

NCH . NEWS . . .

NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS | 2201 P St NW | Washington, DC 20037
Phone: 202.462.4822 | Fax: 202.462.4823 | INFO@NATIONALHOMELESS.ORG | WWW.NATIONALHOMELESS.ORG

Happy New Year!

This is the January issue of NCH News.

Information on how to unsubscribe is found at the bottom of this email. If you would like to receive a print version of this newsletter, please contact: jschuler@nationalhomeless.org

In this issue:

1. Empty Buildings, Crowded Shelters
2. Katrina Update
3. Earned Income Credit-Outreach Kit
4. Communities Mark Deaths of Homeless Persons
5. *Out of Reach* Released
6. Florida Training Forum
7. NCH on the Road
8. NCH News

Empty Buildings, Crowded Shelters

Picture the Homeless is a New York City-based grassroots organization founded and run by homeless people organizing for social change. We consider homelessness to be a housing problem—not a “homeless problem”—and that homeless people must be active participants in shaping all policies that impact them.

Our housing campaign focuses on the thousands of abandoned buildings that remain in NYC while rents skyrocket and the homeless population grows. The city spends \$700 million a year on a shelter system, instead of permanent housing, and Mayor Bloomberg maintains that there are no more abandoned buildings. Last summer, we scored a major campaign victory when Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer committed to developing and executing a street-by-street survey of empty buildings and lots with us, so we can prove the extent of the problem even though the city keeps no official statistics on it!

Now, Queens Councilman Tony Avella is working with us to develop and introduce anti-warehousing legislation, to stop landlords from keeping buildings empty in the middle of a housing crisis, and to fund rehabilitation of these properties into housing for homeless people. This legislation is based on our Homeless Housing & Jobs Platform (<http://www.picturethehomeless.org/files/pdf/HHJP.pdf>), which was written by homeless folks to identify the legislative and policy changes that would need to happen in order for us to see housing for the homeless developed out of abandoned buildings.

This anti-warehousing legislation marks a major testing-case of the ability of a human rights argument to directly challenge a property-rights-based status quo. Our argument is that the human rights of homeless people, and of entire communities impacted by gentrification, must be reckoned against the rights of landlords to keep large numbers of housing units off the market for speculative purposes. Legislation of this scope and scale has almost never been attempted in the United States, and has the potential to be the model for other municipalities throughout the country.

We need your help. To be successful, this ambitious legislative initiative is going to require extensive new organizing efforts focusing on public education, coalition-building, and direct action. Please visit our website, and contact us for further information about this campaign and how you can support it. Call us at 646-314-6423, and ask to speak to a Housing Campaign Leader. Email housing@picturethehomeless.org to sign up for our "Derelict Properties Campaign" listserv.

www.picturethehomeless.org

Katrina Update

FEMA Orders Suspended

Jessica Schuler, staff

The US Court of appeals has suspended the November 29th ruling of US District Judge Richard Leon. Last November, FEMA was ordered by the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia to resume rental assistance and pay three months back rent to Katrina evacuees denied assistance from February through August of this year. The ruling stated that rental assistance must continue until FEMA is able to provide clear reasons for the decision to discontinue assistance and as well as afford evacuees the opportunity to appeal the decision.

Problems began for evacuees last spring when they were told to transfer from emergency 403 Direct Assistance Program to the 408 Rental Assistance Programs, a long term rent and utility assistance program. Many households attempted the transfer, which was ordered by FEMA, but were then denied assistance when they applied for 408 assistance. Adding insult to injury, were the letters discontinuing assistance which were often times unclear and contradictory in nature. In some instances, households were simply told "Reason for Denial: other", with no further explanation for the rejection.

In his November ruling Judge Leon agreed with plaintiffs' complaints citing "It is unfortunate, if not incredible, that FEMA and its counsel could not devise a sufficient notice system to spare these beleaguered evacuees the added burden of federal litigation to vindicate their constitutional rights. FEMA's notice provisions are unconstitutionally vague and uninformative, and a more detailed statement of FEMA's reasons for denying long-term housing benefits...must be provided in order to...free these evacuees from the 'Kafkaesque' application process they have had to endure."

Rent payments were ordered to be reinstated for families living in FEMA financed households who were able to escape eviction as well as those eligible for reimbursement for three months' back rent, according to Judge Leon.

