

{ Who are the people you see every day? }

**No. 88**  
in a series.



# People We See

*Shelterless in Los Angeles.*



Meet  
**Darrell Ford.**

Club CEO John Hawkins and Darrell Ford.

**AGE:** "I'm 64."

**BIRTHPLACE:** "Chicago."

**FAMILY:** "I have a younger brother and a younger sister."

**MARITAL STATUS:** "Never been married, but I have a girlfriend."

**RELIGION:** "None really, but I believe in God and was brought up Baptist."

**MEDICATIONS:** "I take aspirin every day for my heart, and then I take some cholesterol medication."

**HIS STORY:** "I was born in the City of Chicago, and when I was 13 my family re-located to Riverdale, a suburb of Chicago. My dad was a route driver for Sealtest Ice Cream, so we had lots of ice cream growing up. I was eating so much that my dad finally told me I had to switch to sherbet because I was gaining too much weight. My mom worked for Victor Dana; they made gaskets for cars and such. My dad was on the quiet side while my mom talked a lot. She also cursed like a sailor but always had words of wisdom. My parents always said I always had a cavalier and nonchalant attitude and was hard-headed."

"When I graduated high school I worked for a bank – me and another guy rolled coins.' I was there for a couple of years until I was laid off, then I got a job at a law firm. I worked in the mailroom there. I was there for another three years and got laid off again. My next job was at the National Association of Realtors, in the mailroom again. I was quickly promoted to supervisor but again, after about three years I was let go."

"I received unemployment for a little while and when that ran out I started working at a gas station pumping gas, cleaning windshields, changing tires and cleaning the lot. Money began to get thin and I lost my apartment. Thus began my life on the street. One day a kind lady felt sorry for me and gave me some boots; they were good boots but not good for the coming winter. You see they were steel-toed boots for construction workers

and such. But, that steel toe works against you in the winter. I ended up getting frostbite on both feet. They were able to save my left foot but they had to cut all my toes off of the right foot. I wasn't discouraged, though, and it didn't keep me from being the positive person that I am. Like my mom said, 'You never lose your personality.'

"So then my friend says, 'Let's move to California!' So he and I came by bus. We arrived on Jan. 1, 2005. When I got here I first went to the Union Rescue Mission. I did their year-long program. After that I was living in SRO Housing at Fifth and Maple for eight years actually. But then they hired a new building manager who evicted me because my room was too cluttered. My mom used to say, 'Give a man some keys and they think they own the world.' And that's what happened, he started evicting people left and right. Eight years in that apartment, can you believe that? So for the last couple months I have been living over by the main library out in the open, with no shelter. But I'm not going to let that get me down. I am staying upbeat and optimistic."

**FAVORITE SPORTS:** "I used to play softball and basketball after school, but it wasn't with my high school."

**FAVORITE MOVIE:** "I love shoot-em-ups, cowboy movies, mysteries, suspense and comedies. Not too big on romance-type movies."

**FAVORITE TV SHOW:** "The Lone Ranger."



Darrell shows frostbite damage to his right foot.

**FAVORITE ACTORS:** "Al Pacino, Clint Eastwood and Bruce Lee."

**FAVORITE ACTRESS:** "Cybil Shepherd."

**FAVORITE MUSIC:** "R&B."

**FAVORITE FOOD:** "Fried chicken! Oh, and sweet peas, mashed potatoes and apple pie a la mode."

**FAVORITE CANDY:** "Oh boy I have a sweet tooth – I love Snickers, turtles, anything really."

**FAVORITE PLACE IN THE CITY:** "Pershing Square and the main library."

**LAST BOOK READ:** "I don't read too much."

**LAST FOOD EATEN:** "I had a Subway last night."

**IF YOU WERE MAYOR:** "I would create a program to get the homeless off the streets ... I mean everyone off the streets, a clean sweep. And I would convert apartments to house them, like five apartments or so. All the amenities would be free."

**WITH \$1 MILLION:** "You and I both know a million dollars really isn't that much these days. The first thing I would do buy some necessary items that wouldn't amount to much, you know, small essentials. Then I would help people, maybe buy an apartment building and use it to house people like me. The rest, if there was any left over, I would invest."

**ADVICE FOR EVERYDAY PEOPLE:** "Humble yourself, get a good mattress, rest plenty, drink water and walk slow!"

*The Club gave Darrell a Bucket and a Blanket, a toothbrush and toothpaste, soap, two pairs of socks, shampoo, hand wipes, some food, \$20 and bottled water.*

*The interview, conducted by John Hawkins, took place Nov. 14 on Broadway between Third and Fourth Streets.*

{ In this monthly feature, Club CEO John Hawkins, and Director of Sales Angel Gomez, introduce you to people you see every day, but you might not know who they are. The Club reminds you that we all have names and stories to tell. }