

Five (5) Minute Presentation to:
El Dorado County Human Rights Commission
July 22, 2019

Okay....Imagine you woke up one day and found yourself homeless. Regardless of the reason or cause, there you are. And whatever the reason, there is no quick solution to your predicament. Besides no roof over your head, what has fundamentally changed for you?

1. Assuming you are not currently working, and you have no substantial savings or source of income, you have to QUICKLY find a way to survive. Food and water. Shelter. From a few remaining friends or local charities, you are able to find SOME food, SOME water, and maybe a sleeping bag, a tarp and/or a tent. So you camp out (if you are luckier), or curl up behind some building somewhere if you aren't so lucky.

2. Because SURVIVAL instinct has kicked in, you are not too concerned with things like laundry or showers, but they creep into your daily life, and you begin to stink SO badly that no one will approach you. Anyone you approach, rejects you. Because there are no public toilets for the most part, you have no choice but to find the most discreet place you can, behind a bush, maybe in a hole if you have a shovel, or whatever.....but again, this makes you stink even more. The food and necessities you have been able to scrape up, inevitably result in a certain amount of TRASH and garbage. But, there's no acceptable place you can put it. Local businesses can't accept the general public using their dumpsters, as they overflow too quickly, and so they lock them. Since you have no home, you have no trash service. Since you have barely any money, you can't afford to buy garbage bags. So, you have to leave the trash wherever you can, but it

quickly piles up, STINKS, and adds to your health problems. It also quickly turns the entire neighborhood against you, because you are a “bum” and a “litterbug”.

3. The distance between you and the rest of the public, the social and emotional wall that others build between you and them, grows taller and more impenetrable. This WALL, otherwise known as “STIGMA” effectively prevents you from asking for, or getting the assistance you need, to get out of the hole you find yourself in. The limited help you get from so many shelters or food banks, is only sustaining you, but not helping you to move out of your dilemma. As you feel more isolated and hopeless, your SELF ESTEEM plummets, and you quit trying seriously, to find work, to find practical solutions, and you simply learn to live in the new community in which you find yourself.

I’m Peter Brown, CEO of:

The Lighted Candle, aka: “TLC”

Our group is an IRS certified 501c3 Non-Profit Charitable public benefit corporation. We are dedicated to providing relief to the homeless and most under-served population of El Dorado County, and Northern California in general.

We have started with a free mobile laundry service for local homeless folks, and it has been wildly successful. The CLEAN clothes have had an immediate and growing effect of raising the self esteem of the homeless clients we serve. During these events, there is no psychological barrier between our staff and our clients. We develop mutual respect, trust, and friendship. Again, our clients’ self esteem

grows, and little by little, they become more open to suggestions and ideas to help them help themselves to climb back up the social and economic ladder.

We have begun providing free garbage bags to many homeless clients in a particular test area. We have arranged to pick up the trash that they now BAG, rather than scatter, and we have partnered with El Dorado Disposal who gives us vouchers to dispose of that bagged trash, FREE. We have enlisted MANY of our homeless clients to also VOLUNTEER on many occasions, cleaning their own camp sites, AND cleaning sites that they have nothing to do with, other than a willingness to show they CAN be productive, and DO have value as human beings. Our projects and programs are designed whenever possible, to enlist our clients to become INVESTED in their own future success, with both physical labor and emotional commitment.

TLC is just starting to promote job opportunities to and for our clients, mostly with manual labor for now, but soon to include more skilled trades. Because homeless folks tend to have NO TOOLS, and no place to keep them, TLC is about to begin a “Tool LENDING LIBRARY” program where we will have a stock of commonly needed tools to loan our clients. Our clients will then be required to put 25% of any money they receive from work with loaned tools, into an account we will administer on their behalf, which will later be used to purchase their own tools. In this way we hope to make them more self sufficient and invested in their success.

TLC is currently constructing a PORTABLE SHOWER that will provide periodic showers to our homeless clients, in tandem with our laundry events. At the same time, we have purchased and are retrofitting a 30-foot motor home, which will serve as a MOBILE SHOWER (3 shower rooms) as well.

We are doing this, and all our other projects on VERY careful and spartan budgets. We all work as volunteers and have NO paid staff. ALL the donations we receive, go directly to project costs and costs of maintaining our legal corporate status.

TLC's LONG TERM GOAL is to become integrally involved in the placement of a TINY HOME community solution. This is no small task, BUT, it HAS been done VERY successfully in many locations across the country. The biggest hurdle by far though, is public acceptance, and willingness to allow such a facility anywhere near areas that the rest of the public occupy. If we can succeed in building public trust in our projects and programs, we can truly make LIFE CHANGING improvements for the homeless community, AND greatly improve the general environmental and neighborhood appearance and health.

THANK YOU!