

freezing vagabonds. It will be the end of this dark era our nation has faced. Together we can fight alongside human trafficking victims, and ally with organizations that provide for them. Innocence that has been corrupted will be avenged, sympathy will be given with compassion, justice will be fought for with bravery, and knowledge will prevent this tragedy from repeating itself again in a vicious circle. A sense of home is the knowledge that one belongs to somewhere. Having a bed to sleep, food to eat, a place to study, and a home in which to live is something everyone should have the right to. With this plan to diminish youth homelessness, the tensions of the victims will be soothed and the anxieties of the country will dissipate to create a truly tranquil home for all.

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**Division II - 2nd Place**

**Judah Sloan**

**Independent Home Susan Janis**

**A Place to Call Home**

"No one is going to hire you if show you up with a backpack."

(Valine) These words were spoken by Erik Lee, a forty-two year old man in Modesto, who, like hundreds of others in Stanislaus County, struggles with homelessness caused by unemployment. Contrary to what most might expect, unemployment is not only a cause of homelessness, but also an effect of it. Living out of a backpack or showing up unkempt is not an option for a homeless person if they want a job or place to work. Last year's annual count of 1,408 homeless in Stanislaus County shows us that no matter what makes a person homeless to begin with, the unemployment that comes with it can start a vicious cycle. (Valine) Finding a solution to the struggle of unemployment is a crucial part of

both decreasing the number of homeless people in Stanislaus County, and relieving the tension between citizens and the homeless population.

One of the biggest hindrances to securing a job for a homeless person is not having a place to reside, an address, a way to shower, or to store their belongings. Considering this, supplying these individuals with a small new home is the perfect way to kick-start a new life for the homeless. By hiring local contractors, the county could derive a program that would furnish the homeless with "micro-studios" that they could help build themselves. Any able-bodied homeless person would be encouraged to participate in the building of their own home. The county would offer incentive to local contractors, not only to train and oversee the building process, but also to potentially hire anyone that shows promise. Some of the building materials could even be donated as surplus by local hardware stores and construction sites. Using local resources like this is a great way to encourage harmony between the county, its residents, and the needy in our community.

Secondly, in addition to locally-provided building materials, the county would allocate facilities for donations to be made by people like you and me for basic amenities. These could include such needs as household items, hygiene supplies, and clothing appropriate for the workplace. Another resource the program would provide would be help securing job connections and training for job interviews. An often-overlooked, but integral piece of the puzzle, is a system of accountability. If a homeless person were to participate in this program, the temptation to use it in the wrong way might be strong but could easily be solved by this system that would ensure positive reinforcement and perseverance in their hunt for a steady income. This program is a sure-fire plan to give anyone willing the chance to start a new life.

Some might say that a homeless person would take advantage of this program and not show initiative when it comes time to find and keep a job. The last step of this program, however, is exactly what

addresses this concern. Even with the tendency to stagnate when it comes to the pursuit of work, an accountability contract such as this would allow the homeless to keep their property as long as they persevere. This would be a great balance between the encouragement and tough-love needed to hold them accountable on the path to success. Furthermore, occasional progress reports from employers would play a major part in ensuring the responsibility of the individual. This accountability program would eliminate the common roadblocks on the highway to independent living.

Creating a program that helps the homeless help themselves is the perfect springboard for them to start a self-sufficient life. In today's economy, unemployment could affect any of us at any time. It is my opinion that support from the community is the most logical solution to the problem of homelessness. If we all do our part in donating to this cause, we can help foster security, peace, and independence in a homeless person's life. In the end, the biggest thing a homeless person needs, is the very same sense of home that we take for granted every day.

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### **Division II - 3rd Place**

#### **Ninweh Gorges**

**Ceres HS Tracy Pannell**

#### **Homelessness in Stanislaus County**

Most people are under the impression that homeless men and women are abusing drugs and substances or are too lazy to get a job. However, many homeless people are suffering from mental health

steps that must be taken together as a nation, and individually as human beings. We must inform and train our school counselors to recognize the signs of abuse or intent to run away. Even a small sign must be addressed with the utmost urgency. Another step that can easily be integrated in schools is to urge youth to reach out. Schools should give educational presentations to students and faculty, inform adolescents of the signs, and provide resources for their benefits. These small changes to our school system can save the lives of many and save many more from the trauma they could experience. This can prevent tragedies. It is prudent and vital that services be offered for previous victims of human trafficking and offer services that save the homeless who are still suffering from its tortures. The healing process of victims would increase at a faster rate if they were around people who understand what they've been through. The main participant in this plan for salvation are the schools of the United States and services like Covenant House. Individually, as a student, one would take every opportunity to educate ill-informed peers and volunteer in shelters nearby. With these steps implemented, over time the victims of human trafficking will decrease along with the entirety of youth homelessness, all one must do is enact it. It seems like a stretch; some might even ask *wouldn't human trafficking be an effect of homelessness?* The answer is yes. Human trafficking is an effect and cause of homelessness. Homelessness causes youth to turn towards human trafficking, but it can also be used vice-versa. There is a line between runaways and the homeless, and when a truant runaway gets caught up in a human trafficking ring, there is no going home. "Approximately 1.7 million youth run away or are forced to leave their homes each year. While away from home, an estimated 38,600 (2.2%) of these youth were sexually assaulted." (Human) Some might even believe that there is no point in assisting someone who plans to run away because there is no changing their mind. This is small, ignorant thinking. Everyone can be helped, and everyone can be saved.

