

ST. STEPHEN'S HUMAN SERVICES

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Alliance
of the Streets

Employment &
Family Services

Free Store

Housing Services

Human Rights

Kateri Residence

Programs to End
Longterm
Homelessness

Shelter

Street Outreach

zAmya Theater Project

**Our mission
is to end
homelessness.**

Why I Beg

Begging, panhandling, flying a sign, performing for tips...all are ways for people without an income to get money.

To get a better understanding of why people beg, St. Stephen's Street Outreach staff surveyed 55 people panhandling in downtown Minneapolis.

These are some of the responses:

Where are you staying? If you are housed, where is that?

Northside
Glenwood
Wakaigun
Drake
Mission Lodge
Mom's
Richfield
Outside
Shelter
public housing
couch hopping

Where do you eat?

at home
churches
non-profits
food people give me on street
dumpsters
buy food
doesn't eat when under influence
at home-I'm a good cook
fast food
food from passing cars
Walgreens
people bring food under bridge
Cub Foods

Do you fly a sign? If yes, where do you usually sign?

Nicollet Mall
Cedar Riverside
Cedar Franklin
Lyndale/Dunwoody
62 and Xerxes or Penn
Lake St./Lightrail
35W by U of M
35W and Washington
Lake St and Stevens
7th and Olson
Metrodome during Twins games

How many hours per day are you out signing?

1-10 hours
All day until it's dark
One day a week for 2 hours
Enough for a bottle \$8

On average, how much do you make per day signing and how much money do you usually consider enough for the day?

\$0-40
\$30-100 (family with 4 kids panhandling on Nicollet Mall)

How long have you been signing?

2 weeks-15 years

What led you to start signing?

When I lost my job
friend taught me
lost job as school bus driver
lost housing
mom kicked me out (homeless youth) and I needed money
peer pressure
can't work and disability isn't enough
drinking
a dare
everybody else was doing it
don't believe in stealing
chemical dependency

What would it take for you to stop signing?

A job
Income
place to live

quit smoking
healthcare
the police
going to jail
just stopped
starting school and permanent address
don't think I will-I enjoy the challenge and everyone needs a hobby
getting social security
\$100,000
a home with full fridge

What would your reaction be if the police passed a law that stated signing is not allowed downtown? Would have to do

what I need to do
Would go to freeway
Would not have a choice
would have to stop
I would still do it and get arrested
would continue
wouldn't care
would ignore law
would walk away and continue later when police not around
I would go somewhere else where I can
would adhere
dog would not have food
no reaction

How do the police and/or the safety ambassadors treat you?

Good
ambassadors rude at first
dirty looks from police
move along
no sitting on sidewalk
get the hell out of here
no interaction with police
Ambassadors are ok and police leave me alone
give you trouble
give you a ticket
police are positive when I explained why I have 4 kids with my husband and me while signing
very friendly and helpful
Ambassadors ok but police not good
Gentle
by the book
usually understanding
good
they bring me home
neutral-they take my sign away

will take to remote location and dump in another jurisdiction
respectfully because they know I'm a veteran
great

How do you feel when you sign?

Good-doing it for God too
degrading
I don't feel anymore
don't like begging
bored
vulnerable
broken down
embarrassed
hate it
would rather play music than ask directly
pretty low
demoralized
amazed at generosity but feel down
scared
humiliated
motivated
had to be buzzed to do it
nobody wants to do it
no drinks=embarrassed/few drinks=don't give a shit
like a low life
shameful
I don't want my kids to see me so I turn the lights off-my eyes are open but the lights are off
ok-blow kisses to the police
overwhelmed
college kids beat me up with baseball bat
hot in the summer/cold in the winter
feel guilty-asking for help is hard
belittled
no pride

What do you buy with the money you make?

Food
Cigarettes
co-pays
alcohol
socks
clothes
supplies
food for kids-I don't eat so they can
heroin
supplies for dog
gamble it away

crack
movies
music
batteries
sundries
ride the bus
motel room

What is something you are proud of that not many people know about you?

I am a good person-no drugs or alcohol
I'm a good prayer warrior
AA degree in electronics
6 years in Air Force
worked at HCMC
I have an awesome personality (youth)
I am a hunter and fisherman
I have been sober 3 years
I still have faith in Christ
I've never had an alcohol or drug problem
my kids
my brother went to college
I have a job at the State Fair
when I'm sober I'm a perfectionist
I'm proud of myself
I'm resilient
being Native
I'm an artist and painter
I'm a good mechanic
went to state and nationals as a cheerleader
I've helped push cars
I have working class values
I really do want to work
I resuscitated a baby on Nicollet Mall with police (medical training from military)
used to be a fishing guide
has BA from Iowa State

If you used to fly signs but don't anymore, why did you stop?

Police told me to
I got enough money through government aid
retired
trespassing citation
I have housing now
ain't my thing