

Opinion: Homeless services don't end homelessness

By Tully MacKay-Tisbert

Homelessness is often described as a problem we must solve—and Los Angeles city and county now have expensive plans to do so.

As someone who has spent eight years working in nonprofit homeless services and studying homelessness, I've learned homelessness is also an industry designed to manage costs rather than challenge the mechanisms that create and maintain homelessness.

As George Mason Professor Craig Willse shows in his book, "The Value of Homelessness: Managing Surplus Life in the United States", homeless services don't end homelessness; they manage it. While the industry is dominated by nonprofits, there is money to be made, and we have accepted the reality that homeless services are professionalized, and offer career opportunities and—sadly—a certain security.

Homelessness is not routine—it's a deeply personal experience of suffering, and its causes are largely systemic. Many of the folks that I've met through my work became homeless because of the way their life and choices were constrained by forces outside their control.

Of course, many people I serve have high psychiatric needs and chronic health conditions, but I don't buy into the notion—common in popular, policy, and academic interpretations of homelessness—that these conditions are the primary cause of homelessness.

I fear we have constructed an imaginary chronically homeless person—mentally ill, with substance abuse and other issues. That hides the structures behind their troubles—a criminal

justice system that swallows up poor people, health care systems that underserve the poor and mentally ill, housing markets that don't provide enough safe and affordable options. Framing homelessness as a pathology reinforces the legitimacy of the industry and places the blame for housing deprivation on the individual.

As a graduate student in applied anthropology at CSU Long Beach, I did life history interviews with people at Lamp Community, a nonprofit homeless services organization in Los Angeles. I found that life-long courses of trauma and poverty caused housing insecurity that led people to become homeless. I also found that housing insecurity remains even once a person makes it from the streets to supportive housing. Of course, the committed work of staff in providing services and intervention can sometimes help them keep their housing. But all such efforts are temporary, since supportive housing, like the rest of the homeless industry, fails to confront the inequality, poverty, health care, and other systems through which homelessness exists.

When the city of Los Angeles declared a state of emergency in October 2015 and committed \$100 million to address homelessness, I couldn't help but see it through this more skeptical lens. Of course there will be folks who benefit from the infusion of millions of dollars into the homeless services industry. But expanding the industry doesn't bring us closer to ending homelessness. So the state of emergency and funds appear more aimed at masking the visible reminders of our disparate economic and social systems.

As downtown Los Angeles gentrifies and a palpable tension between the newer tenants and those living on the streets grows, the pressure to better manage the homeless population mounts.

Many advocates have argued that housing should be considered a human right, but in our society it is first and foremost a

commodity. Still many advocates adopt the argument that housing the homeless is cheaper than leaving them on the street, as a way of getting new policies and more funding. This demonstrates how effectively economics dominates the discourse of homelessness. Take the logic to the extreme, and you understand the horror of such thinking: If homelessness and costs shift so that abandoning homeless to the streets is cheaper, should we stop trying to find them housing?

Of course I want to make a difference. That's what drew me to the field of homeless services in the first place. But the poverty and trauma I've seen have convinced me that we are failing. The nonprofit industry and all our emergencies will not end homeless.

What will? Real advocacy that isn't compromised by the funding of an industry. Advocacy that produces deep changes in how our economic system creates and responds to poverty, how we create housing, how people get the health care they need.

While I can focus on the day-to-day work—the great team I collaborate with, the amazing people I've met during my time in the field, and the ways we exercise compassion and attempt to lessen the harshness of our broader system—I'd rather simultaneously confront the hypocrite that I've become. I can't help but encourage others caught in the web—advocates, case managers, clinicians, administrators, academics, politicians—to do the same.

Tully MacKay-Tisbert studied applied anthropology at CSU Long Beach and currently works for an organization in Los Angeles that provides support to homeless and vulnerable individuals.

Bobcat seen prowling on South Shore

The U.S. Forest Service is warning South Shore residents that a bobcat had been seen multiple times in the Saw Mill Pond, Dundee Circle, North Upper Truckee, Washoe Meadows State Park, Echo Lake areas.

