

CITY MATTERS

Say No: handling panhandlers

By Ellen Leahy

Saying "No" is actually the most sensible and practical approach to handling a beggar says Onondaga Historical Association's Greg Tripoli.

"Just say, 'No,' politely," he said.

Beggars are also known as panhandlers. They are defined as people who approach strangers on the street for money. For many who live and work in downtown Syracuse the panhandlers are often no longer strangers as they are so common a part of the street culture. Several of Armory Square's restaurants have offered the occasional free meal or turned over a portion of collected bottles to that neighborhood's most frequent street people.

There are many reasons someone might need money, often a beggar might say they need bus fare or are in desperate need of food or for diapers for their baby. But Tripoli who is the newest member of the Downtown Committee says there are several agencies in place in the city that offer a free hot meal daily including the Samaritan Center, which is located

right across the street from the OHA and the Rescue Mission on Gifford Street. Tripoli says if you want to help, volunteer time or donate funds or goods to these valuable organizations.

Before landing back in Syracuse, Tripoli spent most of his time on airplanes making volunteering almost impossible. But now that he has a regular gig at the OHA he volunteers, making up for lost time.

Spring cleaning think Rescue Mission

When cleaning out your closets and drawers, don't second guess what to donate. Like each person, each article of clothing has value to the Rescue Mission regardless of its condition.

If you throw away items simply because they are stained, torn, missing buttons or have broken zippers, they will likely end up in a landfill. Instead, donate all of your clothing, shoes, belts, purses, sheets, blankets and towels to the Rescue Mission, which will only give away or sell merchandise that's in good condition and recycle the rest for cash to support services to the homeless and hurting.

The Rescue Mission will also take any usable household

item you'd find at a garage sale, including furniture, kitchen appliances, utensils, electronics, jewelry, accessories, knickknacks, collectibles, books and office, sports and gardening equipment. Clothing and household items are accepted at the Rescue Mission's seven donation centers in Wegmans supermarket parking lots or its 12 Thrifty Shopper stores. Large items can be scheduled for pickup at 453-7242.

Anything with a motor, whether it's running or not, can be donated to the Rescue Mission Auto Donation Center, 167 Richmond Avenue, Syracuse, including cars, trucks, boats, all-terrain vehicles, lawn mowers, snow blowers and snowmobiles. To arrange a free tow or receive more information, call 1-877-CAR GIFT.

There are certain items that the Rescue Mission will not take, including televisions, tires, refrigerators, furniture in unsellable condition and hazardous materials such as paint and oil. But the Rescue Mission will recycle whatever it can, including cardboard, cell phones and computers—even metal from a broken lamp stand or a set of golf clubs.

Remember, every item that can be reused by someone else or recycled to make money to help our neighbors in need is being kept out of our landfills