

the back door

*an experiment
or an alternative*

by Carl DeLore

Table of Content

1. **Foreword**
2. **Why This Book, at this time**
3. **What We Do Today**
 - For/With Young Street People (the Participant)
 - For/With Non-street Volunteers and Staff
4. **History: How the back door came about**
 - Participants - Who they are and where they come from
 - Discovering the cost
5. **Belief Systems**
 - Belief Systems Exist, And Behavior Ensues
 - Philosophical Roots: 5 Major Points:
 1. All people are created with integrity.
 2. All people are broken to some degree and in some way.
 3. Forgivingness is the ability to pick oneself up and to start over time and time again.
 4. An incarnational dialogue is needed.
 5. Help is based on an immediate response, not long term planning.
6. **Philosophical Nuances**
 - Street and non-street cultures exist
 - Whose responsibility is it that young people go on the street?
 - Who would/will pay for the work of the back door?
 - Does a safety net exist or should this concept be reinvented?
 - Education - is it all it's cracked up to be?
 - The 'Buffer-Zone': a byproduct of holes in the safety net!
 - Concepts too easily taken for granted
 - Traditional thinking needs to be challenged.
 - Traditional understanding needs to be challenged: the poor you will have with you always.
 - Money really isn't the only issue.
 - Getting off the street nonetheless still costs money.
 - Getting off the street is an immigration process.
7. **Variables - the experiment began: "An introduction to a life of variables."**
 - Words as part of the experiment.
 - Location as part of the experiment.
 - Staffing as part of the experiment.
 - Volunteers as part of the experiment.
 - Participant contracting as part of the experiment.
 - Funding and fund raising as part of the experiment.
8. **What others have said**
 - Pacific Rim Research
 - Canadian Institute For Advanced Research
9. **In Conclusion**

Foreword

Are young people on the street any different from other young people? Do they share the same hopes and aspirations as young people off the streets?

Many people who design programs and create programs do so as if there is very little difference. The young people who have been a part of the back door dispel this myth in many ways. The differences are immense. Yet, these same young people became an encouragement to the hopes of many in our society. This world can be a better place. Time and again a young person who is on the street makes the decision to start their journey toward a new direction. They take hold of every opportunity to rewrite their lives and make it work to leave the violence and addictions of the street world behind them. Every step away from the street is a new experiment. There are no promises where the journey will lead. There are no magic wands that instantly make everything better. There is a lot of hard work. For every successful step there are many failures. But in each case the ultimate conclusion leads to a safer and stronger sense of purpose and life.

the back door started by helping to point young people towards jobs. Over the years *the back door* has helped young people who are coming off the street to integrate into a new life, to move beyond jobs to a fuller understanding of making life off the street work.

Dedication

To the participants, it is their willingness to experiment
that continually opens new doors.

Why This Book, at this time?

Because:

1. People from other cities are asking what it would take to have a back door in their city or community.
2. Evaluators have said that, the back door has not only enabled many young people to change their lives, but the program itself may well serve as a model for other kinds of social transitions.*
3. Evaluators have also said that, "the back door program has several unusual features which distinguish it from other programs with similar aims. For example, the back door program places an unusual level of responsibility on the individual participant. This high level of individual responsibility extends to the selection of goals, pacing of the program, and the means selected by participants to resolve for themselves the step-by-step transition away from the streets." It is the frustration of many street people that so many programs which have been developed to help them has now only resulted in a revolving door which often leads back to the street. This frustration will continue until both the street and the non-street recognize the need to bridge the cultural gaps. The back door bridges those gaps.
4. In the midst of all that is said and written about street people, many non-street people still believe the myth that young people choose the street for some glamorous or adventurous reason. In reality, the vast majority of young people who have come to the back door refute this idea as they publicly back up their intentions with their efforts to get off and stay off the street.

*additional thoughts on Pacific Rim Research Team

© 2002 Carl DeLine, All Rights Reserved.