

Client Perspective

In every ATC newsletter, we provide an opportunity for clients to contribute pieces of poetry, artwork, essays, or interviews discussing their lives. It gives clients a chance to express themselves, and enables readers to better understand their realities.

In this newsletter, Veronica, an ATC client for about 6 years, contributed a poem, Grandfather Says. "I want other people to realize that they are not the only one this is happening to. If you speak out about it, it becomes easier to deal with. Writing about this helps myself, and hopefully helps others."

Grandfather Says

*"sit in my hand"
I'm ten.*

*I can't see him,
but I hear him breathing
in the dark.*

It's dinner after playtime.

*We're outside,
hidden by trees and shrubbery.*

He calls it hide-and-seek,

*But only my little sister seeks us
as we hide*

and she can't find us,

as grandfather picks me up

and rubs his hands between my legs.

*I only feel a vague stirring
at the edge of consciousness.*

*I don't know what it is,
but I like it.*

*It gives me pleasure
that I can't identify.*

It's not like eating candy,

but it's just as bad,

because I had to lie to grandmother

when she asked,

"What do you do out there?"

"Where?" I answered.

Then I said,

"Oh, play hide-and-seek."

She looked hard at me,

*then she said, "That was the last
time.*

I'm stopping that game."

Ten years past, thirty five,

when I began

to reconstruct the past.

When I asked myself

*why I was attracted to men who
disgusted me*

I traveled back through time

*to the dark and heavy breathing
part of my life*

I thought it was gone,

*but it had only sunk from view
into the quicksand of my mind.*

*It was pulling me down
and there*

*I found grandfather waiting,
his hand outstretched to lift me up,*

Naked and wet

where he rubbed me.

"I'll do anything for you,"

he whispered,

"but let you go."

And I cried, "Yes," then "No."

"I don't understand

how you can do this to me.

I'm only ten years old,"

and he said,

"That's old enough to know."

At The Crossroads

SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER, THE CORNER | SPRING/SUMMER 2004

“Why don't you just get a job?”

Young people on the street face this question all the time – from passersby, people who live and work in the community, sometimes relatives or family members, maybe even service providers.

Misunderstandings about the root causes of homelessness and unemployment can cause larger attitudes of blame and shame.

At The Crossroads Outreach Counselors regularly face the challenge of providing support and referrals for young people who are looking for jobs. Counselors keep in mind the following challenges that homeless youth face in getting a job:

The Obstacles

- Street youth lack clean/appropriate clothing, access to hygiene (a shower, soap, toothbrush, etc.), and stable housing (it's hard to get sleep, get up on schedule, store belongings, etc.).
- Street youth often don't have stable contact information (a phone number) to be reached by a potential employer. They may have little to no access to computers or fax machines, making it hard to monitor job listings, and create and send resumes.
- Many don't have money until their first paycheck; so many frequently need to continue making money in street economies like selling drugs or sex work through this transition. When youth need to focus on getting their basic needs met, getting and keeping a job is extremely difficult.
- A criminal record deters employers (and prohibits work with youth, handling money, nursing, etc.) Many employers are just not willing to take the "risk," or give someone who appears homeless/gang-affiliated/etc. a chance.
- Youth transitioning off the street and into a workplace need a lot of support. They may be dealing with mental health and substance abuse issues. Many are survivors of trauma, or they may feel a separation from their support network when leaving the street lifestyle. Few workplaces, unless specifically set up to do so, meet these needs – which leads to clients quitting or getting fired.

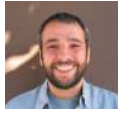


Pictures of Ashbury Images, a local program that trains and employs at-risk people in the screen printing business.

At The Crossroads is a project of the San Francisco Foundation Community Initiative Funds.

If you'd like a copy of one of our previous newsletters, send us an e-mail, and we'll send it to you as long as we have some left (we have a limited supply).

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Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

Imagine having a choice between two jobs. The first job pays minimum wage, which is \$8.50 an hour in San Francisco. You work 40 hours a week, with no flexibility around your schedule. You wait two weeks before you see a dime of your earnings, and about 20% gets taken out of that check for taxes. You have to have identification, a resume, clean clothes, a phone number and an address to get this job. You have to deal with a boss who may yell at you or disrespect you all day long.

