

## JUST WORDS

### The Stories of Working People In Our Community

#### Episode 34: Carla and Donny

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Welcome to Just Words—the stories of working people in our community.

Homelessness.

We stereotype this as an urban issue, and assume most homeless people to be mentally ill or addicted. We often paint a black and male face on homelessness.

But what is the reality when we go beyond the stereotype and explore the reality of homelessness...We see that it exists in all places, for all races, for all genders.

We see Carla, a white woman who lives in Cecil County, whose homelessness was not caused by mental illness, alcohol, or drugs.

I was a victim of domestic violence even long ago, and it was severe to the point where he actually had put me in a coma from beating me in the head with a baseball bat, and I just couldn't take anymore. I got the kids together, I packed their stuff, what little bit I could, clothes. And I left. I was in the woods. The first time was about six months. It was about six months in the woods and it was hard. We actually were at a campground for a small period of time. And then from there we went into Elk Neck into the woods for awhile. When it was in the campground it was not as bad because you had facilities, but when you were in the woods it was difficult. We had to carry out water and I would have a pan and would bathe the kids in the pan. We had a tent. It was actually a two man tent but we all fit in there snug. We had sleeping bags and I had a Coleman grill and I would cook soup, things like that.

**Carla's friend Donny has also lived in the woods in Cecil County for the past two years. Not long ago he was a homeowner and had a job.**

My wife and I had gotten a divorce and I sold my house. In all honestly I got to drinking and uh.... I worked for Chrysler for 29 years. I was an electrical repairman. After the divorce and stuff, I just walked out-quit. Today I could beat myself to death for it. I ended up on the street, living outside. Emotionally, it is rough. The pain inside you is just eating you alive. And you got no where to go and no one to turn to. How did I end up here, why am I here, how do I get out of this? I was raised by a mom and dad that was very good to me. He worked at Chrysler. When I turned 18 years old and started working at Chrysler, he retired. He moved to Florida and said, the house is yours. So at 18 I am paying for house, electric, doing all this. You end up out there in the street, how did I go from that to here. So you just start drinking to kill the pain. And that's what happened.

**Carla and Donny are the faces of rural homelessness. Their stories help us understand that we need to broaden our understanding of homelessness, which affects over 50 thousand people in our state each year. It touches all kinds of lives.**

**Carla is looking for low-cost or free campers for the homeless population in Elkton. If you can help, call her at 410-620-0798**

**We'll learn about her outreach efforts next week.**

**Music: Explosions in the Sky, *Glittering Blackness***

Produced by Jessica Phillips. Hosted by Marc Steiner.

Through a grant by the Open Society Institute-Baltimore. Visit them on the web at [www.osi-baltimore.org](http://www.osi-baltimore.org).