Eradication of the homeless youth is achievable. With the participation of an entire nation, ending this crisis has never been more possible. It will be the end of starving vagrants. It will be the end of

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## **Division II - 1st Place**

**Grace Parsons**

**Ceres HS Tracy Pannell**

### **Lost and Alone**

Young demoralized vagrants, runaways who shuffle across dirty alleyways in search of the basic necessary essentials to survive another cold night, they feel numb, lonely, and worthless. Because of society's indifference, it's improbable for any of these desperate adolescents to receive help, or even a bit of sympathy. They are met with suspicion, avoidance, and egregious attitudes. Homelessness is an obvious issue known to all, but rarely does one know the extent of youth homelessness. "One out of every 45 children - some 1.6 million - in the United States is homeless" (Human). It's a painful truth the nation has to face. Even more harrowing, "A New York City provider of services to homeless youth found that approximately one in four youth had been a victim of sex trafficking or had engaged in survival sex, and that 48% of those who engaged in a commercial sex activity did so because they didn't have a safe place to stay" (Trafficking). Homelessness is not caused by one particular reason, but human trafficking is one easily avoidable cause of homelessness. Year after year, fragile homeless runaways become subjected to the cruel world of human trafficking just to survive. In order to prevent this from happening, schools need to provide counselors that are trained to become aware and assist in situations where it can be helped. Homeless youth that are victims of human trafficking can easily be helped and perhaps human trafficking could be prevented entirely.

To minimize or prevent these ghastly occurrences, there are

issues. Mental health issues occur when a person's thought process and/or behavior are affected by illnesses such as Depression, Anxiety, Schizophrenia, Bipolar Mood Disorder and Psychosis. These illnesses, if untreated, can cause people to not work, provide for themselves, or pay bills. Of course, this issue puts a strain on the resources of a community. As a community, it is imperative to identify the problems and figure out how to solve them. One such issue at the core of the mental health crisis is homelessness. Around 42% of homeless people in the Modesto area alone suffer from mental health issues (Valine). Therefore, a solution that addresses this particular group of homeless people can benefit the community.

Stanislaus County is home to approximately 1,408 homeless men and women. These men and women suffer everyday, continuously worrying about their next meal, where they will sleep that night, and praying that the weather will not be devastating. Preventing this is as simple as starting free clinics that are funded by the Stanislaus community. Launching a clinic, that would treat homeless and low-income people for little to no money in order to search for mental health issues and any other diseases that can cause someone to be incapable of providing for themselves. The clinic can also provide a home if the homeless people are diagnosed with mental health issues. Money being the biggest issue, can be accumulated by local people, businesses, from fundraising, and donations. Local business can promote the cause and the need for money to build this effective clinic. Fundraisers like car washes, or a barbeque picnic, where people in the community can come to a cookout and buy freshly made food like burgers and hot dogs can raise tremendous amounts of money. There are also the possibilities of fundraisers that involve church communities. Local high school students can also be asked to volunteer at the clinic. Money would not be the only factor to focus on. The homeless men and women

need to be aware about the clinic so putting up fliers around town, or even adults talking to them about it can get their attention. Many men and women would be treated and cared for at the clinic, and because nearly half of the homeless men and women in our community are suffering from mental health issues, this clinic would diminish the amount of homeless people in our society.

Many people may argue that our community is not willing to get involved in the initiative to reduce the number of homeless men and women in our society. However, if one promotes the fact that they cannot provide or take care of themselves because of their mental health issues then people may take initiative and feel the need to help. Soup kitchens and organizations like the Salvation Army are working to better the lives of homeless people and they have gathered many participants to help them with their goal and our community can as well. Besides helping men and women in our community being morally right, it would get to the point where homelessness in the Stanislaus area would not be as prominent. Since 42%, nearly half, of homeless men and women have mental health issues (Valine), taking them off the streets would obviously cause a decline in the abundance of homeless people, which most people in our community would like to see happen. Yes, there will be people who don't participate in funding and starting the clinic but proper promotion can get majority of the community involved in the project.

