

*Join the Real Change from Spare Change
Facebook group!
Get updates on charity events and news!*

There's a Better Way to Help!

The desire to help those in need in our community is wonderful! However, giving directly to panhandlers may not actually help their true needs. Often panhandlers use money to support alcohol and drug addictions. We often perceive panhandlers as having an immediate need for cash to buy food, shelter, and services. In reality, free food, shelter, and services are available in our community. And although panhandling is often associated with homelessness, most panhandlers are not homeless. Lastly, panhandling has a negative effect on our community by keeping people away from patronizing businesses and services downtown. Choosing not to give to a panhandler is not making a personal judgment on someone's life; it's a choice to use your money effectively to help those in need.

Tips for Responding to Panhandlers:

-Simply say "No" or "Sorry" or "No, have a good day".

Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. A sarcastic comment or argumentative tone can provoke aggression, while ignoring a request can make someone feel invisible -- something that street people may already experience.

-You don't need to engage with panhandlers if they approach you, it's okay to walk away.

-If someone is aggressively panhandling you- loudly say "No" several times. Panhandlers don't like to draw attention. If you are followed, walk in to the nearest business and report the incident. Calling 911 in Chapel Hill is not just for emergencies! It is okay to call 911 simply to report a safety situation or concern.

-Act confident; your attitude is a powerful tool in dealing with aggressive panhandlers.

-If you ever feel threatened or harassed by a panhandler, don't hesitate to call 911 as soon as you can.

Real Change from Spare Change

Although it may seem small, donating any amount of money can make a difference when it comes to funding basic human needs. The funds raised for Real Change from Spare Change go directly to the street outreach team that helps homeless clients receive medical attention, mental health services, navigate the human services system and get into permanent housing. Funds also support community education to continue to teach people that there is a better way to help in our community. For details visit www.RealChangeFromSpareChange.org or contact Meg McGurk at 967-9440 or meg@downtownchapelhill.com.

Creative Ideas to Help!

-Donate the spare change that is accumulating in your jars and cups to Real Change from Spare Change!

-Host a basketball game viewing party to watch the Tar Heels. Challenge everyone to donate a dime for every basket scored by their favorite player. Place a container in the middle of the floor or table and encourage everyone to "make a basket" with their change.

-Get an empty, clean plastic bottle or clear flower vase and put it on your desk at work or in your living room at home. Ask people to put their spare change in when they stop to visit.

-If you are a member of an organization, service club, church group, sports team or other group...challenge another group to a "Change Poverty" drive. See which organization can collect the most change!

-Sign up for the Real Change from Spare Change Facebook group. Find out about upcoming charity events like the Top of the Hill Charity Tuesday on Tuesday, May 20th. A portion of sales from a charity beer will benefit Real Change from Spare Change!

-Clean out your closet and donate gently used backpacks, umbrellas, rain coats, winter hats and winter gloves. Items will go directly to homeless persons through the street outreach team and towards Project Homeless Connect.

For complete details on these ideas contact Meg McGurk at meg@downtownchapelhill.com or 967-9440.

-Clean out your food pantry or cabinets and donate non-perishable items to the IFC food pantry. Don't forget to donate brown paper grocery store bags to the food pantry too!

-Hold a personal hygiene item drive in your neighborhood, apartment building or at work. Donate the items to the IFC. Items such as toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo, soap and lotion are always needed. Make sure items are new. You can even put together Toiletry Kits; assembling items in Ziploc bags.

-Are you a member of an organization that holds an event? Ask attendees to donate a can of food or a personal care item as 'admission'.

-Create a special event! Hold a themed dance party such as a Sock Hop and ask attendees to donate new pairs of socks as admission. Host a dinner party at your house but instead of *eating* dinner *make* dinner for the Community Kitchen! Fill disposable aluminum pans with prepared foods and put a date on them. For example, you can fill the pans with: casseroles, mashed potatoes, green beans, cooked cabbage, or any other "meat, vegetable or starch." Wrap the pans and deliver them to the IFC Community Kitchen. The pans will go directly onto the serving line.

-Participate in one of IFC's annual events, such as eating at a participating restaurant on RSVVP Day, walking in the CROP Walk or volunteering or participating in their annual golf tournament. See more and read about them at www.ifcweb.org.

For complete details on these ideas please visit the Inter-Faith Council website at www.ifcweb.org, call 929-6380 or email servicesdirector@ifcmailbox.org.