

Volunteer Opportunities Serving Homeless People

While reaching out directly to provide food, clothing, or other items to persons experiencing homelessness may feel like a compassionate and impactful way to help those in need, your generosity may inadvertently serve to keep people homeless.

“Your efforts should go to helping people have a better life and not inadvertently maintaining homelessness.”

Mark Horvath, Founder, Invisible People

On any given night in Sacramento County, it is estimated that just over 2,650 persons experience homelessness. Roughly one third of these people are unsheltered.¹ Region-wide efforts to prevent and end homelessness are

coordinated through ***Sacramento Steps Forward***, a non-profit that partners with other local non-profit organizations to provide direct services ranging from shelter to supportive services to permanent housing. Most of these organizations are welcoming of community support and depend on the good will of local citizens to help support their services to help those in need.

Experts in the field of ending homelessness call attention to some of the inadvertent issues associated with public feedings and other “give-aways” that are not coordinated through an established homeless-serving organization:

- ✓ They separate critical services and supports from food and other necessities; this can be a disincentive to visit organizations providing services to end homelessness.
- ✓ Public feedings are typically not regulated, and can lead to unsanitary conditions in the public spaces as well as questionable food quality for those being fed.

“You must understand that when you feed the homeless in the street, you unintentionally rob them of any incentive to seek assistance from the various services in the area.”

Downtown Clergy Council (L.A.)

Below are some resources (with web links in footnotes) written by homeless advocates, service providers, and religious leaders on the unintended impacts of street “give-aways” and recommended alternatives to provide assistance.

*“Why I Support Regulating the Public Feeding of Homeless People”, Mark Horvath, Invisible People*²

*“Help the Homeless, So We Can All Feel Good”, Joel John Roberts, CEO of PATH*³

*Summary of Atlanta’s Clergy-Initiated Partner for Hope Program*⁴

*Interview with Mark Horvath and LAPD Officer Deon Joseph*⁵

*Downtown [L.A.] Clergy Council recommends alternatives to feeding Skid Row homeless*⁶

¹ <http://sacramentostepsforward.org/news-events/publications/>

² <http://invisiblepeople.tv/blog/2012/08/why-i-support-regulating-the-public-feeding-of-homeless-people/>

³ <http://www.povertyinsights.org/2013/10/07/help-the-homeless-so-we-can-all-feel-good/>

⁴ http://www.atlantadowntown.com/_files/docs/partner_for_hope_faq.pdf

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKEMU6moDHs>

⁶ <http://blogdowntown.com/2012/08/6979-downtown-clergy-council-recommends-alternatives>

If you are interested in volunteering your time or donating to community organizations in Sacramento that work to end homelessness, this list includes most of those who are either funded by or coordinate with Sacramento Steps Forward. The list is not exhaustive and the organizations listed are not endorsed by the City of Sacramento; the City has compiled this for information only.

For more volunteer opportunities, visit Hands on Sacramento (<http://www.handsonsuperiorcal.org/>).

Sacramento Steps Forward
<http://sacramentostepsforward.org/help-now/volunteer/>

Cottage Housing
<https://cottagehousing.org/volunteer>

El Hogar Community Services
<http://www.elhogarinc.org/volunteers/>

Family Promise
<http://sacfamilypromise.org/volunteer/>

Loaves and Fishes
<http://www.sacloaves.org/to-volunteer/>

Lutheran Social Services
<http://www.lssnocal.org/get-involved/volunteer.html>

Mercy Housing
<https://www.mercyhousing.org/volunteer>

Mutual Housing California
<http://www.mutualhousing.com/intern-and-volunteer-opportunities/>

Next Move
<http://www.nextmovesacramento.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

Sacramento Self Help Housing
<http://www.sacselfhelp.org/index.php/volunteer>

St. John's Program for Real Change
<http://saintjohnsprogram.org/make-a-difference/>

Salvation Army
<http://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/volunteer>

TLCS
<http://tlcssac.org/volunteer>

Tubman House
<http://wakingthevillage.org/volunteer/>

Volunteers of America
<http://www.voa-ncnn.org/volunteer-sacramento>

WEAVE
<http://www.weaveinc.org/volunteer-0>

Wind Youth Services
<http://windyouth.org/volunteer>

Women's Empowerment
<http://www.womens-empowerment.org/take-action-2/volunteer-information-opportunities>

Questions?

Emily Halcon
City of Sacramento
Homeless Services Coordinator
ehalcon@cityofsacramento.org
916.808.7896

Details on CA Health and Safety Code health permit requirements for the public distribution of food can be found on Sacramento County's website.
<http://www.emd.saccounty.net/EH/FoodProtect-RetailFood/Pages/CommunityEvents.aspx>