

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Part 1 – Homeless Hotspots



OASIS ON THE SAND DUNES IN THE CITY OF SEASIDE

By Wanda Sue Parrott

HONING in on homelessness is easier if you know how to start.

If you've ever wondered where to turn for help if you became homeless, think: Homeless Hotspots.

Next, pinpoint why you need specific help by asking yourself:

Am I in need of proverbial “birds of a feather who flock together” for company?

Am I a free-spirited traveler, on a sojourn through Monterey, in need of a tour guide to help me find a place to sleep free?

Am I a shaken, sheltered bystander aware that I could be displaced, as were the thousands of unprepared victims in the floods in Houston last week, so I need to know where to turn if disaster strikes me?

Or is the reason you're curious about homeless hotspot locations solely so you can avoid them? In other words, homeless people are not wanted in your own backyard, so you need to know where not to go to be around them.

How To Take Care Of Your Family?

Knowing why you're interested is the first step. If none of the above questions resembles your situation, perhaps you're not concerned solely for yourself.

Maybe the survival of an elderly loved one depends on you. Or maybe you're responsible for children and grandchildren. Is your question: How can I take care of my family?

Regardless of whether your domicile is a relative's couch, the seats of your car, a shelter with many beds, or a tent on the ground, your first question is:

Why is finding a homeless hotspot important to me?

When you're sure of that answer, familiarize yourself with what constitutes a homeless hotspot. Here's my definition:

*A homeless hotspot is any place
where unsheltered people
hang in or hang out in order to hang on*

The current hottest homeless hotspot in local news is on Lapis Road just north of Marina near the dump because entire families and their dogs have been living there in vehicles for several years.

A month ago, I reported seeing 76 vehicles on the 1-mile strip of road. On Labor Day, I counted 36 campsites.

The Monterey County Sheriff had given notices on Aug. 10 that RVs, trucks, trailers and cars must be moved by Aug. 31, but a 90-day reprieve was given by the Board of Supervisors on Aug. 29, when, by a 3-1 vote, they decided campers could stay parked until Nov. 30, provided they comply with restrictions that include parking only between 6 p.m. and 10 a.m. daily, and compliance with health and penal codes, meaning no more dumping of trash or human excrement by the roadside.

Instead, portable toilets and trash containers are supposed to be provided while the county searches for means by which to supervise the proposed safe parking program at a location to yet be determined.

As of today, funding for the project and supervision of its implementation remains unknown.

For details, or to apply, contact District 4 Supervisor Jane Parker at district4@co.monterey.ca.us.

In The Bushes At Laguna Grande Park

The second most-prominent campground among local homeless hotspots is Laguna Grande Park, shared jointly by the cities of Monterey and Seaside.

Located across from Safeway at the intersection of Fremont Blvd./Ave. and Canyon Del Rey, transients slide like lizards into the native-plant garden and down the embankment, dragging bicycles, backpacks, trash bags and other belongings with them, virtually vanishing in the brush along the shallow ravine's creek bed.

At the far end of Laguna Grande Park, behind the In-n-Out Burger on Del Monte Ave., campers enter on flat paths that wend their ways past the lake where floating flocks of homeless honkers waddle ashore to wallow in debris left behind by campers.

If you are not enticed by the prospect of finding homeless hotspots full of rotting food scraps, empty bottles and cans, and piles of steaming human excrement that bake like summer pies in the sun, there's a better option.

You can and should become acquainted with the oasis on the sand dunes of Seaside.

MCDSS: The Oasis On The Sand Dunes Of Seaside

You wouldn't usually call it an attention-getter, yet it draws most of the Monterey Peninsula's needy community through its doors.

The homeless use its restrooms, drink fresh water, avail themselves of financial aid and sign up for free food benefits. They don't bed down in the place they simply call "the welfare office."

Its proper name is Monterey County Department of Social Services (MCDSS); it houses the Monterey County Community Benefits Offices.

If you've never visited the MCDSS, is now the time? It's a one-story building that floats like a square island in a parking lot at 1281 Broadway Ave., Seaside. For details, call, 866-323-1953.

Next week's MCDSS question will be: Whatever happened to food stamps?

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