.....8-10 a.m.
Jan 14.....8-10 a.m.

Gresham Library, 385 NW Miller Ave
Jan 7.....1-3 p.m.

Union Gospel Mission, 3 NW Third Ave.
Dec 22.....1-3 p.m.
Dec 29.....1-3 p.m.



Gifts, Photos with Santa,
Phone Calls and Live Jazz!

IT'S ALL **FREE**

Please Join Us for

CHRISTMAS DINNER

on

Christmas Day

Noon to 3:00pm

PORTLAND ART MUSEUM

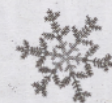
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