The clinic would provide a safe caring home and treatment physicality for these men and women who shouldn't be punished for not being able to care for themselves. The clinic would tend the men and women to find mental health issues, provide treatments, while also providing a safe care system and home. Having a mental illness isn't something homeless men or women ask for, so why punish them? There are many ways to raise money for the clinic while getting others in the community involved in the project, just like other worldwide

to the amount of money and resources required to make it work. However, they are only focusing on the initial investment and not taking into account the long term benefits of cohousing communities. While the initial cost is admittedly higher than the programs in place right now, that money would be used to create self sustaining communities that will be able to function with relatively little government involvement in the long run. The system generates a little revenue from those who have work and uses those who are unemployed to maintain the communities through cooking, cleaning, and fixing the various homes and utilities. This kind of cohousing system is kept running by the very people that it is providing aid to; the result is a positive cycle where both the communities and the people living in them are helping each other. While there would still be some government involvement, this is much more efficient and practical than continuously depleting government tax dollars by giving it to people who rarely become able to sustain themselves.

Everybody has the inalienable right to have a place to call home. However, many families throughout Stanislaus County and the United States do not enjoy this right. They can be seen pushing shopping carts around town and sleeping in parks. The community must take a step towards providing these vagrant families homes. Grouping them together in cohousing communities will create not only a physical sense of home, but an emotional one as well. Former homeless families can sleep easy knowing that they will be able to rest in the exact same spot the next night, and those who put them there will enjoy knowing that their community is one that denies no one the right to a home.

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The initial part of this plan is to secure unused but suitable lands for cohousing. This can range from flat plots of land out in rural areas to riverbanks (e.g. off of the Tuolumne River). This can be achieved through a proposal to the city/county government that starts with the support of homeless agencies. I can contact the major homeless shelter agencies within the area and explain my idea. The goal is to create an adequate amount of support from multiple shelter agencies so that the idea can then be heard by someone in political power. Many city council members are involved in providing housing for the homeless, so it should not be difficult to get the idea heard. If a political leader can push the idea through and pass it through city/county governments, planning and funding can begin. Money for these communal housing units can be raised through county wide government sponsored fundraisers or from federal grants. Events or volunteer groups could be set up to provide money for these homes. If people can help the homeless and get some enjoyment out of it themselves in the process, money would pour in quite quickly.

After areas have been set aside and adequate funds have been acquired, actual construction of these housing communities can begin. One of the main advantages of using smaller and more compact forms of housing is that they can be constructed in a very short amount of time (often in a couple of days) and are very durable. The shared facilities like kitchens and showers would be built at the center of multiple different houses to provide easy access. Those who have some sort of income and are homeless only due to not having enough money should be required to pay a small rent fee to help cover the cost of utilities and food for these communities. For those that have no jobs at all, the government can put them to work inside these communities as cleaners or cooks so that they can learn skills and contribute to the sustainability of these projects.

Critics of this plan may argue that it is too expensive in regards

organizations do. With proper advertising and promotion of the project, people in our community won't hesitate to get involved.

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### **Division III - 1st Place**

**Aiden Hervey**

**Hart Ransom Acad Charter Susan Janis**

### **Creating Peace Through Technology**

"What is the use of living, if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone?" - Winston Churchill.

In 2008, our country went through a recession. From that, many families lost their jobs and homes. Even though it happened eight years ago, people are still trying to recover from it. Homelessness, sadly, is now a way of life for many people. No human being should have to worry about where they might find their next meal, or shelter. Providing a home would give a sense of peace and stability for these families.

in 2015, Housing and Urban Development required a tally of the homeless in communities across America. The census for the homeless in Stanislaus County was 1,408 people. Of the 1,408 there were 86 children, 11% of the 1,408 were military, and 35% had disabilities. (www.ModestoBee.com)

The Humani Hut was designed for natural disasters, such as earthquakes and tornados. These high tech huts could be the answer for our homeless families. One hut can be set up in five minutes. In an afternoon, an entire village could be formed. These huts are suitable for a family of five. They provide toilets, showers, fresh water, sewage disposal and solar power. Neal Sutton, the inventor of Humani Hut, sells his homes for \$4,000 apiece.

This plan might be objectionable to our community because of the cost. However, H.U.D. secretary states, "A homeless person costs taxpayers \$40,000 year." [www.Politifact.com](http://www.Politifact.com). Indeed, being homeless is heartbreaking, and difficult for our community to witness. Therefore it is quite expensive for the taxpayer. Thankfully there is a solution. If we

housed all these families in Humani Huts, the cost would be \$1,264,500 for 281 huts. That is the same amount our community pays for 32 homeless people a year. Without a doubt this would save money in the long run. Homelessness would decrease by almost 100%.

As you can see, implementing this plan would take some time to raise money. I would like to start an organization that would not only house the homeless, but get them back to where they once were; in a place that they can call home. Looking out of the window of my car, I have always been aware of the homeless in our community. I have often wondered why, and how they came to be this way; now I know, and that there is a solution. Giving homeless families a house would not only keep them safe and off of the street, but it would also give them peace, hope, and a sense of home.