The second job pays \$15-\$50 an hour. You can dress how you want, you don't need ID, and you don't have to submit a resume or sit down for an interview. You have a lot of flexibility around what hours of the day you work, and can take days off when you need to. You work around your friends, and can listen to music or talk on the phone. You get paid for your work immediately, tax-free.

This is a choice that I see clients grapple with: taking an entry level job at a fast food restaurant or as a telemarketer, or working on the streets selling drugs.

Keep in mind that many of our clients base the majority of their decisions on what will help them get through the next 24 hours. The street economy meets their immediate and crucial survival needs, the other options do not. So when deciding how to make money, the choice can feel obvious. This is a primary reason why so many of our clients participate in street economies such as drug dealing or sex work.

However, most of our clients who work on the streets would rather be doing something different. On the street, they constantly face the threat of jail, and violence is a prevalent occupational hazard. I rarely hear our clients brag about how thrilled they are to be dealing drugs or selling their bodies. Most of the clients I have worked with who earn a living on the streets like to spend their money as quickly as they get it, in part because they often don't feel good about what they had to do to earn it.

When clients get a "legit" job, they can't wait to let us know about it. I have seen jobs bring a sense of pride to clients, helping motivate them to achieve other goals. When they are at a "legit" job, they seem more likely to save their money or spend it on something that will last for while, like a new pair of shoes or a backpack.

If there were more opportunities that allowed for this sense of accomplishment — but met the realistic survival needs of our clients and offered some of the benefits of working on the streets — I think the majority of our clients would choose to opt out of the street economy. I am grateful for the organizations in San Francisco that offer such jobs, or are working to develop these types of options for our clients.

Rob Gitin

Director, At The Crossroads

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Foundations

California Endowment \$134,000
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Corporations

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Foundations

2003 (Year awarded)
California Endowment \$135,000
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Louis R. Lurie Foundation \$25,000
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Other in-kind Donors

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Discounted goods providers

San Francisco Clothing Bank
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Bold indicates donors who have supported us
annually, for at least
five years

* Donors who have supported us annually, for at
least three years.

** administered through
San Francisco Foundation's
Donor-Advised Funds.

Thanks

Get Involved with At the Crossroads

Make a donation to ATC.

Individual donors are the fuel that powers our organization. Each year, they become a bigger percentage of our funding. Please consider supporting our work. Checks should be made payable to "At The Crossroads, SFFCIF".

Find out if your workplace has a program for matching donations.

Volunteer your skills, or donate items on our Wish List.

When people donate their time and skills, or items on our Wish List, we are able to keep program costs down and put more of our funds into the direct work with clients. Could you donate tech support, web design, legal, or accounting skills? Other ideas? We'd love to hear them.

Volunteer for street outreach.

Volunteers accompany Counselors on the street — carrying supplies like drinks and socks, supporting our work with clients. Find out more about the criteria and process for becoming an ATC Outreach Volunteer on our web site: www.atthecrossroads.org.

Join our Supply Prep Team!

Help us prepare supplies for outreach to our clients by making candy packs, bunching socks, and bagging soaps and Q-tips. It's easy, relaxing, fun — and a great way to get to know ATC staff and other supporters. Plus, it enables us to put more time into the direct work. Prep Nights are scheduled on the last Wednesday of every month. If you would like to be notified about upcoming prep nights, email Rob at rob@atthecrossroads.org and let him know.

Help us grow...

Expand our network. Do you know others who might be interested in hearing about or supporting ATC's work?

Pass on this newsletter, or we'll provide you with a packet of information about ATC — or direct people to our web site: www.atthecrossroads.org.

Be creative.

We're open to hearing your ideas for supporting ATC. Is there some way that you'd like to help that we haven't mentioned? Let us know — we're excited to find out!

Any questions, please feel free to contact us through email (getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org) or phone (415-487-0691).

Outreach Statistics

Sometimes peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are a hard sell. Once in a blue moon, we're able to hand out lunch meat sandwiches, and everyone appreciates the break.

On outreach we hand out about thirty different supplies to our clients, ranging from toothbrushes to snacks. Here is a sample of some supplies we handed out in the last year.