The agency has yet to verify the credibility of a March 1 report of a mountain lion with a cub in the area of Sawmill Road and Lake Tahoe Boulevard.

Spring weather tends to bring these animals out more where they are seen.

The Forest Service has more information **online** about staying safe in mountain lion habitat.

Opinion: Cracking down on crime, blight

By Brian Uhler

Great news: Compared to last year, our violent crime rate is down 41 percent; from 112 occurrences in 2014 to 66 in 2015.

The news is not all good. Our property crime rate is up 6 percent; from 516 in 2014 to 548 in 2015. This was not unexpected as we reported on a significant upward trend in property crime six months ago. Total crime is down 2.2 percent over last year.



Brian Uhler

Last summer and fall, we noticed a significant rise in bicycle thefts along with other thefts. It is our belief that a contributing factor is “loosening” of the laws and penalties for committing property crime – AB109 and Proposition 47. We will continue our effort this spring through the use of “bait” bikes and crime-prevention property marking programs like microdots.

Homicide case

On Jan. 30, police responded to a homicide. In this case, a robbery stemming from a marijuana deal led to the shooting death of 40 year old Dennis Wright Jr. The work on this case has been ongoing with the arrest of four suspects and warrants for two others pending. In such cases, we have the duty to follow every lead and solve the case. To do so our detectives have worked tirelessly and we have been fortunate to have support from other law enforcement organizations to include the El Dorado District Attorney’s Office, SLEDNET, the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Department and law enforcement professionals from Benicia, Fairfield, Vallejo, Contra Costa Sheriff’s Department and several others which cannot be named to preserve the integrity of the ongoing investigation.

Spring cleaning–code enforcement

This year we are planning to bolster community awareness regarding the city’s physical appearance—especially in the area of our most traveled and visited Highway 50 corridor. Here’s the plan: working with community members and staff

members, we are developing a Visual Appeal Index. With this we will grade individual properties and our city as a whole. After the grading phase, we plan notify property owners of the results to include positive reinforcement elements for nice-looking businesses and useful information to improve a given business' appearance. As you might expect, we will take action if in the course of doing this work we discover violations of existing code. We're from the government and we're here to help.

Brian Uhler is the South Lake Tahoe police chief.

Burning Man, Pershing County lawsuit settled

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

While Burning Man and Pershing County officials settled a lawsuit over First Amendment rights and money three years ago, the matter finally and officially has been settled in a federal appellate court.

In the decision released by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on Wednesday, Chief Judge Sidney Thomas struck down the previous 2014 ruling of District Court Judge Robert Jones, whom Thomas chastised for rejecting the parties' settlement in the first place.

Jones called the settlement "illegal, unenforceable and absurd" at the time. He erred because the court's jurisdiction had expired and because Jones ignored "the parties' clear intentions to resolve the matter," Thomas wrote in the decision.

Read the whole story

SLT Library hosting young writers event

The South Lake Tahoe Library is inviting teens and young adults to meet up with fellow writers for an afternoon of socializing, discussion, and writing.

Bring whatever you happen to be working on, whether it is a book, poem or short story. Some laptops will be available for use in the library.

The Young Adult Writers Meetup is the first and third Saturdays from March 5-April 16, from 3-4pm.

There is no cost to attend.

The library is located at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd, South Lake Tahoe.

USFS wants input on updating snowmobile guide

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is going to host three open houses regarding over-the-snow vehicle use in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Updating the LTBMU **Snowmobile Guide** will involve taking a

comprehensive look at access, parking, and motorized and non-motorized winter recreation opportunities.

The South Shore open house will take place March 29 from 5-7pm at the Forest Supervisor's Office, 35 College Drive in South Lake Tahoe. The Kings Beach open house is April 5 from 5-7pm at the North Tahoe Event Center, 8318 North Lake Blvd. A third open house will be in Sparks on April 19 from 5-7pm at the Humboldt-Toiyabe Forest Supervisor's Office, 1200 Franklin Way. There will be no formal presentation. Forest Service staff members will be available to provide background information and answer questions.

