

BTV Street Chronicle

Vol. II

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There are far,
far better things
ahead than any
we leave behind
— C.S. Lewis

M.D.S.

BTV Street Chronicle

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All names have been changed to protect identity.



Being Homeless in Vermont

I would like to start by saying that being homeless and living in the shelter is not easy. In the morning you have to leave at 8:30 and being that it's winter, it is very cold outside. The closest is the mall where it is warm and comfortable to sit. Or at least I thought it was until yesterday when I was walking through the mall heading to the bathroom with a friend. I was stopped by one of the mall officers who and I quote told me that he sees me in the mall all the time sitting around until my class starts and that his director has a problem with that. I was told after that that I would not be allowed in the mall anymore unless I was shopping or eating in the food court. I feel that is not fair because I'm homeless. I don't work yet but I do go to school and I see many people walking and sitting in the mall in the morning and they don't get told to leave. Whether they are old or young like me, they get left alone but I don't.

Annie, 18

Sympathy for Others

Helplessness

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Sorrow

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Need

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Stress

Smothiring

-Nasume, 17

Right now in my life my struggles would have to be all the debts I have accumulated from stupid decisions I've made over the past year. Shoplifting to get clothes that fit me, drinking with friends and getting caught by the police. Now I'm working with Court Diversion for both incidents and have to pay back what I owe along with the cost of my phone and other important things.

It's hard to accomplish these conditions working 20 hours a week at minimum wage. Financially it gets stressful and not being able to think about planning for my future and getting my funds in check when I have all these other stresses to worry about.

Although I have struggles that are unavoidable, I also have successes. I have a part-time job, I plan to go back to school for Child Development/ Child Care and get a career going. I am working on budgeting my funds and planning ahead. I want everyone to understand that regardless of our situation, whether we are homeless or not, we are all people with feelings. Until you walk a day in our shoes you don't understand where we have been or where we are going.

Mallory, 20

The need for work for me is very real, without work to distract me I would return to daily IV injection drugs. After filling out multiple applications and multiple face to face rejections from Church Street employers, I decided it was time to do computer applications. The next week after doing so I received a call for an interview!!! This was the happiest I've been since becoming sober, January 2014.

-The Blue Guy, 21

The world changes so abruptly
In the matter of an instant bones crack and morph
Into what never was
We gasp for air whilst trying to scream
Our screams are so silent
So soundless
Some have tuned their ears
They take notice of us
Hearts racing and optimistic psyches wandering
We reach outward
Cold lonely hands are
Warmed by these kind souls
The helpless helped
The lost found
No longer alone we fight for
Screams that are so silent
So soundless

-Jenna. 18

I sat in the recovery center stirring my coffee, waiting for Salvation Army to open. I sometimes contemplate whether or not to walk to Salvation Army because of the overwhelming amount of mental illness. I feel that it brings me down, but I try not to be overly judgmental towards other individuals.

Behind me I felt a slap on my ass. As I turned around I didn't know what to expect or say, but I felt an overwhelming sense of anger and frustration towards an individual I didn't even know the face of. It was my father.

He laughed to himself, and began to tell me about everything that he had done that day as usual, and how he was tight on money (as usual.) He started to tell me about how he had been tracking the phone numbers and text messages on my phone. Verizon had sent him emails to make sure I wasn't going over my data limit, and then mentioned something about a vasectomy. It was all so much information I had tried so hard to ignore, but tried to nod along to the conversation in hopes he wouldn't make a public scene.

I continued editing my homework as he continued to tell me about different aspects of his sexual life which I didn't care to know about.

Finally he picked up his belongings, and left. I couldn't help but feel relief, but also frustration considering it's probably been close to six months since he's bothered stepping foot in an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting.

I look towards this man, and don't even see him as a father anymore. Now I remember why I utilize Spectrum. I am staring a man in the face, a man I don't even recognize. My own father, who acts like the rowdy fraternity boy he used to be in his college years.

Individually, I am overwhelmed thinking about the amount I've changed over the past year in terms of overall attitude and personality. I am thankful for the opportunities this program has given me. I am now a person who has dreams. I am now a person who has both short-term and long-term goals. I can't say that about the person I previously was – the person I am no longer.

-Michelle, 21

I was 18 years old when I stayed my first night in the woods. A thin tarp lay over my head, protecting me from the unyielding pitter-patter of rain. Camping isn't so great when you have to do it for survival. I wasn't fond of the idea of asking strangers for money. Yet that's what I had to do if I wanted a bite to eat. The glare of judgment you will receive from strangers; good people even, will in turn make you judge yourself.

I know what you're thinking: why not get a job? You need to understand that it's not that simple. If you have to live outside, you are probably wearing tattered, smelly clothes. Chances are you don't have access to a shower, let alone a cell phone. Oh, and another thing – you will most likely need to carry around all of your possessions with you wherever you go.

Before long you will develop a reputation of being a lesser, trashy person. People will talk and you can forget about help or making friends. If you are lucky enough to find friends that will let you sleep on their couch, you can only hope that they will not also become sick of you and wonder why they need to help you.

Anyways, that's kind of what being homeless is like I guess.

James, 20

Shelter Life

Right now I'm just going to school, job hunting, and still working on staying sober for my son...

I'm trying so hard to get off conditions so I can be free again.

Theresa, 19

Being homeless is harder than most people think. Way harder than I thought. Especially being only 18. I been homeless for over a year now. And during that time I learned that partying and not looking for a job isn't gonna get you anywhere in life. You will meet the wrong people but you will also meet the right people. The right people are the ones who are willing to help you out through a lot make sure you keep them in your life, because you never know where you will end up.

Kylie, 18