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#### **Division III - 2nd Place**

**Hadynn Field**

**Turlock Jr HS Denise Nulph**

#### **A Place to Call Home**

"We have come dangerously close to accepting the homeless situation as a problem that we just can't solve" - Linda Lingle

There is truth in this quote, the homeless situation in Stanislaus County feels daunting. It seems everywhere you look someone is pushing a baby stroller with all of their worldly belongings inside. For some homeless this is a temporary situation, a turn of bad luck, Something they had not planned. For the rest of the homeless in our area, this is a way of life. The habitual homeless, are the group that need more assistance.

There are many reasons why people become habitually homeless, According to nationalhomeless.org, loss of job, mental illness, domestic violence and addiction are just a few of the reasons that Americans

haunting words are from the mouth of an eight year old girl named Judy; her family is homeless and lives in an old van bought from the scraps leftover from their old house. Judy's family's situation is not unique; 600,000 families with 1.35 million children experience homelessness in the United States (Doorways for Women and Families). Stanislaus County is no exception to this trend. Hundreds of children across all grade levels along with their families are homeless. Homelessness has negative physical and mental effects that can limit the social and economic opportunities open to those suffering from it, especially children. Communal housing provides a place and opportunity for these families to live and work, thereby relieving the negative effects of homelessness.

The leading causes for homelessness in families are a lack of affordable housing (often stemming from poverty) and unemployment (NLCHP). Providing them with low cost housing and/or jobs will improve quality of life for both parents and children. Increased quality of life means a happier family environment and a higher chance of upward socioeconomic movement. These effects can be achieved through communal housing (cohousing), a cheap and efficient way to create places to live for the homeless through its use of small but cozy homes and shared kitchen/bathing facilities.

Stanislaus County is not a very densely packed area; there are huge tracts of flat, unused land throughout the region, especially near the outskirts of cities. These unused areas of land should be turned into communal housing communities for the homeless. A variety of different types of small homes, from dome to box shaped, can be erected in these areas to create a small village that meets the basic needs of those who live in them. Cohousing communities like this are already being used effectively to provide housing in cities like Austin and Honolulu. The main advantage of this type of housing is that it is inexpensive, compact, and often movable.

potential to end homelessness. If Pliny the Elder was alive today, he would truly believe that the Homeless-No-More Challenge would guide the hearts of the homeless towards their home.

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### **Division I - 3rd Place**

**Jun Lin Zhu**

**Grace Davis HS Julie Beebe**

### **Communal Housing: The Solution to Homelessness**

"Sometimes, mommy cries because we don't have a house. Then, I cry too" (Suddenly Homeless 17 - A Kid's Story). These

become homeless. Individuals who fall into this category of the homeless population, are unable to assimilate back into mainstream society. Because of their difficulties in following rules they typically have a hard time staying in shelters and other government programs.

The solution to this problem comes from the tiny home community. Many cities such as Nashville, Tennessee are transforming small plots of land, that are not typically suitable for commercial or residential building, because of their size or location into tiny home communities for the habitually homeless. These consist of 60 sq feet, 1 door, 1 window, a murphy bed, a mini fridge, and heating and air conditioning. There is a community port-a-potty and sink area for bathroom needs. The best part about these homes is that they cost roughly \$8,333 each. This could be done right here in Modesto. There are small plots of land in the downtown area, such as the empty lot on 7th and Jst or the two plots of land on Hwy 132 and 8th street. These areas are ideal because of their proximity to public transit, social services, and shelters where they can find meal assistance.

I believe that this plan would relieve some of the crowding at local shelters such as the Gospel Mission, as well as the local jails. I think that this would be a great opportunity for programs such as Habitat for Humanity to help a large number of people for a small amount of money. This would also offer an opportunity for young people like myself to get involved in the actual building of the tiny houses.

I believe that if we implement this plan, the Stanislaus County would have a decrease in the homeless population roaming the streets. I also, believe, that if we make the tiny home community that we will give a sense of pride and rehabilitation to the people of the homeless community. This is just one of many plans, that the government could implement to rehabilitate the homeless community, because everyone deserves a place to call home.

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### **Division III - 3rd Place**

**Averie Hardy**

**Hart Ransom Acad Charter Susan Janis**

#### **Providing a Sense of Home**

Outcast, derelict, dirty vagrant. These are the images many people think of when contemplating the homeless population in their town. The presence of disturbing looking homeless people has become such a constant and overwhelming problem that many feel the homeless are beyond hope of ever getting off the streets. People often feel disgust around the homeless because of their dirty and disheveled appearance. Even the most harmless character can appear menacing when they have not showered in months. However, if showers, clothes, and basic hygiene products were available, it would be a first step to ending the resistance and resentment towards the homeless. People in the community would feel safer and the homeless population would be provided with a sense of home and have a better chance to get off the streets permanently.

One cause of homelessness is unemployment. If homeless people had jobs, they would have a steady income and could slowly earn their way off the streets. Fast food restaurants and other simple jobs often refuse to give job applications to homeless people because of their appearance. My plan is to build shower facilities, or equip a mobile

organizations focusing on homelessness win because they will gain the ability to further assist the homeless community. I would like to play the most important part in this plan and start the challenge in my community. Even though this plan could be a monumental success, no plan is without its flaws.

