

SUNDAY POST-DISPATCH

Gifts of cash don't solve problems of panhandlers

Begging can become strategic, routine, a habit to support other habits.

BY ADAM JADHAV
ajadhav@post-dispatch.com
314-809-9423

ST. LOUIS • Arthur Martin on many sunny afternoons can be found holding a tattered cardboard sign and begging for dollars on the traffic islands near the Edward Jones Dome.

If you knew him, you probably wouldn't give him money. He's usually drunk and will probably just spend it on booze.

"We're alcoholics," Martin said one recent afternoon while holding a piece of an old shoebox that read, "Homeless. Anything Helps. God Bless."

He glanced over at his unofficial "wife," Leona Urbanek, who was drinking Milwaukee's Best Ice with another friend in the shade of the Interstate 70 overpass. Given his existence, Martin was strangely jovial and quick to brag to a reporter about his success in his chosen vocation: pan-handling.

"Show him," Martin said to Urbanek.

She pulled a bankroll from her pocket — mostly ones and some fives, more than \$100 in all. "That's just from today, a couple hours," Martin said. "You watch me for 20 minutes, I can come back with \$20, easy."

People such as Martin and Urbanek — who stand on the side of the road with a sign or walk high-traffic districts asking for change — are the most visible,

See **PANHANDLING** • Page A9

Downtown's new front yard

Citygarden, an 'urban oasis with sculpture,' will open Wednesday on the Gateway Mall.



PHOTOS BY ROBERT COHEN • rcohen@post-dispatch.com
"Zenit," a 1999 bronze and aluminum sculpture by Mimmo Paladino, is seen with the civil courts building in the background at Citygarden, a new sculpture park downtown.



"Eros Bendato," a 1999 bronze by Igor Mitoraj, rests at Citygarden last week as painters worked on finishing touches before the sculpture park's official opening, coming Wednesday.

BY DAVID BONETTI • Visual Arts Critic > dbonetti@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8351

ST. LOUIS • Surrounded by office towers that house some 12,000 workers, Citygarden, the spectacular new urban sculpture park that opens Wednesday, creates a front yard for a downtown that has lacked a people-friendly focal point.

Citygarden occupies 2.9 acres on the Gateway Mall bordered by Eighth and 10th streets and Market and Chestnut streets. It will be free and open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. 365 days a year.

It is the creation of the St. Louis-based Gateway Foundation, which is paying for Citygarden's \$25 million to \$30 million construction cost. The foundation also purchased and owns all the works of art, estimated to cost at least \$12 million. The city, which owns the land and made the site improvements, will be responsible for the cost of the park's water and electricity.

"The city is absolutely thrilled," said Barbara Geisman, deputy mayor for development. "They've made a wonderful gift to the city."

For years, the Gateway Mall had been an unattractive space that created a barrier between the north and south halves of downtown, Geisman said.

See **CITYGARDEN** • Page A8

Botched hot tub case angers girl's mother

Interim chief agrees • Says O'Fallon, Mo., police let her down regarding man's pot, alcohol parties with teens.

About 10 cases mishandled • Ex-mayor says 'black eye' pushed police chief to resign; Schulte denies it.

BY JOEL CURRIER
jcurrier@post-dispatch.com > 636-255-7210
© 2009, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

O'FALLON, MO. • They partied in his hot tub when his wife was gone, drinking beer and vodka and smoking marijuana.

He was 37. The girls, two who were 15 and one 16, met him because they all lived in the same neighborhood. He cultivated a relationship with one of the 15-year-olds for more than a year through e-mails and messages on MySpace.

He and the girl chatted online using a secret code word — "boob" — to make clear who was really typing. She ended up routinely sneaking out of her house to go to his place along with the other girls.

The hot tub parties ended abruptly in September 2007 when her mother called police after she discovered what her daughter was doing.

But the mother's complaints — and the police investigation — went nowhere.

The man could have faced a felony charge after admitting to police that he provided the girls with alcohol and pot, but he was never arrested.

Police records recently obtained by the Post-Dispatch through a court order show the O'Fallon police investigation dragged on for more than a year, past the statute of limitations to file sex and alcohol charges. The mother of the girl who contacted police believes that authorities may have let a sexual predator walk free and that the man should have at least been charged with giving alcohol and drugs to minors.

