



MYTHS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

MISSION: EDUCATING AND INSPIRING COMMUNITY ACTION TO HELP PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS IN MARIN.

MYTH: People who are homeless do not work and do not want to work.

According to national statistics, approximately 24% of all adults experiencing homelessness are employed full-time. However, the majority of them are only earning minimum wage. Job loss is the second most common reason why people say they became homeless.

MYTH: People who are homeless do not want to be housed.

Most people confronted with homelessness reach out for help and the majority of persons experiencing homelessness express a desire for a safe, stable place to live. The lack of affordable housing is the largest barrier preventing persons from exiting homelessness.

MYTH: The majority of persons experiencing homelessness in Marin are undocumented persons (illegal immigrants).

The majority of persons experiencing homelessness in Marin are legal residents, many of whom have lived their entire lives in Marin County.

MYTH: The majority of people experiencing homelessness have a severe mental illness.

Persons with mental illness represent a small minority of those who experience homelessness. However, people who suffer from paranoia, delusions and other mental disorders are often the most visible members of the population. Because of this, many falsely assume that the majority of persons experiencing homelessness have a mental illness.

MYTH: People who are homeless commit more violent crimes than housed people.

Persons experiencing homelessness actually commit less violent crime than housed persons.

MYTH: If there are community services for persons experiencing homelessness, then people will come from out of area to take part in the programs.

Most people who experience homelessness remain in the community where they became homeless. The presence of family and friends, familiarity with the community and its resources and the fear of being homeless in an unfamiliar area, all create a natural reluctance to leave a community. Persons with disabilities and older adults are less likely to leave an area where they lived prior to homelessness than are younger persons. Those that do relocate, do so because they are searching for work, have family in the area or for other reasons not related to services provided to homeless people.



For a list of volunteer and other opportunities to help cure homelessness in Marin, visit: www.homeforallMarin.org

Sources: Culhane, D. (2009) "Five Myths About America's Homeless," National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (2002) Myths and facts about homelessness. SLO Homeless <http://slohomeless.wordpress.com>