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Group Helping Homeless Stay Alive During Frigid Basin Nights 2/1/11

Beau Berman CBS 7 News bberman@cbs7.com February 1, 2011

Odessa, Texas -

It's bad enough working out in the cold but what if you have to live outside. That's the reality for dozens of people in the Permian Basin so we spent Tuesday night following a group that may be the one thing keeping the area's homeless alive.

As the temperature drops, winds pick up and the deep freeze sets in, most of us head home.

But home for many is the outdoors, even as temperatures drop below zero.

And for some like Odessa native, Betty, having a home doesn't mean you can afford to heat it.

"Cold. We have a hard time keeping warm", she says.

It's such a hard time that many would die without blankets and hot food.

That's where the Nite Strikes (sic) come in; a group of volunteers part of the Jesus House Ministry at Odessa's Faith Temple Fellowship.

They cook, pour and package food before loading it into a Uhaul truck and delivering it to the homeless.

"It keeps them alive", says Donny Kyker, who leads the Nite Strikes.

The objective is to bring warm food and cover to the area's homeless but on nights like Tuesday evening when the temperatures drop so low, sometimes even blankets aren't enough to keep the area's homeless warm and can lead them to end up in the Emergency Room.

"Frostbite and really severe cases where there's hypothermia and the heart can go into cardiac arrest", says Doctor Sudip Bose.

Dr. Bose saw the problem when he worked in Chicago, and surprisingly he sees it even more working in the emergency room at Medical Center Hospital in Odessa.

"It's not always the cold places that have the most hypothermia. I would say in places like TX here, it can be a higher risk, because perhaps the population isn't as prepared for it".

That's why this group of volunteers, some formerly homeless, is helping.

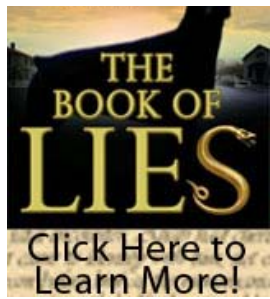
Donny Kyker and wife, Laura say they're just following the footsteps of one man.

"Jesus. There's no other reason".

For those living in tents, to those keeping warm by using a few logs, to house dwellers like

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Betty - the Nite Strikes are a stroke of luck, and an answered prayer.

"It makes you have a good blessing in your heart to know that people care", says Betty.

If this group didn't care, Betty and others might not make it through the night.

"This is why we come out on nights like tonight to make sure they don't freeze to death, make sure they're taken care of, a hot meal, coffee, and prayers", says Kyker.

Donny will lead the Nite Strikes again Wednesday night and Thursday night.

If there were ever a cause worth helping, this is it as they're still in need of cash to help pay for food and they have a grave need for heavy coats and sleeping bags.

You can call Jesus House of Odessa at 432-559-9165 to help.

If you're in Midland and you need help call the Salvation Army at 432-683-3614.



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