See **BOTCHED** • Page A9

Hardy Cardinals fans beat the heat at Busch

PrideFest organizers expect bigger crowd Sunday as weather breaks.



J.B. FORBES • jforbes@post-dispatch.com
D.J. Swinson, 6, gets a hand up to a misting station Saturday at Busch Stadium.

BY JEFFREY TOMICH
jtomich@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8320

St. Louis baseball fans consider themselves the most knowledgeable in the country. For a day, they can claim to be the hardiest.

More than 40,000 people poured into Busch Stadium on Saturday afternoon despite near-triple-digit heat that felt closer to 110 with the humidity.

Weather also did little to hold down attendance at PrideFest in Tower Grove Park, the area's other large outdoor gathering this weekend.

"Being our 30th anniversary, it's a little less than what we expected, but I think we're going to make that up tomorrow," said Tyler Hill, vice president of marketing and public relations for Pride St. Louis Inc., the nonprofit group that organizes the event.

See **HEAT** • Page A5

STARS AMONG THE ALL-STARS



Stan Musial makes the team ... at first base?

Who stands out most when baseball's best face each other? See the Post-Dispatch's all-time team.

Sports • C5

CARDS TRADE

They get infielder Mark DeRosa (13 HRs, 50 RBIs) from the Cleveland Indians.

Sports • C1

stl today.com

ALL-STAR GAME COVERAGE ONLINE

- See Rick Hummel's all-time Cardinals All-Star team
 - Test your knowledge with All-Star quizzes
 - Watch a documentary on Stan "The Man" Musial
 - Find the schedule of events
- STLtoday.com/allstar**

PARK REVIEW

Visual Arts Critic David Bonetti offers his take on the new St. Louis sculpture park.

A&E • D1

stl today.com

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

See a gallery of Robert Cohen's photos from Citygarden.

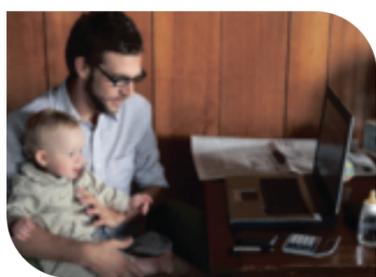
STLtoday.com/multimedia



City shapes

WEATHER • TODAY **87°** • TONIGHT **72°** • TOMORROW **87°**

FORECAST **A23**



INTRODUCING SECURE CHECKING

Our new Fifth Third Secure Checking Package helps protect your future with free Fifth Third Identity Alert¹, an emergency savings account and Mobile Banking. All for one low monthly price. Stop in any bank location, call 1-877-579-5353 or visit 53.com to see what we can do for you.

¹The services and benefits included within Fifth Third Identity Alert are provided by Affinion Benefits Group, LLC, which is a separate entity, not an affiliate of Fifth Third Bank. A \$50 minimum deposit is required to open any savings account. Fifth Third Bank, Member FDIC. Equal Housing Lender.



PANHANDLING

A PANHANDLER'S PRIMER

For some homeless, begging becomes nearly a job in itself, with rules and strategies. Among the techniques panhandlers say they use:

- Act thankful. "God bless" is a common refrain.
- Don't approach cars.
- Be careful around children.
- Pick up litter.
- Respect another panhandler's territory.
- Have a story or a witty sign.
- Scruffy appearances can be overdone.
- Men with women on dates are more generous because they like to impress. So are the poor, who can empathize.
- People waiting at long lights – particularly at highway off-ramps – are captive audiences and easy targets.
- Among the best area spots: The sidewalks outside Busch Stadium are filled with tipsy people with loose wallets. Tourists outside the America's Center or down on the Landing are already primed to spend and are likely to be less tight-fisted.



J.B. FORBES • jforbes@post-dispatch.com

Rene Rowe, 41, panhandles for money on a recent Saturday next to Souldard Market in St. Louis. Rowe sleeps in the park pavilion next to the market so she can catch the early shoppers.

PANHANDLING • FROM A1

Etiquette is involved: What works, what doesn't and what might spur arrest

stereotypical face of poverty and homelessness. As the weather warms, they become more apparent. And as the economy languishes, they are expected to become more prevalent.

