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Venice Homeless Initiative: We Are All Venice

Dear Venice City Councilmembers and Venice Businesses,

Pheenix and I would first like to thank you all for taking the time to read this, as we know this is an extremely tough time. We are writing to you today to share our findings in relation to the growing homeless issue in the community of Venice, as well as a plan of action we aim to take in the upcoming weeks. According to the *Venice Update* in an article from August 1, 2020, “Venice has a 47 percent increase in homelessness, an increase of more than 539 homeless” putting the total at roughly 1,146 (*Venice Update*). Venice currently has the highest homeless population on the Westside of Los Angeles, despite the area being much smaller than other nearby neighborhoods.

Just a few weeks ago, Pheenix and I first met after witnessing a series of destructive actions by one particular person, who Pheenix feeds and helps whenever possible. From there we began talking and came to the conclusion that an initiative to provide basic necessities, including food, water, face-masks, hand-sanitizer, clothing, medicine, etc. is much needed.

Since this interaction, we have drafted a series of steps to begin a project, which we will title “We Are All Venice”. Our goal is to mend community relations between the homeless population and the city, in addition to providing assistance in any way we can. On Saturday, October 24, 2020, we would like to run the first “soup kitchen” from 9:00 am-1:00 pm in two locations with the help of local restaurants. One will be on Sunset Avenue and Main Street by Gold’s Gym and the other at the intersection of Rose Avenue and Lincoln Boulevard. We believe these two locations will maximize our resources and cater to the greatest amount of people. Should we eventually add a third, the location would be at Venice Boulevard and Lincoln Boulevard.

Following the first soup kitchen, we plan to have them regularly every few weeks with the approval of city council, local police departments, and other governing bodies. Each event will serve as a learning experience to improve our program and events, outline necessary next steps, and provide support to the people. Eventually, we would like to collect information on the needs of the Venice Homeless Population ranging from clothes, to blankets, to medicine, and more. Once we have this data, we will continue to develop partnerships with companies and organizations, such as Goodwill, USC Keck School of Medicine, and additional local Venice businesses.

Pheenix and I both have reached out to friends and colleagues, who are eager to get involved and address this issue. We both very much appreciate your support and look forward to working with you. Please reach out with any questions, concerns, or suggestions.

All the best,
Matthew Schwartz and Pheenix Wade

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