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Mar. 02, 2007

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Young publisher lets homeless speak UNLV student releases street newspaper

By [LYNNETTE CURTIS](#)
REVIEW-JOURNAL



UNLV junior Amanda Haymond shows off the first issue of her *Forgotten Voice*, a street newspaper written by and for homeless people in Las Vegas.

Photo by [Samantha Clemens](#).

UNLV junior Amanda Haymond for years thought about how she could help give a voice to the voiceless.

This week, she's finally seeing the fruition of a project to do just that.

Haymond has published the first issue

of *Forgotten Voice*, a free street newspaper written primarily by and for homeless people.

"I hope it will empower homeless people," the 21-year-old said. "I want to help give them an easier playing field, for things to be more equal for them."

Haymond spent the past year raising funds for and planning the project. It took a long time to secure enough donations to incorporate *Forgotten Voice*. Its nonprofit status is pending.

Haymond and other volunteers will hand out some of the 1,000 copies of the newspaper's first issue today at First Friday, the downtown Las Vegas Arts District's monthly arts and entertainment street festival.

The young publisher also will host an official launch of the paper at 1 p.m. Sunday across from City Hall at Frank Wright Plaza, a popular hangout for

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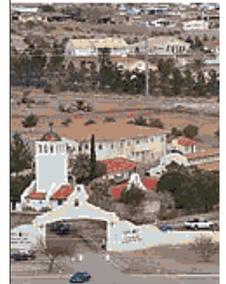
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homeless people.

The eight-page first issue includes a two-page article written by Mike Lee, who is known as "Las Vegas Superbum." In it, Lee outlines a plan for combating homelessness, including placing a moratorium on laws that "criminalize the homeless," establishing an "urban campground" and creating more accountability in the use of public funds to combat homelessness.

The newspaper also contains an article criticizing the Metropolitan Police Department's early morning practice of rousting sleeping homeless people downtown, a photograph of filthy showers inside a local homeless shelter and a "Know the Code" section that details laws critics say target the homeless. Those laws include prohibitions against obstructing sidewalks and sleeping on private property.

Haymond also accepts submissions of fiction, poetry and artwork.

Haymond became interested in homeless issues while a teenager working as a page at a local library.

"Homeless people would come in there to get away," she said. "I became friends with some of them. I learned that they are all unique individuals who don't fit into the stereotype."

Haymond began doing volunteer work for the homeless and researching the issue.

She discovered that many communities have street newspapers dedicated to homeless people. Most of them sell the newspapers for a small price to homeless people, who then sell them on the street for a profit they are allowed to keep.

"We just didn't really like the idea of having them buy it first," Haymond said. "They wouldn't make that much money, and we wanted to empower them."

So Haymond, a social work student who says she has a 4.0 grade point average, decided to offer the newspaper for free and distribute it via volunteers.

A private donor provided enough funds to publish the first three issues, and Haymond is hoping to raise enough money to continue publishing the newspaper indefinitely.

It costs about \$400 to print 1,000 black-and-white copies of the paper, she said. But she hopes to one day include color and increase the number of copies printed and the number of pages.

Social service providers estimate that 14,500 homeless people live in Clark County.

Haymond also would like to have an actual office in which to produce the newspaper. Now, she puts it together in a makeshift office in the dining room of the northwest Las Vegas apartment she shares with her parents.

The newspaper has a board of directors that includes homeless people and advocates for the homeless.

Linda Lera-Randle El, director of the Straight from the Streets homeless outreach program and a member of the newspaper's board, said it's refreshing to see a young person like Haymond so passionate about a social issue.

"This is a young person who actually said, 'I want to do something,' is going to school and trying to understand these issues and take it a step further," she said.

A newspaper written by homeless people is a great way to dispel stereotypes, Lera-Randle El said.

"People tend to forget that people in the street have an opinion. They read and write."

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