There are a few questions that might arise after reading this plan. One of the biggest question is, will the homeless community cooperate and stay sober? The answer is yes. Because there are less than 6% of homeless people who choose to be homeless, it is safe to say that the rest did not choose homelessness and will take any opportunity given to them. The homeless will most likely stay sober because, combined with a rehabilitation program, hope can greatly increase the chance of remission. Another question is, how will this help the homeless that are not addicted? The homeless without addictions will still receive the benefits raised by the challenge and feel the support of the community by witnessing the challenges at work. The last question is, will people with homes respond to the challenge? That question can be answered by looking at the ALC Ice Water Challenge. To challenge another person, the participant would tag the new participant. The new participant saw it as an obligation to accept the challenge and be included in the social media craze. Because the Homeless-No-More Challenge would use the same format as the ALC Ice Water Challenge, the same results can be expected. It is also known that the community will unite against homelessness. In 1986, 6.5 million people held hands to help end homelessness in Hands Across America.

Homelessness is an intricate situation that is often caused by substance abuse and alcohol addictions. In order to solve homelessness, the addictions must be resolved. Homelessness can be solved by following the lead of the ALS Ice Water Challenge and adapting the challenge to serve the homeless. Homeless-No-More Challenge does raise some concerns, but the Challenge still has the

the chances of a person achieving remission are slim. The solution to paying for rehabilitation and motivating the individual while raising awareness about homelessness lies in the palm of our hand: social media.

Social media is the most efficient and expansive way to reach people and spread ideas. In 2014 the world witnessed the birth of the ALS Ice Water Challenge. The challenge started with one person who poured ice cold water over their bodies to raise awareness about Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis. That person challenged others to do the same or donate to the ALS Association and continued the cycle until the Challenge took over social media. The Challenge raised 115 million dollars in its 8 week span of existence. The ALS Ice Water Challenge proves that social media is an effective, if not the most effective way to raise awareness and donations. So, who is to say the ALS Ice Water Challenge cannot be adopted for the homeless?

My plan, The Homeless-No-More Challenge, would start with one person looking to make a donation on behalf of the homeless. That one person would find homeless person who is willing to quit their addiction. A video of the meeting would be recorded and a brief interview of the homeless would be conducted; how they became homeless, what being homeless is like, etc. Then, the donor says they will donate to organizations that benefit the homeless or for their rehabilitation (In our community, they can donate to Housing & Shelter Services, Central Valley Opportunity Center, and Stanislaus Community Assistance Project, etc.). In exchange, the homeless person promises to stay sober, attend rehabilitation if possible, and to not give up hope. Additional milestones can also be recorded and posted on social media. This plan is a win-win for everyone; the homeless win because they receive a sponsor for remission and inclusion in the community. The people with homes win because they make a lasting change on the homeless community and contribute towards the fight against homelessness. The

shower facility, and provide for basic hygiene needs in areas where homeless people congregate. Then homeless people, seeking a way out, would have the opportunity to look just as good as an average job seeker.

Many believe the homeless are in their current situations because of laziness and/or bad choices. Although that is true for some, many homeless people would seize the chance to get off the street, but are unable to get jobs or homes because of their present state. I know it is not from laziness, because when driving around town, you will often see homeless people collecting recyclables, most commonly bottles and cans. Over the summer, I went on a mission trip to San Diego with the purpose to help and build relationships with the homeless community. To help us understand what it was like to be homeless, we were given the task of collecting ten bottles within two hours without any form of transportation except our feet. I soon realized that it was quite tiring, walking all over the city searching for unlocked dumpsters, (for I also found that the majority were locked) and then having to dumpster dive in order to retrieve the bottles. I eventually collected eleven bottles/cans and turned them in, to find they were only worth fifty-five cents. I was appalled that after working so hard, I had so little reward. I also participate in my church's "Rescue like Jesus" team. Every Wednesday we give out water bottles and talk with homeless people in Modesto. My conversations and interactions with the homeless in my community have convinced me that the majority are determined enough and willing to work.

In implementing this plan, I would partner with my church's established rescue program. Together we would raise money to help fund the cost of the building, workers, clothing and brushes. We could do this through traditional fundraisers and simply asking others to donate. I would also advertise the project by making posters and bringing it up in conversations. People want to help, but they are uncomfortable interacting with the homeless and aren't sure what they can do. Offering a tangible solution and way they can get involved helping their own community, fosters a sense of home for both the donors and recipients.

There are many homeless people in our community and this plan

would help them in a unique way. There are already many resources for feeding the homeless, but my plan would help them feel better and be more employable. Being able to access a job would provide for their basic necessities and a path to obtaining a permanent home. Moreover, looking approachable would help the overall community feel safer and more comfortable interacting with homeless people in their neighborhoods. If the homeless population had access to showers, clothes, and basic hygiene products there would be a decrease in people on the streets. Also the community would feel safer and more able to help the remaining homeless population find a permanent way out, which fosters a sense of home for everyone.

