



July 5, 2009

Reginald T. Dogan: No child should be homeless

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When we see homeless people, we often make judgments about their condition and position without any facts to support our theses.

They are lazy or crazy, drug addicts or alcoholics, thus deserving of their depressing station in life, most of us have said at one time or another.

But what about homeless children? What did they do to deserve to live without a place to call home, except be born?

One of the most gut-wrenching sights is a child with no place to live. Imagine a child with no warm bed to sleep in. Think of a child who doesn't even know where his or her next meal is coming from.

Growing problem

This is a daily reality throughout this country, this state and even right here in this community.

What do you say to a child whose life is a constant shuffle from crowded shelters to flea-infested motels to dilapidated cars to dark, lonely tents and streets?

It is a shameful tragedy that about 2,000 children in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties are homeless, and many more are on the verge of homelessness.

It is a sad, sobering reality that the number of homeless children continues to increase across the state. It is estimated on any given day that some 50,000 children are homeless in Florida, which has one of the highest rates in the United States, says a report from the National Center on Family Homelessness.

The same report says that one in 50 children in the U.S. are homeless. With more foreclosures and job losses, the numbers likely are to get worse.

It's one thing to hear about homeless children miles away on the television or the radio. It's quite another to read about them in this paper so close to home — in our schools, at our churches, near our neighborhoods.

Finding solutions

The poor always will be with us, a great spiritual leader once said, and the challenge of a caring

community is to figure out what to do about it.

In the midst of the darkness of homelessness, there are glimmers of hope. Charities can't provide for them all, but Project REACH, Loaves & Fishes, Family Promise of Santa Rosa, the Interfaith Hospitality Network, and some dedicated churches and schools are trying to attack the troubling problem.

Of course, they can't do it by themselves. We all have something to give to help improve the lives of homeless children.

The News Journal's two-day series laid out the problem. It's up to us to find solutions.

We can sit around and pass judgment or we can stand up and provide a helping hand.

Donate money, give your time, recruit local businesses to resources to agencies, urge local and state politicians to push for homelessness programs, get your churches and schools involved.

To whom much is given, much is required.