



At the forum on "Street People: Adrift in the Cities" were (left to right): David Schultz, consultant on the homeless, Bishop Emerson Colaw, Minnesota Conference, United Methodist Church, John MacDougall, KSTP-AM News Director and State Representative Lee Greenfield.

Homeless, cont.

Doug Federhart, coordinator of St. Stephen's Shelter in Minneapolis says, "All of the people you see in shelters are victims of systems that have used and abused them. We have people who have lost jobs and can't get rehired because they don't have currently marketable skills. Some were abused from a very young age; some don't fit into the normal social system because of chemical dependency or mental illness."

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Father Edward Flahavan, pastor at St. Stephens told our staff that homelessness could happen to most anyone, under the right circumstances: "The people who are staying in shelters or standing in foodlines are people who felt secure until their company got purchased or moved out of town. For them, the bottom dropped out. We have a couple of Ph.D.'s eating with us."

There's a sense of family among street people. They tend to look out for one another.

KSTP newswoman Cathy Wurzer worked as a volunteer in two shelters to research the series. She reported that shelter guests sometimes stood in the cold for several hours to assure a place for the night. Showers are only available every few days . . . and it's anything but comfortable, as 25 to 30 people snore, cough, and wheeze in the stuffy, sleeping room, which smells of cigarettes, alcohol and stale sweat.

Cathy told listeners that there's a sense of family among street people. They tend to look out for one another. She interviewed a young woman named Julie, who told her the shelter has been a good place for her. "Even though it isn't a home like you want it to be, still you're out of the cold, you have a roof over your head, you have a bed to sleep in, you've got food, you can wash up. It's better than outside," she said.



A flower, a sandwich, and a touch of dignity for low income people.

First Call for Help's Marge Carpenter told Cathy, "You hear a lot of people say, 'I would rather stay outside than be institutionalized.' Then people are going to say 'Well, if they don't care, if they want to sleep outside, why are we worrying about them?' I still think we have to provide them something with dignity," she said.

KSTP's Religion and Public Affairs Editor, Tom Di Nanni, rode the "Hobo Bus" on Minneapolis northside. The bus, operated by Pastor Arnopoulos and his volunteers from the Disciples Ministry Church Mission, distributes warm food to persons who live under bridges or in crudely made shelters. Each week the volunteers also take groceries into the neighborhood for the elderly, whose pensions don't last the month.

Reporter Karen Severson visited St. Paul's Dorothy Day Center, and interviewed state, county and city officials about the problem of the homeless. News Assignment Editor Tom Myhre got reactions from the general public and discovered the special problems of Vietnam vets who are homeless in our community.

The series was replayed on Sunday, December 15, during a four-hour on-air forum of religious, governmental, community service and business leaders, who discussed the problem. (Audio tapes of the series and forum are available to teachers and groups who request them on their organization's letterhead.)