

# NCH . NEWS . . .

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NCH News - December 2008

This is the December issue of *NCH News*.

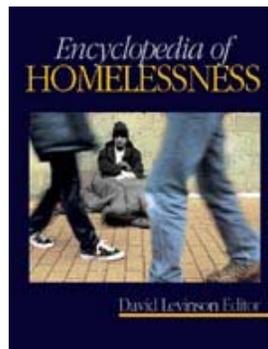
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## Now Available: The Encyclopedia of Homelessness

By Kristen Shaw



NCH has a new addition to its bookshelves; *The Encyclopedia of Homelessness*. Released in 2005, Berkshire Publishing Group reported that, "At any given moment, about 3 million American women, men, and children are homeless. And another 5 million Americans spend over 50% of their incomes on housing, meaning that one missed paycheck, one health crisis, or one unpaid utility bill can push them out the door into homelessness."

*The Encyclopedia of Homelessness* is the first systematic effort to organize and summarize what is known about homelessness in the United States. Entries cover homelessness in 8 major U.S. cities and 30 cities and nations around the world, as well as causes of homelessness; historical aspects; housing, policy, health and lifestyle issues; and service systems.

NCH encourages sociologists, anthropologists, economists, historians, social policy analysts and planners, program administrators, physicians, social workers, lawyers who provide advocacy and services, journalists, students of history, social studies, and the social sciences departments in high school through graduate school to purchase this \$400, 2 volume, hardcover publication. It is surely an indispensable resource to anyone studying homelessness.

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## One Reader's Recommendation



In response to our call for film suggestions, *NCH News* reader Erin Sorenson of Chicago had this to say:

I would like to recommend a film produced on the Street Medicine project in Pittsburgh, "One Bridge to the Next." ... It has won a number of film festival awards, most recently in Puerto Rico.

We welcome any further recommendations from our readers.

## NCH on the Road

Where to Catch the Faces of Homelessness Speakers Bureau:

- November 19th College of Holy Cross
- November 19th Southern New Hampshire University
- November 19th Drexel University
- November 19th DeSales University
- November 19th Villanova University
- November 20th Georgetown University
- November 20th Oyster River High School
- November 20th University of New Hampshire
- November 20th Longwood University
- November 20th Southern New Hampshire University
- November 20th Muhlenberg College
- November 21st Mechanicsburg PC-PA
- November 21st Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church
- November 21st Brandeis University
- November 22nd George Washington University
- November 24th Youth Services Opportunities Project
- November 25th Richard Montgomery High School
- November 25th Northwestern High School
- November 25th Bnai Israel Congregation
- November 27th Baldwin Wallace College
  
- December 1st Otterbein College

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December 3rd "Life and Death on the Streets" Health Care, Housing and Homelessness"  
December 5th St Patricks Episcopal Day School  
December 5th Westminster PC-Greensboro, NC  
December 5th Religious Action Center  
December 8th Christopher Dock Mennonite High School  
December 12th Religious Action Center  
December 15th Saginaw Valley State University-University Center,M

### Recent Contributors

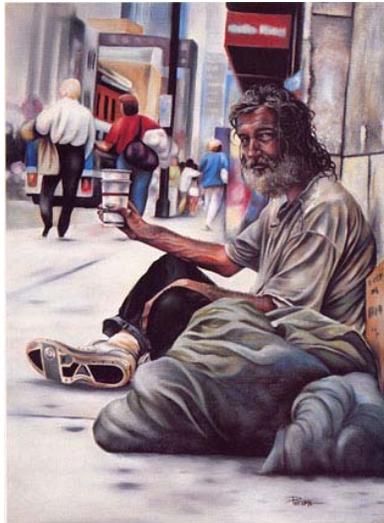
NCH would like to thank the following contributors for late October and early November:

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## Understanding Panhandling

By Richard Troxell, NCH Board Member



This brief paper discusses the new path that the act of solicitation (panhandling) has pointed which may ultimately take the city off the road to perdition and instead, onto the road of economic salvation for many.

Four surveys were conducted in 2008 attempting to learn why a person might voluntarily remain in 100 degree plus heat for 12 hours a day facing rejection over and over and over again by standing on a street corner asking a perfect stranger for money.

The survey results yield two common threads:

- 1) The need for employment, and
- 2) The need for adequate income.

In the first survey, the University Of Texas School Of Social Work presented its findings having interviewed 103 individuals and reported that 51% of those surveyed wanted job training and 52% were looking for work. Their over-riding common theme was that they were “soliciting for daily survival.”

