



DEBUNKING THE MYTHS OF HOMELESSNESS

from the Soul Supplies, Inc. Team

SoulSupplies.org

MYTH #1: HOMELESSNESS IS A CHOICE.

FACT: While certain bad choices may lead to homelessness, the vast majority of those who are homeless do, in fact, want to be housed and wish for more affordable housing. Unfortunately, there are many barriers, especially in Atlanta, that limit affordable housing and services for homeless people, such as skyrocketing rents, inaccessibility to housing, lack of tenant protections, and stagnant wages. These factors are accompanied by domestic violence, trauma, and mental illness. The result is that many people are forced into homelessness. Yes, people make mistakes, but certain mistakes and choices are rarely the sole reason for homelessness.

MYTH #2: ALL PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS ARE ADDICTED TO DRUGS OR ALCOHOL.

FACT: This is false. Substance abuse is an issue, but not all people who suffer from homelessness are addicted to illicit drugs. It is reported that around 38% of homeless people were dependent on alcohol and 26% abused other drugs. Substance abuse is much more often a result of homelessness due to the close proximity of people living on the street near dealers and repressed trauma, rather than a cause. Housing, counseling, and treatment are often the best ways to combat addiction. These are services that Soul Supplies is dedicated to connecting people with.

MYTH #3: HOMELESS PEOPLE ARE LAZY.

FACT: It is easy to label someone who is sleeping outside as “lazy,” but in reality, 55% of homeless adults in families had worked during the previous year according to a 2013 US Department of Housing and Urban Development study . Those who are homeless have often fallen on hard times and are the opposite of lazy; they spend a countless amount of time searching for their next meal, where they will sleep, a job, and ways to survive while living on the streets. Homelessness cannot be oversimplified to laziness and bad choices, as it has many layers, often involving trauma and difficulty navigating a life on the streets. It would be doing an injustice to judge those who are actually working hard to find housing and employment despite the many barriers in their way.

MYTH #4: HOMELESS PEOPLE SHOULD “JUST GET A JOB.”

FACT: It is often very difficult for homeless people to obtain employment due to the obstacles they face, such as lack of access to the Internet and job resources, lack of transportation to a job or interview, absence of clean clothing and showers, as well as the stigma surrounding the homeless community. Even if they are able to attain a job, it is often low-paying and not enough to afford the skyrocketing housing rents and expensive transportation costs. A significant number of them do have a job, but are still unable to afford housing. Wages are too low and rent is too high , thus making it extremely difficult to attain a job that will allow them to obtain affordable housing.

MYTH #5: HOMELESS PEOPLE ARE DANGEROUS AND VIOLENT.

FACT: It is dangerous living on the streets, but there have been very few crimes or incidents committed against those who are trying to help them. In fact, homeless individuals are more often the victims of violence, rather than the offenders. If the rare occurrence of violence were to happen, it would likely be either self-defense or an individual perpetrating harm upon the homeless.

MYTH #6: HOMELESS PEOPLE ONLY SPEND MONEY ON DRUGS AND UNNECESSARY ITEMS.

FACT: When talking with those who are homeless and various other sources, it is found that the majority of the homeless spend their money on food, hygiene products, and necessary supplies. Yes, people may spend money on items deemed unnecessary or drugs, but the majority of money given or earned by people who are homeless goes toward items allowing them to survive.

MYTH #7: IF PEOPLE CAN AFFORD SHOES OR A SMARTPHONE, THEN THEY AREN'T POOR.

FACT: Just because people have access to basic consumer goods does not mean they are not poor. Consumer goods like smartphones, televisions, and clothes have gone relatively down in price, while housing, food, and other essential items have gone up in price. People in poverty must stay connected to the world, especially to receive certain services and employment, as well as access different resources. Therefore, it is incorrect and damaging to make an assumption that because they have these items, their financial situation is negligible.

MYTH #8: PROVIDING FOOD AND SHELTER ONLY ENABLES PEOPLE TO REMAIN HOMELESS.

FACT: Food and shelter are essential for survival. Long-term shelter is proven to significantly reduce homelessness, especially among families, and food allows them to survive, so that they are able to seek support, if desired.

MYTH #9: HOMELESSNESS WILL NEVER HAPPEN TO ME

FACT: No one who is homeless expected to be homeless at the onset. Homelessness can happen to anyone: an individual with a solid job is laid off and evicted, a mother trying to support her kids and working a minimum wage job is not able to afford the rent of her apartment, domestic violence causes someone to flee their home. No matter what your financial situation or background is, you are still susceptible to homelessness.

MYTH #10: HOMELESS PEOPLE TEND TO BE OLDER.

FACT: While it is true that there is a very large number of people who experience homelessness above the age of 24, there is still a significant number of homeless youth in America. Each year, there are around 4.2 million youth and young adults that experience homelessness at some point. This includes a substantial population of homeless and runaway youth ages 14-25 in Metro Atlanta alone. Many people have this stereotype because of the transitory and hidden nature of homeless youth. They are more geographically mobile, so they are able to blend in with others, thus creating the false appearance that almost all homeless people are older.

MYTH #10: HOMELESSNESS WILL NEVER END.

FACT: While there may be always be brief episodes of homelessness where poverty exists, it is very possible that homeless can be effectively ended, which means if someone were to become homeless, it would be a rare occurrence, very brief, and not occur again. Many agencies, nonprofits, as well as local and federal governments are working closely to develop and implement programs to end homelessness, such as permanent supportive housing systems, that provide immediate housing for the homeless and services for individuals suffering from illnesses, trauma, and chronic homelessness. Additional solutions include a livable wage to allow people working multiple minimum-wage jobs to be able to afford rent; affordable housing systems, like housing vouchers, for families ; and programs that are designed to assist low-income people with increasing their income and housing stability . By continuing to support the homeless through Soul Supplies distribution events, we are aiding in the end goal of effectively ending homelessness by providing them with short-term essential supplies and connecting them with valuable resources to enable them to seek assistance and long-term support.

MYTH #12: THERE IS NOTHING THAT I CAN DO THAT WILL MAKE AN IMPACT ON ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS.

FACT: False – here’s how you can help: first, you can educate yourself on the common misconceptions about homelessness, which will reduce the stigma of being homeless. This also comes in the form of having conversations with those who are homeless and learning their stories, so that they don’t feel “invisible” and ignored. Second, donating to organizations and nonprofits that assist the homeless in both the short-term through outreach events and long-term through housing and employment services allows you to make a direct and positive impact on people’s lives. Donations can come in the form of monetary contributions, supplies donations, or a variety of other ways unique to each organization. Third, volunteering for different organizations or passing out essential supplies with a partner is a great way to ease the burden of homelessness. Fourth, one of the most important ways to assist the homeless is through advocating and speaking up for different public policies that will help effectively end homelessness, such as increased affordable housing, higher minimum wage, increased funding for homeless services and organizations, as well as implementation of more housing programs. Overall, simply speaking up and acknowledging the plight of those experiencing homelessness has a tremendous impact.

Soul Supplies, Inc.



@soulsuppliesatlanta



@soulsuppliesatlanta



linkedin.com/company/soulsupplies

Email: soulsuppliesatlanta@gmail.com

Website: SoulSupplies.org

Phone: (770) 903-2979

Address: 924 Forest Pond Drive, Marietta, GA, 30068