



We've all experienced it -- men and women and sometimes children soliciting money alongside busy streets, standing in medians, and wading into traffic.

Every one has a story, usually scribbled on a battered sign. Sometimes the stories are true. Sometime they are not. And none of the stories tell you how the money collected will be spent. Most panhandlers are not homeless. Many come from outside Montgomery County, or even outside the state. For some, panhandling is a profession.

We all know the feeling. We want to help those less fortunate than ourselves. We want to do something to help someone who seems in need.

We all want to help. The question isn't whether to help – it's how.

That's why Montgomery County government is joining together with homeless advocates and social service providers throughout the County to urge you to give a hand-up, not a hand-out.

The simple truth is that giving cash to panhandlers doesn't help.

Those who work daily with panhandlers in homeless advocacy and other social service groups know that most panhandlers use the money they collect to support their

addictions – drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. None of that helps panhandlers to solve their problems.

Panhandling can cause distracted drivers and dangerous intersections.

Known panhandler Mary Josephine Fish, 52, was in the median of Veirs Mill Road in Wheaton last May 16 when she was struck and killed by a car that jumped the curb.

Panhandling is legal under the First Amendment.

People panhandle at intersections, along roads, and even in shopping centers because other people give them cash. If people didn't give them cash – and instead gave in a way that would REALLY help them – they wouldn't be panhandling.

You can help:

Text "SHARE" on your cell phone to 80077 to contribute \$5 to the Community Foundation for Montgomery County, a non-profit, non-government organization that will distribute the proceeds to grassroots efforts in Montgomery County to REALLY help folks in need.



Join the effort to
**"Give a Hand-Up,
Not A Hand-Out."**

For more information, go to
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/panhandling