They're a constant source of frustration for elected officials trying to curb the practice, and for homeless advocates who say a handout on the street isn't likely to help someone out of long-term poverty.

Some panhandlers defend themselves as people down on their luck, failed by the system or done in by addiction and illness. Some plead that they really just need a cross-country bus ticket, a fixed car or an apartment security deposit to get back on track.

Some are open about mental illness, addiction and criminal history. Many say they can get meals at shelters but want money for something tastier.

And plenty, such as Martin, display savvy and a fair amount of etiquette – knowing what works, what doesn't and what will get you arrested.

THE FIGHT AGAINST BEGGING

Although many homeless people eventually move back to housing and work, the St. Louis region is home to a few hundred chronically homeless, local officials estimate. They get by using charitable agencies, government aid, scavenging or begging.

Experts say those who turn to panhandling employ a degree of rational skill but are often pushed to desperation by addiction or illness.

A 2003 Department of Justice guidebook for police suggests that nearly everything from appearance to working hours to location is calculated by panhandlers – at least some of whom are scam artists. Much research and anecdotal evidence suggests a majority of homeless have chronic health problems and frequently are hooked on alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes and harder drugs.

Dozens of charities and businesses have tried to persuade the public to give money to organizations that serve the homeless, rather than to the homeless themselves. For example, de-commissioned parking meters in the Central West End, once a premier panhandling spot, serve as drop boxes for spare change that is funneled to area churches.

"It's never a good idea to give anybody cash," said Lu-Ann Oros, associate director of the Bridge, the downtown kitchen and social service program formerly known as CARES Outreach at Centenary United Methodist Church. "Even if they are not dealing with an addiction, it's still then a temptation to use it toward an addiction. In the end, it's not solving their real problem."

St. Louis aldermen got fed up last year and voted to essentially prohibit passive begging after dark or near businesses, cafes, ATMs, public transportation, parks and city buildings. Overtly

GIVE OR DON'T GIVE?

For many, panhandling presents a quandary: Give or don't give? In general, experts say, don't give.

The alternatives:

- The Rev. Larry Rice, who runs New Life Evangelistic Center, suggests handing out a granola bar or bottle of water instead of cash.
 - Webster Groves Christian Church recently offered the congregation small fast-food gift cards with agency referral cards.
 - Donate instead to a homeless outreach center.
 - Dan Buck, chief executive of St. Patrick Center, puts the onus on the public: Stop giving your change and you'll stop people panhandling for it.
- "It's supply and demand," Buck said. "Dry up the supply. Instead of giving, have a conversation with that person. Ask who he is. Maybe encourage him to get help."

threatening panhandling is banned.

"The combination of that ordinance with the education of the public about why not to give money has reduced panhandling, in my mind, significantly," said Central West End Alderman Lyda Krewson.

Beggars say police now are much more aggressive; although some officers hand out leaflets explaining the law, most panhandlers said they were simply told to move along or risk arrest.

"The police try to run us off all the time," said Jeffrey "Texas" Cazel, 30, of Galveston, Texas, who said he lost his home there to a hurricane. "But this is the only way we've got to make money."

A St. Louis Police Department spokesperson said via e-mail only that officers were briefed on the law after it was passed in March 2008. Since then, 46 arrests have been made for panhandling violations, according to police statistics.

But even as they frown on begging, homeless advocates also generally oppose ticketing panhandlers. They argue that criminalizing the activity more often simply moves it to different areas or pushes people into other desperate acts.

"Punitive measures don't generally address the underlying causes of poverty and homelessness," said Tulin Ozdeger, of the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, which recently joined a lawsuit against the city of St. Petersburg, Fla., over ordinances aimed at the homeless.

Walter Sanders, 63, a panhandler with one arm who frequently works the intersection of Kingshighway and Oakland Avenue, offered a rhetorical question: "If begging is against the law, then shouldn't giving be against the law, too?"

Several donors didn't want to comment on why they handed over money. One simply cited pity before driving away.

THE PANHANDLER'S METHODS

For the more than 20 homeless people interviewed by the Post-Dispatch, panhandling has become strategic and routine, a habit to support other habits.

