

Journey

A Homeless Challenge *By Michael*

My name is Michael and you might say that I am a resident of Laurel. However, I don't occupy a residence at all. You see, I am homeless. But don't feel sad, I'm not. I have learned things about myself that I never would have if not for this experience. Although I don't plan to spend more time than absolutely necessary in this predicament, I wouldn't change this experience for any other.

Since I became homeless, I've managed to maintain my automobile, most of my (portable) material possessions and, to some degree, my sanity. I depend on my 1998 Dodge Caravan for transportation, storage, a means of helping others with challenges similar to my own, and at times even my shelter. My van has been put to the test and has been, for the most part, a reliable asset in confronting day-to-day life.

However, I was recently returning from the Anne Arundel County Library westbound on Route 198, when the vehicle just died. When I say "died" I mean there was no sign of power at all. Not even enough to maintain the hazard lights.

The sun was about to set so I knew that I had very little time to be proactive. It was rush hour on a week day and I was stranded on a busy road in Laurel with no lights or flares to signify that I'm inoperable. I didn't have jumper cables but I did have a jump box. But, after several attempts, I realized there was not enough charge in the box to start the vehicle. I decided to take the box across Rt. 1 to the Fish House, the Laurel soup kitchen. I figured I could charge my jump box for 30 minutes, grab something to eat, then return to the vehicle to try to jump it again.

While at the Fish House I received a text from Pastor Jeremy of Covenant Church where I worship. The text read, "Are you all right? The kids thought they saw you broken down on 198. Let me know if I can help." I informed him of my predicament and soon he was en route to meet me at the van. However, when I reached the site, the van had already been towed.

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Perspective

Winterhaven 2011-2012 **Continued** *By Jerry*

In January, while I was still spending nights in the U-Haul, I went to Covenant's volunteer training session for Winterhaven. Pastor Jeremy discussed volunteer duties, but mostly he talked about showing the homeless men love and respect. It was a great meeting.

At the time, I never thought I would wind up being a volunteer. I have tried many times to turn my life around and have always failed. But being thrown out of Winterhaven in the cold felt like I was a piece of garbage being thrown in a dumpster. So with the help of family and friends, so far I have pulled myself out. I am still sober and clean today and also still a volunteer at Covenant. It makes me feel good to be able to give back.

So if you can take a homeless man who was thrown out of Winterhaven and at a later date is a volunteer, isn't that proof that with a little love and prayer you can help someone be a better man?

So far I have made a change in my life. I couldn't have made it this far without the help from y'all. Thank you for believing in me.

Right now I am high. I am just high on life instead of alcohol. I am better off taking another chance. This one might not be much of a risk anyway except for emotionally. Better to try to do something and fail than to try to do nothing and succeed! ■

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Remembering Brian

Family and friends celebrated Brian's life on Tuesday, March 27, at a service hosted by Pastor Chris at First United Methodist Church on Main Street in Laurel.

Pastor Chris read Psalm 23 and said Brian brought warmth and goodness to everyone he encountered and that friends of Brian told him he was "one of the nicest people they'd ever met, always had a smile and was uplifting, positive and upbeat." Brian was loved at LARS, the Day Center, and the racetrack where he used to work, he said. Brian's sister Michelle said she loved her only brother very much and will miss him. Other speakers included Lauren, his case manager at LARS, and Jerry and Clement. "Amazing Grace" was sung accompanied by Pastor Chris on guitar, and Pastor Jeremy of Covenant Presbyterian Church gave the benediction.

Alfred, a friend of Brian's who had been his neighbor for the past year in the LARS housing program, also had kind words for him. "He was a

real nice guy, always accommodating and friendly. You might remember Brian from the Day Center sitting on the couch waiting patiently for his medication from Nurse Barbara. Brian had some health problems and was seen periodically by the medical staff at the Center. Sad to say, on March 8, Lauren and I found Brian dead in his apartment. We love you, Brian, and will miss you. God bless and rest in peace." ■

We also remember Mickey, two years after his death on March 29, 2010.