In the Unsheltered Homeless Count Survey, conducted in Austin in May 2007 over 200 respondents were interviewed. When asked as to the cause of their homelessness, 100 said it was because of being “unable to pay either their rent or mortgage.” Another 118 said it was “due to unemployment.”

In a third survey, this time conducted by the City of Houston Health & Human Services Department, 345 persons were interviewed. When asked their reason for their street solicitation, 250 or 73 % stated “income for survival.” When asked if they enjoyed street solicitation 280 or 81 % said “no.”

When asked what would be required for them to stop street solicitation, 196 or 57% responded with “employment.”

The fourth and final survey was conducted in Austin in November 2007 when House the Homeless, Inc., a local, grassroots organization comprised of homeless and formerly homeless persons, successfully interviewed 536 people experiencing homelessness. 38% said they were working at the time of the interview. When asked if they would work a full 40 hour week job if they were sure it would pay them enough to afford basic food, clothing, shelter, ( in other words a living wage), 468 or 91% said they would work 40 hours for a living wage.

In the City of Austin, TX, social service organizations gather under the umbrella of the CAN, the Community Action Network, through the planning body, ECHO, Ending Community Homeless Organization, and garner over 4.5 million dollars from various governmental resources each year. Their mission to end homelessness, like most cities across America, is framed by their 10 year Plan to End Homelessness. Many people are introduced to substance abuse treatment, intensive case management, resume writing, self-esteem building, and sometimes placed into supportive housing. But the numbers speak for themselves with 4,000 homeless folks (actual count of persons experiencing homelessness in 2007), compared to little over 600 emergency shelter beds and only a couple hundred permanent supportive housing units.

The idea is to examine and then combine all of our resources/goals into one workable solution to everyone’s satisfaction. We have: 1) workers outside of the tax base i.e. urban recyclers, etc., 2) the business community’s desire to remove all panhandlers from city corners, 3) \$4.5 million in-kind service dollars, 4) need by business for a stable low-end workforce. 5) unemployed homeless, minimum wage workers desire to achieve self sufficiency.

The hint of an answer may come from Corpus Christi, TX which has created a student intern program that provides a living wage. By combining a grant from the Corpus Christi Business and Job Development Corporation with Del Mar College and Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi, living wage internships were created at small businesses. The Federal Minimum Wage of \$6.55 is paid by the small business and is then matched by Del Mar College using the development fund thus yielding \$13.10 per hour or a living wage for student interns.

In Austin, TX a parallel approach is about to be taken which will create a living wage job program for tutors. A failing Johnston High School has now been recast as Eastside Memorial High where students will be paid \$6.00 per hour to attend tutoring classes and the tutors are to be paid a living wage from privately raised dollars. This will pay tutors \$12.00 per hour through the local community college. Obviously, this will benefit the local business community as well as the school, the school system and the individuals involved.

On May 21, 2008, House the Homeless will spearhead a citywide “best practices” job summit along with the Ending Chronic Homeless Organization and the Texas Homeless Network. The idea is to address the goals/desires of all affected parties by creating a living wage job program for people experiencing homelessness.

Local employment agents already working with populations desirous of finding work will be brought together to examine the aforementioned programs along with the Ready, Willing and Able work program out of New York and Philadelphia which touts a 20 year track record and a 46 million dollar business supported, annual budget.

After the summit, the inquisitor-panelists will evolve into a Task Force that will select from the best practices concept and then craft a local living wage jobs programs that utilizes the already invested city dollars (in-kind dollars) and creates a pathway for homeless/formerly homeless persons to enter that will lead them out of homelessness  
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homeless/formerly homeless persons to enter that will lead them out of homelessness.

At this year's Thermal Underwear Distribution Party, House the Homeless will ask unemployed people who are experiencing homelessness, to select and list in order of preference, their top three jobs from a pool of jobs training opportunities being offered at the local community college. We will take traditionally low wage but multi-training staged jobs i.e. electrician's helper or plumber's helper etc. and use work force development dollars in conjunction with the local community college, to pay these folks a living wage while putting them on a job training program that places them into a career/job path.

The intended result is to create a living wage jobs program for people experiencing homelessness. This will create an identifiable pathway where we can guide street solicitors and other under utilized/potential workers and forge them into a viable work force serving the community and local businesses while establishing true individual self sufficiency.

This creative approach will serve as a local/national model replicable across America.