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#### **Division IV – 1st Place**

**Jason Fritz**

**Hart Ransom Acad Charter Susan Janis**

#### **Homeless Veterans**

In 2013 there were a total of 87 homeless veterans in Stanislaus County (Point). Homelessness can affect cities, towns, and their residents. Mental illness, job loss and drug use are some of the reasons for homelessness. Helping homeless veterans can lower the number of homeless people in Stanislaus County. I feel useful when I help my dad with his landscaping business, so I want to help veterans feel helpful while helping people. There should not be any veterans that are homeless in Stanislaus County.

One obstacle that veterans face is mental illness (Homeless). At night when they are home, they can have horrible nightmares about

#### **Division I – 2nd Place**

**Courtney Covolo**

**Central Catholic HS Trevor Guina**

#### **The Homeless-No-More Challenge**

It was Pliny the Elder, an author and natural philosopher, who said, "Home is where the heart is." Many people are familiar with these words and the comfort of having a home. But, homelessness has snuck into the lives of some and taken from them a place to rest their hearts. Luckily, homelessness can be averted. Homelessness in Stanislaus County can be solved by connecting the homeless and fortunate communities through social media, encouraging the homeless to stay sober, and encouraging the fortunate to donate to organizations that stop homelessness. Before this problem can be tackled, the origin of homelessness must be addressed.

Homelessness is a complex issue with copious sources and factors. The reason for homelessness varies, but substance abuse, including alcohol dependency, is a common reason why people go homeless. While poverty, family issues, mental health problems, and disabilities often threat homelessness, substance abuse is a major factor in keeping a person homeless. Addictions can consume a person's life and take priority over paying for housing. Along with losing their home, substance abusers feel separated from the community. Addictions are commonly seen as a taboo and shameful problem, preventing addicts from seek out help and communal support. The combination of losing a home and not feeling at home within the community makes the distressed person feel incapable and not welcome in the community. In order to solve the problem of homelessness, the solution must include fixing the reason why many people find themselves without homes.

Because homeless substance abusers are preoccupied with their addiction, the abuse must be solved for the person to return to their home. Entering a rehabilitation center is one way in which addicts can reclaim their lives. But, this service can be costly, and without motivation,

obtain other services. Because of this difficulty, they often just don't seek out the services they need.

I propose that cities create communities where homeless people are given safe, but simple structures where they can live, and that they be provided with the other services they need within the same community where the housing is provided. This will allow for more people to have stable lives and make it easier for them to seek treatment for mental health issues.

It seems like all of this would just be unrealistic given the costs of services, and shelters. However, one study in New York showed that the opposite is true. It is actually cheaper to provide people with stable housing, food, basic facilities, and health services than it is to maintain a homeless person who is not provided with these things. It can cost about \$20,000 to maintain one homeless person whose life is unstable, which leads them to bounce back and forth between the streets, the rehab, jail and hospital. The study in New York showed that the cost could be cut to \$8,000 per person per year when people are given basic housing, and provided with access to healthcare, food, facilities and even job training. The statistics show that more people provided with these things will get off of the streets and those who remain there will cost less to the city.

This solution requires a coordinated effort with state, county and city personnel to work closely together in an organized way to bring all of the needed resources to the homeless in a safe environment. The Utah Studies show that this will decrease homelessness and provide a stable environment for people to improve themselves and their own quality of life.

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what they have gone through. Loud booms and cracks make them remember bombs and gunshots. Veterans have hard lives when they return home because they have to get used to civilian life. Mental illness can be treated. I would find doctors that specialized in mental illness in Stanislaus County. The WA Palo Alto Health Care System at 1225 Oakdale Road in Modesto, California specializes in housing and illness. Many times, when veterans are ill it is hard for them to find a job.

One way I would help the homeless veterans to get off the street would be to start a business. I would start a landscaping business that would hire homeless veterans. The job would help residents with lawn care needs and the veterans would earn money to buy what they need. I would train them to use the lawnmower, blowers and weed eaters. Some veterans would do the mowing while the veterans who cannot do the physical work would do the taxes, invoices, and bills.

The business would also give them a chance to start their lives again. It would allow them to work together and learn new skills. Once they start working, they focus on getting off the streets. They will never forget what they saw, but I would help them find treatments and a home. They will learn new skills and get off the streets. With the skills the veterans learn, they could start their own businesses. Hopefully, they could help other veterans to get off the streets.

Helping homeless veterans can help them to find a better life and get them off the streets. We need to be working with veterans with mental illness, so they do not have to be homeless. By giving them the help they need, they could have jobs and a house. Our veterans have helped us, so we need to help them. Every veteran in Stanislaus County should be given a chance to find their own peace and have a place to call home.

