

## JOBLESS INDIVIDUALS IN NEVADA



Two people living in Las Vegas, Dylan Wikoff and Jorge Suescun Hijuelos, know exactly how it feels once you lose your job and your unemployment benefits run out before you have had a chance of finding employment. Your life, which was once under control, can completely spiral downward right in front of your face. Wikoff, who is 36 years old and is a veteran of the Marine Corps, says, "I ended up homeless on Fremont Street." Two years ago, he was laid off from his sales job with a construction company. Hijuelos, on the other hand, says, "It was a slow downward spiral for me." Hijuelos, who is 51 years old and worked as a union construction worker, said, "I sold my car, sold my bedroom set, sold everything to pay my rent. I went from a beautiful condo to renting rooms by the week. I slept in a couple of fields." These two men are both intelligent and are finally experience some luck, after getting assistance with putting their life back together with the help of the Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada. Wikoff is working at the thrift store of the charity. Meanwhile, Hijuelos works as a dorm monitor for the living center. Both have finally gained employment through the help of this charity and not through those safety net programs that the state provides. And, they are not alone, as many other citizens of Nevada agree that the programs by the state were simply not helpful. About 27 percent of individuals living in Nevada, after exhausting their unemployment benefits, looked for help within the state, including food stamps and different available welfare programs. The other 73 percent of people are unaccounted for which means these people could be going without any means of support. The officials who work with many unemployed individuals along with those who considered poor, suggest there are a number of different things those 73 percent of people could be doing. Officials suggest that they have a partner or spouse who works and they are living off of one household income or that they are living with family and friends or moved out of the state in hopes of finding work elsewhere. Over 30 percent of individuals do not realize that the state agencies and charitable organizations can actually help them. There are some people who, unfortunately, have stopped paying their mortgages as a means of saving some money. However, this will eventually lead to foreclosure but sad to say, it is all that they can seem to do for the time being. There are some people who are afraid to accept help or are too proud to even ask anyone else for help. Both Wikoff and Hijuelos received unemployment benefits for 99 weeks, which was the absolute maximum. Neither of the two was able to find jobs or benefits that helped them keep on top of things which are how both of these men ended up homeless. Wikoff said he wasted a lot of time working with programs that were supposed to help him yet he still ended up homeless. He says, "I lost my sense of productivity. I chased my tail trying to get assistance and ended up a drifter. It was incomprehensible to me that I ended up on the street."