Despite Judge Leon's valiant efforts, Katrina victims, who had finally seemed to catch a break, will not be seeing payment anytime soon. On December 22, a three judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals placed Leon's order on hold until at least March when the case can be tried before the panel. The appeal did not suspend Judge Leon's ruling on the unclear phrasing of FEMA's issued letters. FEMA representatives claim that new comprehensible letters are currently being instated. A small favor for those who have been continuously harmed by FEMA's ambiguous practices.

Earned Income Credit-Outreach Kit

The 2007 tax filing season is fast approaching, and tax time can bring good news for low-wage workers — including workers who are homeless. The Earned Income Credit (EIC) is now worth as much as \$4,536 for low- and moderate-income workers raising two or more children (as much as \$2,747 for workers raising one child, and up to \$412 for very low-income workers not raising children).

Also, millions of low-income working families will be eligible for the Child Tax Credit (CTC), which is now worth up to \$1,000 for each qualifying child under age 17. Even families that earned too little in 2006 to owe income tax can receive a refund from this credit. Many low-income working families will qualify for *both* the EIC and CTC.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities produces a **Tax Credit Outreach Kit** to help organizations like yours make sure workers know about these tax credits, how to claim them and the availability of free tax filing assistance. The EIC and CTC continue to be vital work supports for employees in low-wage jobs, helping many to afford housing, transportation, child care and out-of-pocket health care expenses.

The Kit provides new materials on *both* the EIC and CTC, such as:

- § English and Spanish posters and flyers;
- § A fact sheet booklet on the EIC and the CTC;
- § A booklet featuring strategies for promoting these credits (including a chapter on reaching out to workers who are homeless);
- § A booklet on ways to link workers to free tax help and asset development programs;
- § Information on the new IRS split-refund procedure available for the 2007 filing season, which enables workers to more easily save a part of their total refund; and much more!

Request a FREE copy of the Tax Credit Outreach Kit! Please email your name, organization name, address and phone number to: ickit@cbpp.org or call (202) 408-1080.

Communities Mark Deaths of Homeless Persons

PRESS ADVISORY

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

DECEMBER 11, 2006

JOHN LOZIER

jlozier@nhhc.org (615) 226-2292

MICHAEL STOOPS,

mstoops@nationalhomeless.org, (202) 462-4822 x19

Communities Mark Deaths of Homeless Persons

Communities throughout the country marked the deaths of homeless people during 2006 in a series of memorial services on December 21.

December 21 is the first day of winter and the longest night of the year.

National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day events included candlelight vigils featuring readings of the names of those who have died, proclamations by local public officials, marches, public discussions and prayer services. Each event was organized by community shelters, health care providers, and advocacy coalitions. In 2005, some 100 communities conducted Memorial Day events.

Partial lists of local events and names of those who died, art work and promotional materials for the event, and background information on National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day are available at <http://www.nhhc.org/memoriaday.html>

National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day is organized each year by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council and the National Coalition for the Homeless.

“Mortality rates for homeless people are three times the rate for others, and life expectancy is around fifty years – about what it was for everyone in 1900,” said John Lozier, Executive Director of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. “These high death rates point to the terrible conditions of homelessness, and to serious problems of health care access in America,” Lozier said.

“In addition to the ongoing, unnecessary deaths from disease and exposure, a wave of cruel and senseless murders of homeless people is emerging throughout the country,” said Michael Stoops, Acting Executive Director of the National Coalition for the Homeless. “Homeless Persons’ Memorial Day is in part a call for America to come to our senses, and to treat homeless people with kindness rather than unprovoked beatings.”

Out of Reach Released

On December 12 the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) released *Out of Reach*, its annual report that compares rental housing costs and income levels in states, metropolitan areas and counties nationwide. The report also provides local wage and income data for comparison purposes.

Congressman Barney Frank (D-MA), incoming Chair of the House Financial Services Committee, joined NLIHC President Sheila Crowley and NLIHC Research Director Danilo Pelletiere on a conference call to unveil the report to the media.

The report shows that cost of affordable rental housing climbed again in 2006, out pacing the wages of those who need it most. The national two-bedroom Housing Wage climbed to \$16.31 for 2006, up from \$15.78 last year. This is the hourly wage a full time worker must earn in order to afford a two-bedroom home at his or her community’s Fair Market Rent (FMR).

“Every year it is becoming more difficult for low income families to find decent homes they can afford,” said NLIHC President Sheila Crowley. “As we approach the holiday season with its intense focus on consumer spending, *Out of Reach* shows the difficulty that millions of low-income families face to even pay for their homes.”

