

BTV Street Chronicle



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

BTV Street Chronicle

Want to contribute? Contact us at:

jwheeler@spectrumvt.org

lmorrison@spectrumvt.org

Vol. 1

February 2015

All names have been changed to
protect identity.



I see people stare as I walk down the street just because I was in a drop-in center for youth homelessness. You don't know my situation, you don't know my story. You don't know what I go through. Everybody's situation is always different. Some people become homeless because of drug addiction. Some become homeless because they don't want to follow rules. Some become homeless because they want to party.

But there are other people who are homeless simply because a parent didn't want them. So, how can a community judge us for reaching out for help? Some of us are just barely 18 and homeless. I just don't understand why the community judges us. How can you not help us when we NEED the help and actually WANT to do better in our lives? Some of us weren't raised right. Some of us were always told we would be kicked out at 18. I believe that it is in the best interest to the community to help homeless youth by at least helping us feel wanted. Letting us know that there are people there for support. Spectrum is the best place we can go for help.

What hurts us even more is the fact that adults don't help us "children." You call us "kids." Well the last time I knew kids shouldn't be facing these kind of struggles. Kids should be loved and taken care of. Most of us want to go get a job and an education but how can we do that when we are so busy worrying about having a roof over our heads or the next time when we will have a meal in our stomach? No one is in any position to be judging anybody. If the community took half the time they do judging us and actually listened to our stories, you would then realize what daily struggles it is for us youth. So before you go and judge someone's story you should ask and actually take a second out of your time before judging any situation.

That is why us youth have so many issues—because we were raised to believe that adults are supposed to be there for you whenever you need. So answer this: How are we supposed to have faith and hope when the one thing we were raised to rely on, bailed?

Erica, 22

Write about what your typical day is like.

Walking everywhere, skate boarding, looking for work, drinking.

Write about the circumstances that led up to you being homeless.

Mother kicked me out after father died and I have a bad attitude towards her and certain people.

What does "home" mean to you?

Safety, family, friends.

What would need to happen for you not to be homeless anymore?

A safe place to live and a steady job with a boss that understands.

Ashley, 24

What Would Change My Life Right Now

There is one thing that would be more amazing than anything if it happened, and that would be me somehow falling onto a full ride scholarship to a good 4 year college. If I was given this opportunity I would not squander it. I would dedicate myself to my studies and try to be the best student I could be.

It would also be nice to have a place to live.

This happening would also affect my emotional well-being as well. I would be able to set goals for myself and celebrate my victories. I hopefully wouldn't be depressed as much.

Steve, 19

Being homeless is one of the hardest issues in my life at this point. I have been homeless for about 3 years now or more. I am 22. I was a foster child from the ages of 12 to 18, so about 6 years. Department of Children and Families (DCF) do have a program for people 18 to 22. By the time I was 18 I chose to not be under the care of DCF and have been homeless ever since.

Being homeless is not easy at all and some people just do not get that. Which is understandable. I mean, when I was 16 or so I never thought once in my life that I would be dealing with homelessness. I have driven by homeless shelters and seen people with huge backpacks, sitting on Church Street with signs. At that point, I did judge and now I see how it hurt people whom were in the same boat as I am now. I have gone days and weeks without sleeping or showering and pretty much wanting to give up. I have had nights where it would be very cold out so I wouldn't even sleep. I have to walk around all day and night not knowing if something bad could happen.

Shannon, 23

I
Rivers run down
Leaping from the street
Tiny silver asphalt fishes
Gleaming with oil
Turning and drifting
Between one another
Over my shoes,
Into the grate.
Shit. These are my only pair

II
I found five dollars
In the street today, trampled
Into slush,
As if that little bill
Was worth nothing.
I picked it up and dried it off;
No use in pretending
That it wouldn't buy dinner.

III
I don't go near Church Street
When I can avoid it.
I'm not trying to be cruel,
But I don't want to be mistaken for
"One of *those* people."

IV
I have a story, but so does everyone else.
I'm someone's daughter;
But then,
So is every woman

V
I'm one of the lucky ones;
Just remember that

Nina, 20

Having been in DCF I've grown accustomed to sharing my story. From when you first enter DCF to when you finally leave it you're always on repeat. Saying the same thing again and again, and eventually it's just routine. I think one of the strangest things for me is how easy it's gotten to do this. But really, I don't want to talk about it. I never have and why should the only thing people hear about being in DCF be the horror stories? Why is it that when people meet a kid in foster care or someone who's been in foster care, most want to know what happened. Not how the kid is doing now, not what they want for their future.

We're all labeled and defined by our pasts. It's something I saw a lot of from teachers, kids my age, their parents, and other community members. DCF is supposed to be about giving kids a chance, maybe not a chance at a completely normal life but at least a chance at having a safe life. The system is flawed, the workers overworked, but in the end they do help. Maybe not as much as they should or as much as we'd like, but they are helping us.

I've spoken to a lot of foster kids during my time in DCF and I still do now that I am out of the system. What I've noticed is a lot of them lack goals for themselves. Most of them are still too worried about where they're going to be living, getting in trouble with their case worker, or just completely focused on one thing: getting out of DCF. Really I think that we should be encouraging youth in the system and ones outside of it who have been through difficulties. Just because their past is horrible, and the present isn't all that great, doesn't mean they can't make things better for themselves.

I believe we should stop dredging up the foul black muck of the past, and instead start looking at a brighter future. Everyone, no matter where they come from or their background, can better themselves. It is something that is sadly forgotten when it comes to a lot of DCF kids. I can't tell you how many kids I've seen just get shuffled around by teachers, case workers etc. it's easier to just pass them along, saying you tried even though you didn't. You can't just look at a kid, and only look at where they are now; you need to look at where they can go too.

All I ask after reading this is that people look at kids who have been through trauma, to look at them as a person not as what happened to them. Encourage them, be there for them, and support them. There is a really good chance that no one has bothered to do this, and that they might not even have faith in themselves.

Jennifer, 18

My Story

My life has not been easy but I know deep down more people have it way worse than I do and I'm thankful for what I have. Right now in my life I am doing very well and I have a part-time job and am living with friends. In the next 5 years I want to have my own place and be more stable with a car and be able to start a family.

When I was 6 I went into DCF custody and remained there for 14 years. I went through 80 homes and was always bouncing around, wondering what may happen to me. I saw things and did things that I am not proud of but I would not be the man I am today had I not learned from my mistakes.

Never take anything for granted. Always have an open mind about life and all others. Learn from everything you do. What would life be worth if we all didn't?

Gary, 20

2 days ago I went out to lunch with my father at one of the local Chinese buffets in the area. Before we entered the restaurant he told me to order a glass of water since I had already eaten at Spectrum. I didn't know why he said that so I told the waiter that I wanted a diet pepsi and not water. My father turned to me and yelled at me in front of the other customers as they all watched in awkward silence, not sure how to react. The waiter laughed to himself, probably thinking that my father was a prick, which in the moment, he was being much more than that. He later went to the restroom, and as usual gave himself an excuse for the way he reacted.

"That's how they get their money, Michelle."

I felt like taking the diet pepsi and throwing it at him, but I knew it wasn't the right thing to do. Instead I walked 2 miles back to downtown Burlington.

The evening after, I attended Alcoholics Anonymous which helps remind me that my father's behavior isn't necessarily a choice, but a symptom of his alcoholism.

I wish that I could believe in a higher being which I could to pray to at night and relay my thoughts to. I could write in this essay that financial security would solve all my problems, but I think I'd be a fool to say such a thing.

Michelle, 21