Second Annual
Hope for the Homeless
 5K Race to benefit the Route 1 Day Center

Saturday, May 5, 9 am



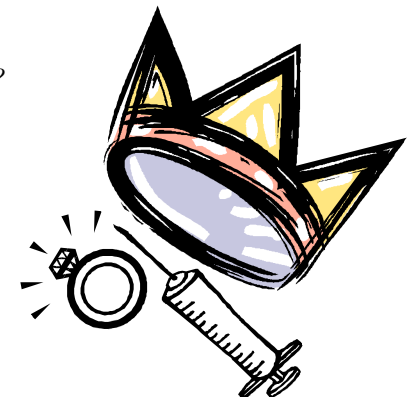
Rockburn Park in Elkridge
 West entrance off Montgomery Road
 near Rockburn Elementary

Online registration:
www.hopeforhomeless5k.com

Original Expressions

Thank You, Lord By Eric aka Lil Pistol

*Lord, please make it impossible for the homeless to get hooked on cocaine
 Thank you, God, for Ms. Anne helping homeless people control their weight gain
 God bless my homeless street family with patience to wait again
 Please stop those people before they start the hating game
 God, thank you even for those people lost hair, thank you for Rogaine
 I pray to God to give people knowledge to think before they complain
 This homeless guy asked me why does blessings come so plain
 And I say that maybe God wants you to realize what you doing
 When you shooting needles in your vain
 God, please continue to bless homeless people from sleeping in the rain
 God, thank you for taking the pain away from my brain when people be saying I'm Insane
 Thank God for the love I have for Ms. Anne Dunn
 Even though I'm a young Man, I'm still Ms. Anne's adopted Son
 In 2005 I was stabbed up but thank God for letting me know my life isn't done
 I'm King, but God are you going bless me with a Queen so my Kingdom will begun?
 I wanna supply my Queen with a diamond ring that shine like a sun
 Thank God that I can eat so much food like I'm Big Pun
 God, please bless me with a peaceful sweet sleep and keep me safe from danger
 Please keep me from harming anybody for treating me like a stranger
 Lord God, thank you for being my brand new life changer
 And thank you, God, for helping me turn my life around like a rearranger
 Thank you, God, for forgiving me when I used to be a homeless gangbanger
 For my closer I will thank God for me being a surviving soldier
 Finally I say, thank you, God, for everything and I see you soon.
 Amen. The End. To God, my Best Friend.*



First Person

It's Never Too Late to Start – Part One *By Woodchuck*

"You're a Woodchuck!" a ten-year-old boy said after watching him drag pallet after pallet across a railroad track to make fires for heat for 40 homeless people huddled on an old railroad loading dock during the Tennessee blizzard of '97. The name stuck. After a two-year absence from the Day Center, Woodchuck was swarmed by old friends when he stopped by on January 21. The Homeless Gazette thanks Woodchuck for sharing his story.

I was born in Burlington, Vermont. My childhood wasn't the best. We were always moving. My mom was a single mom and it was real hard for her. She passed away when I was in jail and I'm going up to visit her grave.

From 1974 until 2008 I lived in the woods – California, Oregon, Washington, Texas, Florida, Michigan, Maine, Arizona, Canada, Mexico. I was in and out of jail because of drinking and drugging. I finally got off the drugs but not the alcohol. When I came to Howard County I had a camp with seven tents and a lot of homeless people living there. I hadn't been in contact with my family for over 30 years, after coming back from Vietnam. I was really messed up in the head. The only way I knew how not to hurt nobody was to live in the woods.

I set up my camp like it was a firebase except without the weaponry. I had a tent for cooking, one for sleeping, one for tools. Kept the area clean and had a 5-gallon bucket for a potty. I had an extra tent for people who needed it. I'd say, instead of sleeping down there in a mud hole, come on up. That's how we'd become friends.

I got real drunk in Laurel and they locked me up for two months. I was drinking half a gallon of vodka and a 30-pack of beer a day, seven days a week. When I was in jail the people living at the camp kept an eye on it, especially my flag.

The day I got out of jail, first thing I do is go to the liquor store and get some beer. I go to the camp and everybody's like, good, you're out! All of a sudden Ms. Anne and some church people come into camp. The people had met her the previous weekend and were like, put the beer away. I said, I don't give a damn. I just got out of jail and I'm going to drink some beer. If they don't like it, they can go.

Ms. Anne said, you must be Woodchuck. I said, I absolutely am. She said, we'd like to help the homeless, would you be interested in coming to the meeting? I said, no, because if someone's trying to set something up where the homeless are in charge it ain't never gonna get off the ground. She said, it would be nice if you would come. She left some food, shook hands and prayed.