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#### **Division IV - 2nd Place**

**Owen Wood**

**Hart Ransom Acad Charter Susan Janis**

#### **How We Can Help Homelessness**

Some people become homeless because of lack of affordable housing. Once they are homeless it is harder to find jobs. One homeless man said in a Modesto Bee article "it is harder to find jobs with a backpack." Some homeless people do not even know how to live on their own. Here is a plan to help decrease homelessness by building dorms, helping them get jobs, and teaching them how to live on their own.

First, there needs to be money from the community and the government to build dorms to give the homeless people a safe place to sleep, shower, do laundry and keep their belongings safe. There needs to be a security guard to watch all night at the dorms, and rules to stop all kinds of problems that happen. This gives the homeless people a place to call home and feel safe.

Next, the local government could help the homeless people find jobs to help pay for what they need. Business owners could work with the government to hire the homeless people. People living in the dorms should pay a small rent. One day a week the people living there should help around the dorms by cleaning and help in the kitchen. The people in the dorms should put money away to become ready for their own houses. When they find a house they would move out of the dorms for new homeless people.

Finally, community groups and churches could teach the people

In my community, I see homelessness all around me. My sister did a study as a college student in which she spent a spring break living on the streets of San Francisco in order to better connect with homeless people and understand their issues. What she learned is exactly what the studies show. Most homeless people who do not have mental health issues, found themselves on the street because they were not equipped to deal with an immediate crisis. They lacked savings and family support. So it seems logical that support would help them get off the streets.

Since housing is the biggest issue, communities need to provide homeless people a safe place to live. I don't think it would be cost effective to build homes for all of the homeless people and try to keep up on the maintenance of individual homes. But, I do think they need a safe shelter. Something like a pavilion could be set up as a shelter. If you poured a cement slab foundation, with a sturdy roof and cement walls to section the pavilion into smaller family sized rooms to give personal privacy to people, you would have a safe shelter. It would put a roof over a family or individual's head at night and give them place to stay each night. I think cement is a good material to be used. It would allow for the shelter to be hosed off periodically to keep it sanitary.

In studying homelessness, I can see that a shelter is not the only need. There is also a need for restroom facilities, showers, and a place to eat. All of these things should be provided in close proximity to the shelter so that people have access to provide for basic human needs. Studies in many states have shown that when people are provided with these things, especially near their living area, that they tend to use the services more effectively and it makes a big difference in ending their homelessness.

Medical care is often lacking for homeless people. Especially mental health services. Studies have shown that people often don't use the services that do exist simply because they must travel in order to

## **Division I - 1st Place**

**Stephanie LeQuia**

**Whitmore Charter Kelly Hayes**

### **The Solution To Homelessness**

The reasons people become or remain homeless are varied.

Statistics show that homelessness is often caused by a tragic event in which the person or family is unequipped to deal with immediate financial costs. This causes them to lose their home and end up on the street.

Events that lead to homelessness include: divorce, sudden illness, job loss. Most people do not have adequate savings to get through even a short period of time when a crisis happens. Often people do not have a sufficient support system that they can rely upon for help in a crisis. Also, studies show that of the total number of homeless people in the United States, approximately 1/2 of them suffer from mental health issues. For many people, their only choice is to move to the streets when such a crisis occurs.

Many communities through the United States have programs designed to deal with homelessness. A lot of these programs require the homeless to be willing to seek treatment for their issues or to get a job before they can qualify for services. It seems like this would be a good idea. Yet, newer studies that have taken place in several states, show that requiring people to seek treatment or get jobs before they can qualify for services that can help them, are going about it the wrong way. A ten year study was recently done in Utah. It is believed that their reduction of homelessness is due to a new program called "Housing First". The idea is that if people are provided a safe place to live and given stability in their lives, then they will be more successful in dealing with their other issues which originally cause homelessness. First the homeless are provided a home to live in. Then they are offered services to assist them to getting back on their feet. The studies show that homelessness has gone down by 72% in recent years because of this program.

living there. There should be classes that teach them how to spend and save their money wisely, how to shop for food, how to take care of themselves and how to live on their own.

With housing, jobs, and teaching we can all help solve part of homelessness. This will give them a opportunity to live on their own in the future. This plan would not solve all homelessness but, with it, we could help some find a sense of home.

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## **Division IV – 3rd Place**

**Nicholas Roman**

**Agnes M. Baptist Elem Toni David**

### **Peace Essay**

Homelessness is a very big issue, not only in Modesto but all across America. There are so many reasons why homelessness happens. It could be mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, or job loss. My focus is another cause of homelessness: the high cost of medical bills and medications for diseases such as cancer. First, I will discuss the cost of cancer, then I will explain how the cost leads to homelessness, then I will propose a plan to fix the problem.

Medical bills to treat cancer can cost \$108,000 the first year after the diagnosis for women. However, for men it is \$115,000. The cost of newer medication for cancer can range from \$100 to \$165,000 per month. Another cost for a person with cancer is that they cannot always work when they are getting treatment so they lose their income. Not many people can pay these costs or live without income.