Toothpaste: 2,220

Sanitary napkin packages: 370

Band-aids: 23,000

Deodorant: 1,630

Antibiotic Ointment packets: 4,320

Chapstick: 6,400 (would be more, but we ran out two months ago!)

Bar Soap: 1,560

Lotion: 6,700

Facewash: 3,400

Razors: 2,320

Condoms: 54,000

Sandwiches: 4,100

Candy packs: 8,500 (many prepared by our supply prep team!)

About ATC

Mission Statement

At The Crossroads reaches out to homeless youth and young adults at their point of need, and works with them to build healthy and fulfilling lives.

We accomplish this mission by following our core values and philosophy.

Core Values

- Prioritizing meeting the needs of our clients first
- Making services as accessible as possible
- Supporting empowerment
- Respecting individuality

Philosophy

To accomplish our mission, our direct outreach/counseling work and the needs of our clients lead all of the organizational decisions, which include programmatic decisions, funding, and salaries.

In order for our organization to succeed, all aspects and members of At The Crossroads must support each other and understand the organization as a whole. We accomplish this by teaching, sharing, and learning from our personal knowledge and the organization's knowledge.

ATC Family Updates

Staff Welcomes:

Molly Rhodes is ATC's first ever development associate. In this part-time position, she will be working to strengthen our fundraising efforts. She brings experience in development and in working with homeless youth, a strong sense of professionalism, a somewhat subversive personality, and a love of the Oakland A's to the job. We are thrilled that she decided to join our team.

Volunteers:

Laurel Eichler and **Katherine Hull** are newbie Outreach Volunteers, but are quick learners and already leaving their mark with ATC clients. We welcome them and truly appreciate their time and commitment to our clients.

Outreach Volunteer Goodbye:

Kirsten Olsen has been an Outreach Volunteer for the last 3 1/2 years!!! She has gone above and beyond her call as a volunteer by even helping us train new Counselors. Not only was Kirsten a resource for clients on outreach, but we currently contact her for other referrals. We're glad that she's around, even though we're sincerely going to miss her on outreach. We've been so lucky to work with her over the past few years!



Basics of what we do

- ATC is on the streets four nights a week in two areas of San Francisco, Downtown and the Mission. We hand out basic necessities like food, personal hygiene products and harm reduction materials.
- On outreach, we talk with youth about their lives. We build trusting, non-judgmental counseling relationships, help them identify personal goals and support them in achieving those goals.
- When youth express interest in working with us beyond outreach we meet with clients, 1-to-1, in a public space of the clients choosing.
- We listen to the issues that they face, help them create realistic plans of action and provide tailored referrals to other programs.
- We work closely with a number of other organizations, connecting our clients with services such as jobs, housing, education, health care and mental health support.
- We support other programs in their efforts to work with homeless youth through dialogue, trainings, and helpful documents.

San Francisco News

Here are a couple of things going on in San Francisco that affect our ATC and our clients.

Mission Housing Development Corporation (MHDC) is going through a battle to preserve its mission and values. MHDC was started in 1971 with the goal of enhancing the quality of life for Mission residents through the production of affordable housing and active investment in the Mission District's social and economic health. For the last 33 years, this organization has both prevented homelessness and helped formerly homeless people get stable housing. The current board of directors of MHDC wants to take the organization in a different direction, going away from developing affordable housing for low income residents of the Mission district and toward developing housing for middle and upper middle income people who may not even live in San Francisco. The board fired the executive director, Carlos Romero in March because of his unwillingness to go along with this drastic change in mission. The dedicated staff of MHDC has organized to try to preserve the original values of the organization, and the community has heeded their call, turning out en masse to show support. MHDC is one of the most respected organizations in San Francisco because of their commitment to low-income, marginalized communities. We hope MHDC preserves its mission, and continues to be a force in preventing and addressing homelessness. If you are interested in learning more, check out www.savemissionhousing.org.

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The CA Department of the Youth Authority is in need of reform. CYA, the state's corrections agency for minors, was recently sued by the Prison Law Office for the conditions of the youth facilities.

