

# Change for the Better fact sheet

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New campaign targets downtown panhandling

## Change for the Better program overview

- Started in 1992, with roughly \$60,000 raised.
- Instead of giving change to panhandlers who may use the money to feed an addiction, drop change into Change for the Better collection boxes at participating businesses. Then take a brochure containing a Help Key that can be given to panhandlers instead of spare change. The key can be redeemed for a range of services at six agencies.

## Why did the Downtown BIZ launch this campaign?

- This campaign is a response to business members' concerns.
- 2002 Downtown BIZ member survey: 84% think that panhandling is a problem downtown.
- A recent Probe survey found that one in five people give to panhandlers.
- Panhandling is a problem in other cities; similar campaigns have been promoted in Saskatoon and Philadelphia; Calgary is about to implement a plan to target panhandling.

## Change for the Better: the campaign

- *Resources are available:* Agencies like Union Gospel Mission provide services like a jacket for a job interview. The many social agencies in Winnipeg do such a great job of providing the fundamental basics of food, clothing and shelter—and are so well-supported by businesses and the public—that no one needs to panhandle in order to feed themselves.
- *Providing an alternative:* We encourage the public to contribute to Change for the Better collection boxes instead of giving spare change to panhandlers who may use the money to buy alcohol, drugs or cigarettes.



## What is included in the campaign?

- Posters at various downtown locations
- Transit shelter ads
- Brochures in collection boxes at participating businesses (list of participating businesses on our Web site.)

## What is the goal of this campaign?

- To educate the public on the reality of panhandling in order to stop perpetuating it.
- To provide a positive alternative to giving spare change to panhandlers.
- To improve safety downtown and improve the downtown experience for downtown visitors and regular users.
- To support social agencies that provide fundamental resources to people in need.
- To help get people on the street into a safer environment.
- This campaign is not about saying 'no' to panhandlers nor about decreasing the public's compassion towards panhandlers. The campaign offers a way that the public can help panhandlers.

## This campaign is not THE solution; but we hope it is the beginning of the solution

- The Downtown BIZ is also pursuing other ways of addressing the panhandling issue, particularly aggressive panhandling.
- E.g. We are working with the justice system and advocating for stronger bylaws.
- By not giving money to panhandlers and instead giving money to agencies that can help them, we are seeing the beginning of a solution. We are beginning to manage the problem.



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## What's changed with Change for the Better?

- The “Help Key” has been added to the Change for the Better program.
- Help Keys are now available for a donation of any amount through Change for the Better collection boxes. The Help Key was previously only sold through Union Gospel Mission or the Downtown BIZ for \$1.00. Help Keys are still available for \$1 from Union Gospel Mission. If someone wants several Help Keys, they can call the Downtown BIZ at 958-4640.
- 6 social agencies are supported by Change for the Better, instead of the previous 14

## “7 out of 10 panhandlers...” Where does that stat come from?

- A study done by our Change for the Better outreach workers found that 7 out of 10 panhandlers will use the spare change to buy drugs, alcohol or cigarettes.
- The survey revealed that 67% of respondents admitted to using money for alcohol or solvent and 76% said they used the money to buy cigarettes.

## Is it really true that panhandlers don't need money to buy food?

There are many social agencies downtown that provide food and meals for people on the street. Social agencies rarely ban individuals from their premises.

## Questions about Change for the Better or this campaign?

Visit our Web site (also listed on the brochure) at [www.downtownwinnipegbiz.com](http://www.downtownwinnipegbiz.com) or phone the Downtown BIZ office at 958-4640.



## Which six social agencies are supported by Change for the Better?

- Agape Table - 175 Colony Street
- Holy Trinity Anglican Church - 256 Smith Street
- Salvation Army - 180 Henry Avenue
- Siloam/Lions Den - 564 Main Street
- Lighthouse Mission - 669 Main Street
- Union Gospel Mission - 320 Princess Street

## How did the BIZ choose which social agencies to support?

Previously, funds collected were distributed among 14 social agencies. When the Help Key was added, we assembled an inventory of all agencies and narrowed the agencies to six who are able to provide services of food, clothing and counselling in exchange for a Help Key. We feel that the funds raised will have a bigger impact when divided between six organizations instead of 14.

## Thank you to our partners

- Destination Winnipeg
- Manitoba Hotel Association
- Manitoba Liquor Control Commission
- Winnipeg BIZ Association
- The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce
- The Winnipeg Committee for Safety

## Also thanks to:

- Viacom
- Fusion Communications
- Six social agencies involved