Recently, Cazel held a sign in the rain near the Edward Jones Dome, while his friend Alan

Williams acted as a lookout for police. The two worked in tandem and with other homeless people, splitting their profits.

A good panhandler can average \$40 an hour, some said. Of course, they rarely beg for more than a couple of hours a day.

Panhandlers say scam artists among their ranks worsen their reputation. And many acknowledge that begging won't solve deeper problems. "But you also don't know how it feels to put on a clean pair of socks or underwear after you've been out here a couple weeks," said Thomas Robinson, 48, who has gone through programs with the Salvation Army and can tick off addresses of all the area temp agencies.

In addition to treatment or help with addiction, most homeless people still need much more than they'll get from begging. Rene Rowe has associate degrees from St. Louis Community College in culinary arts and restaurant management, and a résumé two pages long, but she also has an alcohol problem and multiple drunk driving convictions.

After months on the street and carrying her worldly possessions in a backpack, Rowe said, she's not exactly prepared for a job interview.

"I need an apartment so I can shower. I need a haircut. I need clothes," Rowe said.

Still, on a recent Saturday morning, Rowe set up with a sign and a "jingle cup" on a ledge near the Souldard Market, hoping for change, or even a donation of fresh fruit.

For James Scott, a captain with the Salvation Army, begging did nothing but prolong his days on the street. He was homeless on and off while fighting a crack cocaine addiction in the late '80s and early '90s.

He spent days "working a trail" among charities for food and street corners for drug money. Only when he hit bottom and enrolled in a Salvation Army rehab program did he get clean.

He still gives a dollar from time to time, even knowing how little good it will probably do.

"We should never lose our compassion," said Scott, 49. "But I can say from my experience, it was never a few dollars that got me clean. I needed real help."

PUBLIC SAFETY

BOTCHED • FROM A1

Interim chief says police let woman down when looking into man's pot, alcohol parties with 3 teens

"How is he so lucky to not get charges against him?" the girl's mother said. "They (the police) let me down and they let my daughter down."

Interim Police Chief Bill Seibert agrees. "The O'Fallon Police Department failed (the mother)," Seibert said.

Seibert says the case was among about 10 botched investigations by the department and led to at least two officers' being demoted. He would not disclose the nature or details of the other cases.

Former Mayor Donna Morrow said the botched cases, including the one involving the 37-year-old and the teens, pushed Police Chief Jerry Schulte to retire after she and the city administrator confronted him about the "black eye" it would cast on O'Fallon, the area's second-largest city, if the public ever found out. Schulte denies the cases led to his retirement.

THE PARTIES

The man hosted the three girls in his hot tub at least a dozen times over several months in 2007, police reports show. He would sometimes send e-mails using the secret code word to say when his wife was gone.

"HEY! BOOB!!!" he wrote. "SHE IS GONE TONITE, TOMORROW AND WEDNESDAY NIGHT, WOOHOOOO!"

The Post-Dispatch is not identifying the girls, whose names were redacted from the police reports obtained by the newspaper. The newspaper is not identifying the suspect, now 39, because he was never arrested nor charged. The man, whose home is currently for sale, could not be reached for comment at the house or by telephone. The mother also is not being identified, to protect her daughter.

In August 2007, the man e-mailed the daughter telling her to bring "sexy clothes" because he wanted to take pictures of her, records show. She and one of the other girls told police he had shown them pornography and had e-mailed erotic pictures.

"When I was at his house, he would put on porn for me to watch ... and ask (a friend) and I to get naked," the second girl wrote in a statement to police. "He said he would buy me cigarettes if I showed him my vagina or breasts."

It is unclear whether any of the girls took off their clothes at the man's house, but the daughter later told police she had met the man at his car that summer to borrow \$10 and flashed her breasts when he suggested he should get something in return. That's when he grabbed her breasts, said the girl, who was then 15.

The suspect denied any sexual misconduct to police but acknowledged he had sent the girls messages their parents would find inappropriate.

The mother who went to police said her daughter had been leaving the house at night by turning off the security alarm or squeezing through the family's dog door. "I could second-guess myself all day long," she said. She said that she could have kept a closer eye on her daughter's Internet and cell phone use but that some things were beyond a parent's control.

