

# **‘Criminalized Kindness:’ Grandma Sues City That Arrested Her for Feeding the Homeless**

*Read Time: 1 Minute 52 Seconds*

A 78-year-old grandmother has filed a federal lawsuit against Bullhead City, Arizona, nearly eight months after she was arrested for giving away hot home-cooked meals to homeless people in a city park earlier this year.

USA Today reports police arrested Norma Thornton for sharing food at a park in violation of a 2021 city ordinance that heavily restricts the sharing of food for “charitable purposes” at a public park.

According to the 27-page lawsuit, Thornton has been serving people food at the park for four years. Since the nearest shelters and food pantries are located several miles away, she decided to bring the food to the people in the park.

Thornton is being represented by the nonprofit law firm Institute for Justice (IJ). Her attorneys argue the city’s ordinance violates her constitutional rights. In the lawsuit, they note the ordinance prohibits her right to engage in charitable acts and to share food with the needy, which is protected by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.

“This case is about kindness. Bullhead City has criminalized kindness,” Attorney Suranjan Sen, a member of Thornton’s legal team told KPHO-TV. “The city council passed an ordinance that makes it a crime punishable by four months imprisonment to share food in public parks for charitable purposes.”

Thornton owned and operated a restaurant in Alaska before retiring to Bullhead City several years ago. She became acquainted with the city's homeless population and decided to do something to help. From early 2018 to March 8, 2022, she regularly used a local public park to share her home-cooked food with people in need.

On March 8, Thornton was arrested and accused of violating the ordinance against sharing food for "charitable purposes" at public parks, AZ Central reported. The charges were later dropped in July. But the Arizona grandmother said she was warned that if she began sharing food in the park again, she would go to jail.

But she doesn't want to stop helping people. "When you share your food, it warms the people's hearts and it gives them a little piece of you, a little piece of love," she said. "And when it's something that really tastes good or excites them, you can see it in their eyes."

*For the rest of this article, visit our content partners at .*  
{eoa}

*Reprinted with permission from . Copyright © 2022 The Christian Broadcasting Network Inc. All rights reserved.*

Bring *Charisma* magazine home with a subscription today!