

Homeless Summit in Santa Cruz

by Robert Norse

Coming up next in Santa Cruz is a homeless summit to be held on May 3rd and 4th to bring together activists throughout the area as well as Tent City residents from other cities. They will meet, exchange strategies, and plan direct action to restore civil rights for the homeless community in Santa Cruz.

The idea for the homeless summit began as a gathering of activists interested in fighting the Sleeping Ban sections of the City's Camping Law (which bans sleeping outside or in vehicles at night).

A second goal is to support a broadening of the Camp Paradise idea to the larger homeless community, so that homeless people can camp cleanly and safely on selected pieces of public property, while folks in houses provided legal and material support. The necessity defense, successful in Santa Barbara, though not yet in Santa Cruz, would be the legal basis for fighting tickets or police harassment.

Third, the summit will draw activists from other cities to get the benefit of their experience (and solicit some direct or distant support for Santa Cruz direct action). We hope to learn particularly about how activists in other cities have dealt with criminalization of the homeless through sit-ins, occupations, protests, lock-downs, and other legal and extra-legal approaches.

Fourth, representatives from successful encampments such as Isla Vista's Camp Home Sweet Home, Portland's Dignity Village, Seattle's Tent City III, Toronto's Camp Good Will, and Santa Cruz's Camp Paradise will help others trying to set up tent communities.

We hope to have a good time doing all of this with a performance by the HUFF band and other musical entertainment. With a little luck, we'll end up with a real campaign of direct action to decriminalize homelessness in Santa Cruz beginning with the Sleeping Ban.

Those coming to the summit who need lodging for the night of May 3, please leave a message for Thomas at (408) 591-3342 or e-mail summit@god-mama.com. The summit will be held at Gunilla and Thomas's house at 1135 N. Branciforte Ave. in Santa Cruz. Let them know you're coming, if you can. Food will be provided.

For more information e-mail HUFF at rnorse@hotmail.com, call 831-423-4833 (voicemail) or see the new HUFF website at www.huffsantacruz.org.

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