Even if someone has insurance, they still have to pay some of the medical bills. For some people, it could be a large amount of money. When someone has to take off from work and lose their income, it is

hard for them to pay any amount of medical bills. Sometimes when family or friends help a person with cancer, they have to take time off from work too so they cannot help pay bills either. For people who don't have money and have no one to help them, they might have no money to live off of because what little money they have is used to pay for medical bills and medications.

My plan to help someone with cancer to avoid homelessness would be to raise money so that I could give it to people who have cancer and need help paying their bills. My dad is a Sergeant with the Modesto Police Department and does a lot of fundraisers to help raise money to support the K-9 program. I would ask him if they would be willing to set aside some of the money they raise so that it could go to the people I am trying to help. I would offer to help work at their fundraisers so that I could explain what I am trying to do and hopefully get extra donations. I would work with a hospital to get recommendations for cancer patients who need help and I would meet with them and find out what they need. I would then give them some of the money in my fund.

People often will just give up if they have cancer or a disease that there isn't a cure for and they can't afford medical help. If they pay for medical help, sometimes they lose their homes. This is why we need to provide help to pay for their medical bills. Hopefully, by working with the Modesto Police Department K-9 association, I will be able to raise funds to help cancer patients pay their medical bills and other costs so that they don't become homeless. Anytime that anyone you know or you have cancer just remember, never give up on your or anyone's life.

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<b>Award</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Div I 1st	Stephanie LeQuia	Whitmore Charter Sch	Kelly Hayes
<b>The Solution To Homelessness</b>			
Div I 2nd	Courtney Covolo	Central Catholic HS	Trevor Guina
<b>The Homeless-No-More Challenge</b>			
Div I 3rd	Jun Lin Zhu	Grace Davis HS	Julie Beebe
<b>Communal Housing: The Solution to Homelessness</b>			
Div II 1st	Grace Parsons	Ceres High Sch	Tracy Pannell
<b>Lost and Alone</b>			
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<b>A Place to Call Home</b>			
Div II 3rd	Ninweh Gorges	Ceres High Sch	Tracy Pannell
<b>Homelessness in Stanislaus County</b>			
Div III 1st	Aiden Hervey	Hart Ransom Acad	Susan Janis
<b>Creating Peace Through Technology</b>			
Div III 2nd	Hadynn Field	Turlock Junior HS	Denise Nulph
<b>A Place to Call Home</b>			
Div III 3rd	Averie Hardy	Hart Ransom Acad	Susan Janis
<b>Providing a Sense of Home</b>			
Div IV 1st	Jason Fritz	Hart Ransom Acad Chtr	Susan Janis
<b>Homeless Veterans</b>			
Div IV 2nd	Owen Wood	Hart Ransom Acad Chtr	Susan Janis
<b>How We Can Help Homelessness</b>			
Div IV 3rd	Nicholas Roman	Agnes M. Baptist Elem	Toni David
<b>Peace Essay</b>			

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***Sam Pierstorff***  
***Professor, Modesto Junior College***  
***Former Modesto Poet Laureate***

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## **PRESENTATION AND AWARDS**

***Leng Nou - Board President, Peace Life Center***

***~ CLOSING ~ REFRESHMENTS ~***

***Everyone has the right to have a place they call home.***

Every community has many individuals and families experiencing homelessness -- sleeping on the street, in a car, in a shelter, or some other place. As the number of homeless people has grown, each community struggles with ways to deal with this situation. Sometimes residents view this as an unsolvable problem and blame the homeless instead of working toward solutions -- solutions that will work for all and build a sense of community instead of fostering resistance and resentment.

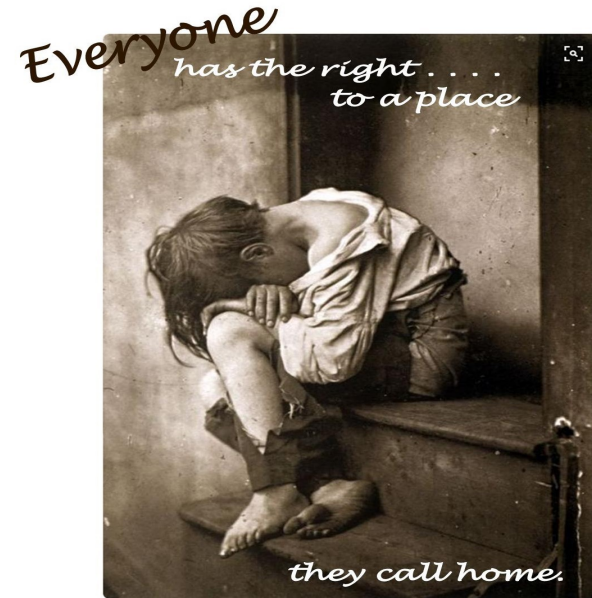
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