The following weekend she's still trying to get me to go to this meeting. I said no. That went on for a few months and one day she said, we found a place, people think we need to have laundry facilities, a pantry and showers. I said, that would be nice. She said, I sure would like your opinion. I said no. I can't say for anyone else but I'm an alcoholic. If you leave the choices to me, I'm going to manipulate you so I can drink. I don't care about anything else.

That went on a couple more weeks, then one day she said they had this place and were going to open up in June or July. I said, I'll help you move. Four or five of us brought the desk in and racks for the clothing and set up the food pantry. When they first opened she had a meeting every week about what could be different. I didn't go because I thought, you know what's going on, you do it. If they don't want it, they ain't coming. You don't want them running it. People were drinking on the back porch. I was going off like, hey, I drink but I have enough sense to take it off the property – they're here to help us, show them that respect.

Back then, I'd flare up, Ms. Anne would get mad and I'd get mad. I tried this rehab that lasted four months. I couldn't deal with it, but she helped me and that's when I started this transition. When I come out, I'm still drinking, still having problems. One day she says, you've got to come to a meeting. I said, no, I don't. She said, you can't come here if you can't attend the meeting, and I walked out. After a few weeks I apologized, and she apologized.

I decided I wanted to go home to Vermont and got as far as York, PA...

To be continued in the May 2012 issue

Humor

***"I'm going to make like a baby
and head out!"***

Overheard as the Day Center was closing

A Homeless Challenge, continued from page 1

This created a new challenge. I had to consider a large payout to retrieve my vehicle, and time can be extremely costly. Pastor Jeremy requested that I spend the night at his home. In the morning I located my van and the fees I would have to pay to retrieve it. So with Pastor Jeremy's car and the fully charged jump box, my friend Ava and I started out on our adventure.

We paid \$40 to the City of Laurel Police Department for the release form (and for making the call to tow, I suppose) and headed to Lenny's Towing, Inc., just across the Howard County line, to pay the \$290 for the tow which was about one mile. But wait! Due to insurance regulations, in order to jump start my vehicle we first have to pay to have it towed off the property, which is another \$75 plus \$5 per mile. When we requested that it be towed to just outside the gate, we learned that there are state laws prescribing where they can release my vehicle. It cannot be released on private or business property without express permission and it cannot be released on public property.

My choices are an automotive repair shop that has agreed to repair the vehicle when I have no need for such an arrangement, or the property where I reside when I have no residence to claim. So even \$410—courtesy of Pastor Jeremy (reimbursed to Ava)—and a fully charged jump box are not enough, and we are at an impasse. Eventually, the tow yard employee and tow truck driver agreed to tow the vehicle to the old police department building on B Street where it was successfully jumped. I later had the battery fully recharged.

I submitted this story not only to share challenges that exist for homeless people, but also to illustrate available local resources like Covenant Church, LARS, Grassroots, Winterhaven and Howard County's Cold Weather shelters, and the Rt. 1 Day Resource Center, headed by dedicated people like Anne, Doug, Joe and Jenny and the various cooperating churches of Laurel and Howard County. Without them, how differently this story might have ended. May God Bless You! ■



**Transitions
April Birthdays**

Jackie, April 8
Lefondo, April 11
Keith, April 21
Dwayne, April 29



Mayor Bloomberg bans food donations to NYC homeless shelters

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/20/bloomberg-bans-food-donat_n_1367542.html

District opens permanent housing complex for homeless women

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/district-opens-first-permanent-housing-complex-for-homeless-women/2012/03/14/gIQAAtfLkGS_story.html

CLASSIFIEDS

Send ads to homelessgazette@gmail.com

Wanted: Looking for an inexpensive, economical car. Contact Ava at the Day Center.

The Homeless Gazette needs your stories, original poems, art, photographs, ideas and suggestions. Please drop off in submissions box at the Rt. 1 Day Center or email to homelessgazette@gmail.com. To subscribe: <http://rt1daycenter.wikispaces.com/thg> and click "Subscribe Now!"

The Homeless Gazette meets Saturdays from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For more information please see Ava, Gary, Jerry, Joe D., Mary or Sherri, or send an email to homelessgazette@gmail.com.

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