### **Change Your Socks, Change the World**



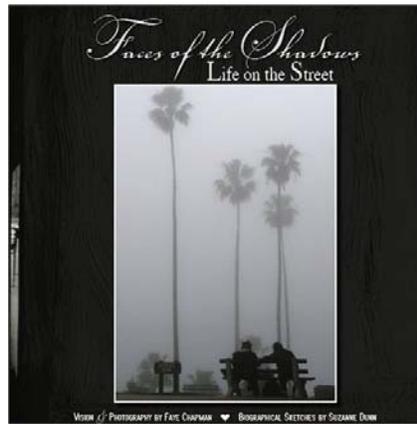
Sierra Sock invites you to purchase your next pair of socks at [www.sierrasocks.com](http://www.sierrasocks.com). The goal is to raise one million dollars for the Sierra Club - And for each pair of socks that you purchase, we will donate another pair to the National Coalition for the Homeless.

Every year, Americans purchase socks made from virgin polyester and nylon. Lots of money goes into promoting these brands without a single thought to how the product impacts our planet. Sierra Club socks are made from organic cotton, bamboo, soy and other earth friendly yarns. They're comfortable and they support Sierra Club programs. So let's do something about the five billion pairs of socks, give or take a billion, that wind up in landfills. While we're at it, let's help the homeless.

For more information or to purchase socks, please go to [www.sierrasocks.com](http://www.sierrasocks.com).

### **Book Review: *Faces of the Shadows, Life on the Streets***

**By Kyle Boudreau**



The causes and conditions of homelessness are as numerous as they are misunderstood. There is thus an important role to play for good data and sober analysis, but what stands between statistics and authentic insight is the human story. A poet once said that there is a lining of objectivity to every radical subjectivity, and it is precisely those subjectivities to which Faye Chapman's photography project bears witness. In *Faces of the Shadows, Life on the Street*, Chapman's portraits combine with writer Suzanne Dunn's biographical vignettes to create a tribute of sorts. Its strength lies in its honesty, its humor, and its refusal to rely on cliché, or structure itself in accordance with any particular political agenda or narrative. The effect is awe, rather than pity-inspiring.

The obvious concern with any project that seeks to use the image of individual human beings, and particularly that of homeless persons, in the course of making an artistic statement, is, of course, the subtle exploitation inherent to all forms of reductionism. What Chapman and Dunn present to us, however, is a diversity of stories, told with few filters, warm, and close-in. Their final product comes across as sincere, and warrants a contemplative viewing or two.

### **Raise Awareness with Little Red Wagon** By Kyle Boudreau



November is National Homeless Youth Awareness Month, and Zach Bonner wants you to know about it.

Founder of the Little Red Wagon Foundation, Bonner's mission is to address the needs of the 1.3 million plus homeless children across the country. To this end, he gathers donations of various items door-to-door, assembling backpacks for kids living on the streets, replete with food and supplies for hygiene and first-aid. To date, 1100 such backpacks have been distributed, in addition to \$25,000 worth of school supplies, sporting equipment and other items to kids in Title 1 schools in places as divergent as Hillsborough County, Las Vegas; Louisiana, and Mexico. His efforts have won him, among other honors, the President's Call to Service Award.

This would be an impressive resume for anyone to possess, but it is made all the more exceptional by the fact that Zach Bonner is a mere 10-year-old boy. Having developed an interest in community service in the wake of Hurricane Charlie, Bonner has accomplished much in the three years since forming the Foundation named for the wagon he wheels to pick-up donations. Still, he sees much more to be done, which brings us back to this, the month of November.

Last year, to draw attention to the first ever National Homeless Youth Awareness Month, Bonner traversed 280 miles on foot from  
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Tampa to Tallahassee, raising enough money to feed 1000 families a Holiday meal, and provide 350 children with gift bags, new books and school supplies.

This year, beginning October 17, he will walk the same distance from Tallahassee to Atlanta. This time around, the money raised will be used to build a house through Habitat for Humanity for a homeless family.

“Some little boys like to play baseball, some little boys like to play football, and mine likes to do charity work,” says Bonner’s mother with a chuckle. To encourage this remarkable little boy and his hobby of choice, you can visit the Foundation’s website at [www.LittleRedWagonFoundation.com](http://www.LittleRedWagonFoundation.com) to learn more, donate, or even track the progress of the walk via satellite.

### Help Out Homeless Partners Wish List



Homeless Partners Christmas Wish List connects givers with people experiencing homelessness in order to provide things they gravely need, whether warm clothes for winter or tools for work.

Donations are distributed to individuals of your choice by way of shelters in Chicago, Columbia, SC, Las Vegas, New York, and several Canadian cities. To learn how you can take part in this innovative program, visit the Homeless Partners Christmas Wish List [Website](#).

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