Ensuring reports and news articles have exposed the dismal practices and treatment of youth in the CYA (You can see these reports at www.prisonlaw.com). Some of our clients have passed through CYA, and have experienced the brutal conditions of this prison system. Recently, a video came out showing young people being assaulted by CYA corrections officers. For the past couple of months, a group of concerned community members have been congregating to discuss ideas for CYA reform; ATC has been taking part in these discussions. This group includes experts on CYA, directors of community-based organizations that work with incarcerated or formerly incarcerated juveniles, representatives from California-based foundations and other people knowledgeable about the criminal justice system. Young people who have survived the system have also been speaking out about CYA and are establishing a voice in the reform efforts. Specific policy suggestions are emerging from these efforts that will be passed along to legislators and policy-makers in California. A major upheaval in CYA may be in the cards.

Wish List

If you or someone you know can help us out with any of the items below, you could make a real impact on ATC's work. Please also refer to our website (www.atthecrossroads.org) for a link to Cole Hardware's Wish List Program.

Items for the Clients

- Clothing (new or good condition used)
- Can Openers (travel or key chain) (new)
- Rain Gear (new or good condition used)
- Sleeping Bags (not too bulky) (new or good condition used)
- Blankets (not too bulky or puffy) (new or good condition used)
- Gloves (new or good condition used)
- Flashlights (new or good condition used)
- Warm hats (new or good condition used)
- Long Underwear (new or good condition used)
- Backpacks (new or good condition used)
- Coats (new or good condition used)
- Sunglasses (new)
- Socks (new)
- Batteries (new)
- Gift Certificates for clothing, music, food



Travel Size (unused):

- (Hygiene supplies from hotels work great)
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Mouthwash
- Shaving Cream
- Hair Brushes
- Laundry Detergent
- Deodorant
- Soap
- Lotion
- Face Wash
- Body Wash
- Sewing Kits
- Razors
- Lip Balm

Items for the Office

- Macintosh computers (1 year old or less)
- Scanner
- Office Chairs
- Loungin' Chairs
- Business Copy Machine
- Staplers, scissors, etc.
- Disposable office supplies
- Paper Cutter
- Certificates for the staff or volunteers (dinners, massages, other fun things)
- Plants

Thanks!

Don't you love it when your computers break down and it completely paralyzes your ability to get work done?

Carol Zielke, you are a goddess. For the past year, Carol has been our ace trouble shooter, and helped us network our new computers. Whether it is phone support or coming by the office after her full time job, Carol has always been willing to help out. And she always works her butt off. We are so grateful for Carol's help!



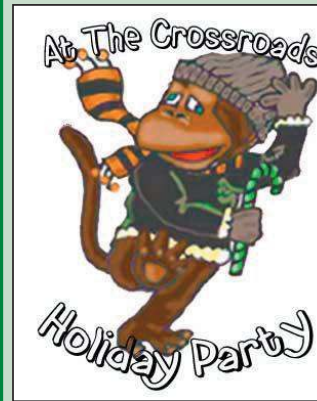
As we mentioned in our last newsletter, the San Francisco Clothing Bank closed down last year, leaving us without a regular source of clothing for our clients.

Exact-Science is helping fill the void. Exact Science is a San Francisco-based concept studio that promotes the production of cultural relevance and intellectual capital through the elevation of urban art. One of their cofounders, Andrew Kringstein, wanted to support our work, and pledged to help out. Among their many endeavors is their design and apparel business, and earlier this year they donated a bunch of very cool t-shirts that our clients immediately snatched up. They plan to donate more clothing later this year. Check out their stuff at www.exact-science.com.

If it was available, we could easily hand out 150 tubes of lotion, 75 bottles of shampoo and 100 bars of soap a week.

We go through travel-sized hygiene items very quickly on outreach.

Northern California Concierge Association is working to make sure that we'll have as many hygiene items as we need. NCCA is a non-profit organization of hotel concierges around Northern California. NCCA has a variety of projects that support the community, and has recently decided to work with At The Crossroads. It has begun coordinating an effort among different San Francisco-based hotels to gather hygiene supplies for ATC that we can distribute to our clients on the streets. We recently got our first batch of items from the San Francisco Marriot, and they have already been distributed on outreach. We want to thank Dan Callahan and Ruth D'Franco for helping coordinate the hygiene supply donation program. We are excited about the potential that the future holds for our partnership with NCCA. Learn more about NCCA at www.nccaconcierge.org.



The ATC Holiday Party Invitation!

