

## **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.

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 a 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 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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## **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 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 youths 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 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 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 sometime 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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Winston Churchill Quote: [www.winstonchurchill.org/resources](http://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources)

#### **Division IV – 1st Place**

##### **Jason Fritz**

##### **Hart Ransom Acad Charter**

##### **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 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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