"You can't lock your kids up in your house and keep them away, shy them from the world."

The girl, now 17 and a high school senior, said in an interview that the man offered her and her friends alcohol the first night they came over. She says she was enthralled by the idea of hanging out with a "cool, older guy."

"I felt cool that I was fitting in with everybody," she said.

Messages left at the homes of the girl's two friends were not returned.

The girl says she now monitors what her younger sister, 13, does online.

"I give her advice," she said. "If there's something I don't like, I tell her."

THE INVESTIGATION

Seibert blamed the mishandled cases on a pattern of poor communication between investigators and high-ranking officers. He would not release his internal report but acknowledged officers had made serious mistakes.

"There was no oversight from the supervisors down," Seibert said.

The city of O'Fallon has rejected the Post-Dispatch's request to release investigative records for the other neglected cases. A city attorney said that even though the chief referred to those cases in an interview with a newspaper reporter, the request was "too vague" for the city to know what reports the newspaper was seeking.

About the cases, Seibert would say only that "some are very, very

minor, and some are substantial."

Then-detective James Klingler was assigned to investigate the hot tub case in September 2007. He and other officers interviewed the suspect, searched his house and found marijuana pipe cleaners but no drugs.

Police seized the man's computers but found no child pornography.

Klingler's last documented work on the case was in January 2008.

At that time, the daughter of the mother who called police added a new claim against the man. Although she previously had denied sexual contact with the man, she now told police that he had touched her breasts. She said she had been too embarrassed to report it until then.

Police records show no activity on the case for the next eight months. Seibert said the case idled because of Klingler's inaction and a lack of supervision. Klingler referred all questions to Seibert, who said department policy prohibited officers from commenting.

The mother said she had tried numerous times to get an update on the case. Frustrated, she called then-Chief Schulte to complain.

"I never got a phone call back," she said.

Nearly a year after the investigation began, a new detective was assigned to redo work on the case, according to records.

The new detective, Jodi Weber, had to rebuild the case by reinterviewing those involved and collecting more evidence. When Weber asked the suspect whether the girl had showed him her breasts, he said, "She did it to everyone, I mean not just me," according to police reports.

Weber applied for arrest warrants in October, but it was already too late because the statute of limitations had expired for misdemeanor charges of sexual misconduct and distributing alcohol to minors.

"I still don't know why it took (the police) a year to bring it down here," said St. Charles County Prosecutor Jack Banas.

The statute of limitations is three years for a felony charge of providing drugs to a minor, but Banas did not believe that the man's admission to police that he given the girls alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana was enough to build a case. Police had not provided enough physical and corroborating evidence, he said.

THE SHAKE-UP

Schulte left the Police Department in January, saying he was ready to retire after 35 years.

Morrow now says that Schulte decided to retire after she and City Administrator Robert Lowery Jr. warned him he would have to accept responsibility for the mishandled cases, including the case concerning the teenage girls.

"We were disappointed that this woman was very upset and threatening to go to the press, and that it would be a black eye for the department to take, and that he, as chief, would have to be the one that would have to explain it to the public," Morrow said.

Schulte said in an interview that the meeting with Morrow and Lowery had not prompted him to retire. He refused to talk specifically about the case involving the teens.

"Let's put it this way, that case had nothing to do with my retirement," Schulte said.

Schulte negotiated a retirement package that paid him more than \$37,000 in unused vacation and sick pay. His payout also included collecting his regular yearly salary of \$113,000 through February.

Seibert was appointed interim chief when Schulte retired. Seibert said he didn't want the job permanently.

As a result of the department's internal investigation, Klingler and former Lt. Tom Harris were demoted to patrol officers, Seibert said.

Since the discovery of the mishandled cases, Seibert says, he now requires the department to follow its long-held policies, such as mandatory monthly case reviews between supervisors and detectives for tracking criminal cases.

"We make our lieutenants accountable," Seibert said. "You have very good officers here in this agency, and it's painful to everybody to have something like this happen. You can't make excuses."

The mother who filed the original complaint hopes the department has corrected its mistakes.

"When these predators are out there and they're befriending your teens, the one place you expect to be able to get help is your local police department," she said. "And when they don't help, it's pretty raw."