On December 23, a steady stream of young people entered Burger King at 16th and Mission, looking for the At The Crossroads holiday party. By the end of the Mission party, more than 60 clients had stopped by. Some stayed for just a few minutes, got some dinner and a gift of a hat or gloves and a movie ticket, and left. Some hung out for more than an hour. Some clients really seemed to gain trust for us at the party, after seeing how trusting and comfortable long-term clients were. Kim, Jason and Taising had done such a good job of getting clients psyched up for the party that kids started confirming that they would be coming two weeks in advance. And when they showed up, they were not disappointed. There was a great, upbeat energy to the night. KMEL was playing on the radio, and clients were chowing down on cookies and brownies that our staff and friends of staff had baked for them. Young people who usually have to keep up tough facades on the streets were able to let their guards down, eat some candy, and just be kids. Many clients expressed appreciation at being able to come by and enjoy themselves without any strings attached.

Holiday Cheer

Downtown, some clients wandered into the Carl's Jr at 5th and Market alone, some came by in groups of 6 or 8 people. There were clients already waiting for us when we arrived. Of the 45 partygoers, some we had known for years, others for only days. We brought pens, paper, stamps and envelopes, and a few of our clients took advantage of the opportunity to write letters to friend or family. Many clients were grateful to get a warm meal from us, after years of eating our peanut butter and jelly sandwiches on outreach. Many clients expressed their gratitude to Kelly, Annie, or Lori for the personalized, beautifully wrapped gifts we gave them, and were touched that we knew some of their preferences.

In preparation for these important nights, many volunteers devoted time and energy to making our parties special. We would like to thank all of those that contributed and emphasize what a great deal this night meant to our clients and the continuing work we do with them.



The following volunteers wrapped all the presents and made them look so nice!

Nancy Cavanaugh
Nicole Sanchez (& her daughter Faith)
Margret Dugan
Shannon Lyons
Matt Schnuck
Bernadette Kirchstetter
Wendy Holcombe
Anna Bonner
Margy Perez
John Anthony

The following volunteers contributed to purchasing gifts that were specifically picked out for individual clients:

Bernadette Kirchstetter
Wendy Holcombe
Nancy Cavanaugh
Various people at Sloan Miyasato
Shannon Lyons & Matt Schnuck

The following volunteers baked delicious goodies:

Sarah Harbin
Minerva & Ryan Lee
Sandy Saberman

So what's the best way for employers to create jobs that attract at-risk youth and young adults?

Here are a few basic steps:

Show Me the Money

A commitment to hiring and supporting high and at-risk youth is best expressed by providing PAID jobs. This might include initially paying youth daily in cash, and/or providing any "start-up" materials. The closer the pay is to a livable wage, the more worthwhile – and the more likely a youth is to successfully transition to more stability.

Teach

Incorporating educational options and incentives (like finishing a GED, or taking college prep classes) are valuable opportunities that will translate into money down the line.



Just Give Me a Chance

Kevin McCracken manages Ashbury Images (AI), a 1.5 million-dollar-a-year screen-printing business that's affiliated with the non-profit GGCI. A former client of ATC, Kevin got hired at AI out of jail, and has been clean and sober for the past five years.

At AI, new hires find others who have had similar jail/street/drug experiences, and no discrimination based on this background or a criminal record. Kevin explains, "I ask people if they have a criminal background, or have done time in prison, and they think that I won't hire them because of it, if they say yes. I tell them, 'So do I. And I don't care...'" How the hell are you going to understand where [they're] coming from if you've never walked in [their] shoes?"

Be Cool

People are most likely to learn job skills in areas they are individually interested in or excited about (our clients like fixing bikes, music/DJing, peer-counseling, etc.) or that they know will lead to a job making a higher, livable wage (carpentry, construction, nursing, computers). And when youth feel like they're a good fit for the company, this pays off in the work they do and the commitment they have.

"When young people are not on the clock/getting paid, they still want to be here – not on the streets," described Director Ruth Barajas of her organization, CHALK (Communities in Harmony Advocating for Learning and Kids), which advocates for and creates job opportunities and other safe spaces for at-risk and high-risk Bay Area youth ("youth on the edge"). "It's a team, a family. Youth are making minimum wage, but they feel as though they're doing relevant and important work – for their community and peers, not just flipping burgers, and they feel accountable. This makes the difference."

