

1-1-2006

Free Shelter

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Recommended Citation

(2006) "Free Shelter," *Oz*: Vol. 28. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2378-5853.1437>

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Free Shelter

The Mad Housers



The Mad Housers is a group of people dedicated to building free shelters for the homeless. We believe that everyone has a right to a roof over their heads and a warm place to sleep at night. If a person has a secure and stable place to live, they are much more capable of finding the resources to help themselves.

The Mad Housers was started in 1987 by a group of Georgia Tech architecture students. Seeing the impromptu

cardboard and tarp shelters erected by Atlanta's homeless, we felt we could design structures that were safer and more secure. Aided by a network of supporters with pickup trucks and hammers, we were able to build and distribute small emergency shelters to Atlanta's homeless. Today, we continue their original mission as an all-volunteer charitable organization.

The shelters are sturdy huts measuring six feet wide, eight feet deep and ten

feet tall. Each hut has a locking door for security, a loft for sleeping, storage, and a wood-burning stove. The stove is built by volunteers, for both heating and cooking. The total cost of a hut is only about four hundred and fifty dollars with all new materials—much less with reclaimed and donated supplies. By using panelized construction methods, we are able to easily construct, store, and transport the hut components to a remote site. A small team of volunteers can erect, paint, and roof a hut from panels in less than half a day.

The huts are not intended to be permanent housing. Instead, they are shelters that offer privacy, security, stability, and protection from the elements. We give the completed shelters, free of charge, to replace our clients' previous makeshift shelters of tents, sleeping bags, tarps, and plywood lean-tos.

We try to place huts at stable sites where our clients have camped out for some time with no trouble. Sometimes the owner is aware of their presence and is okay with it. Other times the ownership of the land is in dispute and homeless individuals are living there until things are straightened out, which could be years or decades. The issue of land ownership is very delicate, so we always strive to build in areas where a hut is not likely to be torn down. The best campsites are ones that do have the owner's permis-

sion. In these cases, the land is looked after and the residents have a place to stay; it is a workable, stable situation for all involved.

Currently, our huts provide shelter for more than forty homeless men and women across Atlanta. The majority of our clients are employed or semi-employed. Some are illiterate, have mental disabilities, or chemical dependencies, which keep them from being employed. But regardless of why a person is homeless, whether by bad luck or bad decisions, there is no problem they can have that homelessness will help.

No matter what, everyone needs a place to stay. The Mad Housers is not a cure, but rather a beginning.

The Mad Housers is a 501(c)3 charitable organization. For more information, check out www.madhousers.org, or call (404) 806-6233 and leave a message.



