

JURY PROJECT PROPOSAL:
an architecture project for the homeless

proposed by: JOANNA GRANT

THE PROBLEM:

Walking down S. Limestone is usually an experience. Taking a break for lunch between classes, students exit the academic environment of campus and enjoy the restaurants that line S. Limestone by North Campus. Most of the time, you will notice someone who is not like you: someone who cannot afford to have clean, nice clothes. Someone who cannot afford a place to live. Someone who often cannot afford to feed himself.

Although programs exist in Lexington that aim to help the homeless, people often have no other choice than to sleep on the streets at night. Shelters turn people away for being drunk or abusing drugs, forcing them onto the street, even during adverse weather conditions. Drug screening is required before being admitted to some shelters. Admittance to the shelters also depends on income, limiting the use of shelters to below the poverty line, regardless of the situation. With the large numbers of people living in shelters, crime is common. These and many other reasons are why the homeless do not always utilize shelters.

The problem facing homeless shelters is that they function on the assumption that people will take advantage of all opportunities available to them. Homeless shelters often do not take into account that people have possessions to protect, and do not provide a place to safeguard valuables. A homeless shelter

provides food and a place to rest, which begs the question: are food, water, and shelter really the basic needs for human survival?

Since we have evolved into intelligent beings, it seems that a person cannot be a person without a purpose in life. Having a home and food allows for us to conduct our lives, but humans need more than food. I propose to address two issues with my design project: a lack of community and purpose among the homeless. I believe that if both issues can be adequately addressed within an architectural project, then the quality of life of homeless people could dramatically be improved. Although the issue of homelessness cannot be solved, at least their condition can be less uncomfortable.

As a large-scale project, I would like to design a homeless haven that not only provides shelter and food, but a number of other amenities that would benefit the homeless. A shelter must include showers, since hygiene is an important factor concerning homeless assimilating to society. Storage, in the form of lockers or closets, should be provided to safeguard valuables and possessions. Access to Internet, in our society, is almost becoming a basic need for life in advanced societies. Since everyone is expected to keep up with technology, computers with Internet access should be provided so that people can check email, type resumes, or simply use the Internet for recreational purposes. Television, as a basic luxury, would act as a stress reliever for occupants. A kitchen that would be stocked by local charities would allow access to food, as well as the sense of family that cooking a meal and sharing with

others offers. Providing to the homeless more than the basic needs would improve their quality of life since, for some, cannot be changed.

At a smaller scale, I would like to design something that integrates into the life of the average person, while still addressing certain issues that homeless face. Integrating a shelter into a bus stop or a park bench would allow temporary relief from the elements, as well as function in a different way as something useful for those who are not homeless. Integrating two functions for one form would allow homeless to not feel so estranged from the rest of society, as well as meet their basic needs. For us, it will be a reminder of the problem of homelessness and perhaps spur us to assist those who are of greater need.

SCHEDULE:

Throughout October and November I will be collecting information about homelessness and conducting interviews with the homeless in Lexington. In December and January, my research will be used to create a design scheme for a project for the homeless. I plan to combine my interviews into a short documentary to present with my project.

PROJECTED EXPENSES:

After speaking to my juror, Jeff Bradford, I decided that it was of utmost importance to pay every homeless person that I interview. I expect to interview between 10-15 people, and I would like to pay each of them between \$5.00 and \$10.00 apiece. A budget of \$100-\$150 would be sufficient to cover the cost of interviews. I realize that it is rather unorthodox to pay a person for an interview, but I firmly believe in letting them know I value their time by paying them.

JURORS:

Mentor: Caroline Quinio

Gown: Jerzy Rozenberg

Town: Jeff Bradford