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## ADVOCATES RELEASE HOMELESS YOUTH STUDY

While the Las Vegas City Council was busy making it illegal to feed the homeless, some local service providers were trying to address the issue more sensibly.

In early 2005, the service providers -- which include WestCare and the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth -- recognized the need for an in-depth study on youth homelessness in Clark County. In late July, after about a year and a half of research, they released the study.

The Clark County Homeless Youth Study, conducted by Strategic Solutions, contains some interesting information. It includes:

\* They are about 1,647 homeless youths (age 12 to 20) in Clark County.

\* 52 percent of the youths are 15 to 17 years old.

\* 74 percent were male, 26 percent female.

\* 36 percent were black, 28 percent white and 20 percent Hispanic.

"The process of going out at night and counting kids is really tough," said Bob Bellis, a homeless youth advocate who took part in the count and thinks it may be low. "But it's a good number to start from. And hopefully having any number at all will convince people to start investing in the issue."

Kathleen Boutin of the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth and Shannon West, Clark County Regional Homeless Services Coordinator, did not return phone calls.

The service providers, which also included St. Jude's Ranch for Children and Girls & Boys Town, said the survey was the first of its kind in Clark County. According to the introduction, the service providers hope the study will be used by community leaders and government agencies to better address youth homelessness.

Good luck with the City Council, guys.

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## PROFESSIONAL LIARS ON CALL

Does the wife hate your golf habit? Do you need to sneak a little action on the side? Do you suspect that your boss might not buy your "sick" excuse for mini-vacation?

If your lying skills aren't up to par, capitalism has finally got the perfect service for you: Alibinetwork.com. That's right, for the right fee -- from \$35 for simple "rescue calls" to thousands for complicated schemes -- you can be the owner of the perfect alibi, courtesy of the 1-year-old, Chicago-based Internet company.

"We're the only corporate entity, as far as I know, that supports the nooner," says Michael DeMarco, Alibi Network spokesman.

As professional liar DeMarco tells it, the genesis for the company came when one of the founder's

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estranged daughter got tangled up with a married man, unbeknownst to her. He needed to find a way to let her know her man was married without the news coming directly from her dad. DeMarco arranged for his daughter to get a discreet message with the bad news.

Since then the company has built up a network of services including providing the perfect alibi for an extra-marital affair, creating "virtual buddies" who will call your house and provide you with the perfect excuse to get out of a trip to the in-laws. If expense is no object in an attempt to conceal an affair, for instance, the company can go so far as to create a fictional work-related retreat or conference, complete with agendas mailed to your home, voicemail and e-mail confirmations.

DeMarco refused to talk about how many clients the company might have, citing confidentiality. However, he said the company has clients all over the country, particularly in California, New York and the Chicago area. And clients seeking alibis for infidelity are evenly divided between men and women.

It seems like an elaborate, and potentially expensive, arrangement. But DeMarco says there's a market for those who don't want to get caught.

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#### ATTORNEY OPINION PENDING ON USING THE STOCKS

Las Vegas City Attorney Brad Jerbic says his deputies haven't committed to paper a formal legal opinion requested by Mayor Oscar Goodman as to whether the city can cast convicted graffiti taggers into the stocks in the public square.

The stocks, which hold an offender's head and hands in place, usually while citizens throw rotten fruit at them, hasn't seen a lot of use in the 20th or 21st centuries. But Goodman sees the idea as a way to embarrass taggers into giving up their crimes. He's apparently been telling audiences about his idea for a couple weeks, but until a story appeared in the July 23 *Review-Journal*, nobody took him seriously.

Jerbic confirmed his deputies will research whether the stocks violate the Eighth Amendment's ban on "cruel and unusual punishments." Goodman, a trained criminal defense lawyer, is apparently unsure about the answer. (The stocks were in use when the Eighth Amendment was penned and thereafter, which means the Founding Fathers didn't consider them cruel or unusual. But those terms are generally defined according to modern standards of conscience, at least modern consciences *other* than Goodman's.)

Goodman's new push for graffiti punishments comes after he got attention for advocating that the thumbs of graffiti convicts be chopped off. That idea was dropped without the need for city government lawyers to spend taxpayer time researching constitutional issues related to de-thumbing.

So, is Goodman serious, or has he simply gone insane? That's probably a question better addressed to an abnormal psychology professor, but consider this: If punishment at the stocks were entirely voluntary, say as a plea-bargained alternative to reduce a jail sentence for graffiti spraying, they might be legal. That means Goodman might usher us all back to the mid-1850s after all.

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*Shrapnel is a roundup of Nevada-related news briefs. To submit story ideas, contact News Editor Matt O'Brien at 871-6780 ext. 350 or [mobrien@lvcitylife.com](mailto:mobrien@lvcitylife.com).*

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