Extensive data for every state, metropolitan area and county in the country are available online, at www.nlihc.org/oor/oor2006/. Ranking tables are also available at the website, as is further analysis and explanation of the data.

NLIHC will also host a web chat on KnowledgePlex to discuss the *Out of Reach* data on December 13 at 2:00 p.m., EST. Information about logging into the chat is available at www.knowledgeplex.org/xchat.html.

Florida Training Forum

Save the Date!

Friday, February 9th, 2007

9:00pm -5:00pm

Florida Human Rights and Training Program

Sponsored By:

The National Coalition for the Homeless, The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty and the Center on Housing Rights and Evictions

Hosted by:

Holland and Knight, with training locations in:

Ft. Lauderdale

Jacksonville

Miami

Orlando

Tallahassee

Tampa

West Palm Beach

Co-sponsors:

National Coalition for the Homeless

Florida Coalition for the Homeless

Miami Coalition for the Homeless

Southern Legal Counsel

Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County

Florida Bar Public Interest Law Section

Housing Caucus of the U.S. Human Rights Network

NCH on the Road

Stay up-to-date on NCH's upcoming speaking events throughout the county

January

Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau:

The Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau is a program of the National Coalition for the Homeless that is comprised of people who are or have been homeless and works to educate the public about homelessness and what can be done to end it.

Wednesday, January 17th The Collegiate School - New York

Tuesday, January 30th University of Pennsylvania

In 2005 we spoke to over 280 groups, 43 states and nearly 17,000 people. If you are interested in bringing our Faces of Homelessness Panel to your school, please contact Michael O'Neill, Speakers' Bureau Coordinator, at moneill@nationalhomeless.org.

Other NCH Speaking Events:

Tuesday, January 16th : ED Michael Stoops will be testifying in Ft. Myers (FL) at City Council Meeting against a "no feeding the homeless" ban

NCH News

New Faces/Energy/Idealism at NCH:**New Staff:**

Three new AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteers have come on board.

Megan Hustings, a graduate of Grinnell College (IA) with a degree in American Studies, and **Michael Parish**, a recent graduate of American University with a degree in Anthropology, will both be doing development/media/public relations work.

Jesse Smith Jr. will work as Vendor Manager for the Street Sense newspaper.

New Interns:

Because of our longstanding work with college students, NCH always has a number of undergraduate/graduate/law school interns working with us throughout the year. We could not do our work without these interns.

Similar to the non-paying internship of Chris Gardner portrayed by Will Smith in the **Pursuit of Happyness** movie, the majority of our internships are non-paying. We are trying to change this.

While none of our interns are homeless, the living/housing costs in Washington, DC are very high.

If NCH donors/supporters/members would like to contribute financially to our year-round internship program, the donations will be used as living stipends for interns along with any tuition fees for conferences and seminars.

Tim Argetsinger, an English major at Dartmouth College (NH), hails from Alaska. He will be working on our "You Don't Need A Home to Vote" project here in the DC Metro area. He will be with us until mid-March.

Erin Brand, a social work major at James Madison University (VA) will work on policy issues. She will be with us until the end of April.

Chanel Clarke, an English major at Amherst College (MA) will be with us during the month of January and will work on miscellaneous projects

Jason Gerig, a social work major at Eastern Mennonite University (VA) will work on policy issues. He will be with us until the end of April.

Advocacy News:

The **National Alliance to End Homelessness** (NAEH) has released *Homeless Counts*. This report lays the groundwork for measuring efforts to end homelessness by establishing a baseline number of homeless people from which to monitor trends in homelessness. It utilizes local point-in-time counts of homeless people to create an estimate of the number of homeless people nationwide.

To read the report visit: <http://www.naeh.org/content/article/detail/1441>

5/15/2009

NCH News Email Newsletter

Catholic Charities USA unveiled its *Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America* is a new multi-year initiative to cut poverty in half by 2020, urging Congress and the Administration to give a much higher priority to the needs of the 37 million Americans living in poverty in budget and policy decisions on issues such as health care, housing, nutrition, and economic security. This broad effort that will involve partners in social service agencies, the faith community, and other groups in a sustained effort to convince government officials of the importance of making systemic changes in government programs to help the poor and most vulnerable in our society.

To learn more visit: <http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/poverty/>

NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS | 2201 P St NW | Washington, DC 20037

Phone: 202.462.4822 | Fax: 202.462.4823 | INFO@NATIONALHOMELESS.ORG | WWW.NATIONALHOMELESS.ORG

Powered By



[remove from list](#)
[update profile](#)