Support Systems

Most successful employers/programs collaborate and communicate with case managers, counselors, recovery and housing programs, parole officers, schools, or friends/family to create a support network. AI takes hiring referrals from programs that they trust have a relationship with, like ATC. Kevin emphasized that they don't treat AI as a primary program. "We focus on the employment piece of the puzzle, because that's what we're good at. We refer out for other services."

Second Chances

Many programs and employers are non-judgmental and flexible with the street youth they employ – many offering second chances and continued support, including the possibility of re-hire after a relapse. They hope for the best, while preparing for the worst. "Behaviors and lifestyle do not change over night," explained Ruth of CHALK, "but you have got to be ready to make changes in your life."

Real Opportunities

There simply aren't enough jobs, job training programs, and employment opportunities in the SF Bay Area that are specifically for high risk youth. For each job that opens at Youthline, at least ten times as many youth apply. Ten to twenty people (youth and adults) apply per job opening at Ashbury Images, and Kevin gets constant phone calls from people who are looking for a job there. Said Kevin simply, "I wish we could hire more people."

And every night, young people on the street tell ATC, "I'm lookin' for a job." Our advocacy continues.

In spite of these seemingly overwhelming challenges, ATC clients are hooked up with programs through our referrals, and find jobs on their own.

What's Out There: Community collaborations and referrals

Clients have talked to us about their job training experiences with Horizons Unlimited (office and computer work, DJing); Asian Neighborhood Design (carpentry, construction, cabinetmaking, plumbing), Golden

Gate Community, Inc; Pedal Revolution, Einstein's Caf  (soon to be Caf  Grow) and Ashbury Images (bike mechanics, food industry work, screen-printing/design), Larkin Street HIRE UP (computers, culinary arts, animal care, non-profit leadership, peer counseling, day labor), and SF Job Corps and Conservation Corps. (landscaping, GED and college credit).

When youth ask us how they can get a job like ours, we tell them about agencies that hire youth for peer-counseling paid internships and jobs: Larkin Street Youth Services, LYRIC, Love & Justice Project/CUAV, PROYECTO, Huckleberry Youth Services, and HIFY (Health Initiatives

for Youth), and Youthline. YO!SF (Youth Opportunity! SF) provides our clients (age 14-21) with a network of services: case management, education and leadership opportunities, workplace readiness, and job placement.

For more information or to support these programs, please visit their websites: ashburyimages.com, ggci.org, chalk.org, youthline.org, yosf.org

Client Stories

In our Winter/Spring 2003 newsletter, Joe Perryman, an ATC client from Downtown, talked about his frustrations with employment: "Some people don't understand why there are people out on the streets... They don't understand why these people don't just get a job. it's not that easy, as long as I'm only able to get low-paying jobs, I'm always at risk of going back to the streets."

Joe has been doing security work for the past five years. He tried to get out of the business after the first couple years, and plans to go to college, but has been continually stifled by college tuition increases, lack of available financial aid, and his felony conviction. When asked why a young

person would give up the money they make on the street for a lesser-paying job, Joe replied, "Respect. [My biggest challenge has been] getting a job that has respect for my personal life... that pays well. They don't have any concern for what you got going on as far as your family and your future so you end up getting stuck there, and it's hard to reach your goals. There needs to be better education, people need to be more willing to give young people, and people of color, and people who have had checkered backgrounds (criminal records) a chance."

We met Kathleen, age 22, in the Mission. Homeless and job-searching in SF for the past three months, she just found a job via craigslist.org in a warehouse putting together and packing orders. She works 20 hours a

week making minimum wage, \$8.50 an hour. Like many homeless young people applying for jobs, she did not tell her employer up-front that she's "homeless," or in unstable housing. On a scale of 1-10 (10=hardest), Kathleen rates how hard it is for young people living/working/staying on the street to find jobs at an 8. "I have casually mentioned to some co-workers that I'm staying with friends, but I've never talked about it [being homeless] with my boss," said Kathleen. "I still don't have stability [meaning housing, a livable wage]. I have a resume and great job experiences and I didn't get very many responses. I want stability. I want to generate enough income to support my lifestyle in this city comfortably, and maybe go back to school by the end of the year."