For more information on the project and how to provide feedback, go **online**.

Eagles expanding their habit beyond the wild



A bald eagle is released
near Carson Pass in 2009.

Photo/

DanThriftPhotography.com

By Gregory Lee Sullivan, Washington Post

If there's a time of year to see a bald eagle, this is it. But those who spot one during the current nesting season won't be observing quite the same national bird as in decades past.

"The main thing is they just don't really care as much about people anymore" and now can be found nesting in residential areas, said Kevin McGowan of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, based in Ithaca, N.Y.

According to scientists, changes in the behavior of the bald eagle – from a bird once found only deep in the wild to one willing to cohabitate with humans – are the result of laws that protect the bird and have helped the species recover after nearly dying out in the early 1960s. The government is empowered to go after those responsible for the death of bald eagles – even if it's unintentional (such as in the case of a New York farmer who received a fine and probation last year after several eagles died from poisoned meat he had set out to kill coyotes). Federal and state officials are investigating what happened to 13 bald eagles found dead recently near a farm on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

The bald eagle's historical range covers most of North America. The bird was hunted for sport before the Bald Eagle Protection Act of 1940 outlawed the practice; that ban was reinforced by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act in 1962. The pesticide DDT was found to cause eagle and other species significant difficulties with reproduction. By 1963 America's iconic bird was on the verge of dying out in the nation's 48 contiguous states. But with the banning of DDT in 1972, combined with more federal and state protection and recovery efforts, the species has made a steady rise.

Read the whole story

Critics: Consolidation of Nev. higher ed system a power grab

By Ian Whitaker, Las Vegas Sun

Late last year higher education officials controversially voted to merge campus police at two Reno colleges with the UNR police department.

Then, last month, administrators proposed centralizing the Nevada System of Higher Education's registration system. At that same meeting, the Board of Regents reaffirmed their vision for a strong, single system to oversee higher education in Nevada.

Now, system officials are considering whether the UNLV police department should take over enforcement duties for the College of Southern Nevada and Nevada State College.

[Read the whole story](#)

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• El Dorado County is using Rocklin-based Ralph Andersen & Associates to find a chief administrative officer. Larry Combs has had the job on an interim basis since June.

• Fire prevention fee bills for fiscal year 2015-16 began being mailed March 1 to more than 700,000 rural Californians, many of who are receiving a bill for the fifth time. Information on how to appeal is available **online**.

• Freedom from smoking classes start March 23 and run for seven consecutive Wednesdays from 6:30-8:30pm at Barton University in South Lake Tahoe. To register, call 530.543.5549. Cost is \$30.

• Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce needs volunteers to conduct door-to-door surveys to determine specific future employment needs for businesses. The inaugural South Shore Business Walk anticipates needing 100 volunteers to canvass businesses from Meyers to Round Hill March 15-16. For more info, go **online**.

Lake Tahoe Dance Collective ready to perform

Lake Tahoe Dance Collective opens its 2016 season March 18-20 with the 8th annual Winter Repertory at the Tahoe Art Haus in Tahoe City. The performance celebrates diversity in dance with three new creations, while honoring the classicism of yesterday.

This year's program includes the classic Paquita featuring guest Jakob Pringle (Ballet West), and new works by Jacqueline Lopez (Ballet Nacional de Mexico), Erik Wagner (San Francisco Ballet, Bern Ballet) and LTDC's Isabella Terrazas.

The evening opens with the world premiere of a work by Lopez that she created for the Collective in January. The program continues with the premiere of a creation by Terrazas entitled Initium.

Tickets available **online**, at Trunk Show in Tahoe City, or by calling 800.838.3006.

- Performances are:
 - March 18 at 7pm
 - March 19 at 2pm and 7pm
 - March 20 at 2pm.