

NCH . NEWS . . .

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Hello,

This is the July issue of NCH News.

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Lessons from a Candidate Who Sought to End Poverty

By Michael Stoops**

Nearly forty years ago in 1968 this country lost a great American, Upton Sinclair, who had a profound impact forwarding social justice in the United States. He first came to national attention with the book, *The Jungle*, published in 1906 which exposed unsafe practices of the meatpacking industry in Chicago. Not as well known was Upton Sinclair's effort to be elected as a U.S. Senator and Governor of California.

As a socialist, he ran for a U.S. Senate seat in California in 1922 and got 50,323 votes. He ran for Governor in 1930 and got 50,480. He described that as progress.

In 1934, he switched parties and became a Democrat. He carried the Democratic primary with 436,000 votes, and winning by a margin of some 25,000 votes.

In the general election, Sinclair received twice the number of votes of any previous Democratic candidate for governor of California up to that point. Final vote: Frank Merriam—1,138,620 Sinclair—879,537.

He died in 1968.

Unlike modern day candidates (with the possible exception of former U.S. Senator John Edwards and now Presidential candidate), he ran on a platform of ending poverty in California.

Similar to today's visible homelessness, poverty and unemployment were at their peak during the early years of the Great Depression. Sinclair sought political office to stop the growth of poverty in one of the most difficult times in American history.

In his own words, Sinclair said,

“But I cannot enjoy the comforts of home, and the freedom of work and recreation which I have earned, while I know there are millions of others around me suffering for lack of common necessities.

Here are thousands of people wandering homeless, and thousands of homes which no one is allowed to occupy. Here are a million people who want to work and are not allowed to work.

I say, positively and without qualification, we can end poverty in California. I know exactly how to do it, and if you elect me Governor, with a Legislature to support me, I will put the job through—and I won’t take more than one or two or four years.

I say that there is no excuse for poverty in a civilized and wealthy State like ours. I say that we can and should see to it that all men and women of our State who are willing to work should have work suited to their capacities, and should be paid a wage that will enable them to maintain a decent home and an American standard of living.

I say that every old person should be provided for in comfort, and likewise every orphaned child and every person who is sick or incapacitated. I repeat that this can be done, and that I know how to do it. If I take up the job, I will stick until it is finished, and there will be no delay and no shilly-shallying. There will be action, and continuous action, until the last man, woman, and child has these fundamental economic rights. Again, I say: End Poverty in California.”

Later on Sinclair said that the slogan, “End Poverty in California”, really meant to him, “End Poverty in Civilization.”

His “End Poverty in California” (EPIC) had twelve basic principles. Some of the more interesting/unique/prophetic ones included:

- 1. God created the natural wealth of the earth for the use of all men, not a few.
- 2. When some men live without working, other men are working without living.
- 3. The existence of luxury in the presence of poverty and destitution is contrary to good morals and sound public policy.
- 4. The cause of the trouble is that a small class has the wealth, while the rest have debts.

The first plank of his political platform was to give the unemployed productive work and make them self-supporting.

He also proposed exempting the poor from having to pay taxes.

“I proposed that all homes assessed at less than \$3000 shall be exempt from taxation. Anybody who lives in that poor a home in these times needs help and not taxing. Homes from \$3000 to \$5000 pay a normal rate, and for each additional \$5000 we add one-half of one per cent. That means that if you live in a \$100,000 home you will pay a tax of about 11%, and if you don’t care to pay that, the State will take over your mansion and turn it into a public institution for orphaned children, or for the aged, or for those who have acquired tuberculosis by slaving twelve hours a day in a department store or a restaurant kitchen,” said the candidate.

The Nexus of the Campaign

Sinclair offered a real choice to Californians. He said, “In California of 1934 there could only be two parties, those who wished to abolish poverty, and those who wished to maintain it.”

“We say to the voters. There are half a million persons in our state out of work. They cannot be permitted to starve. These persons can never again find work while the present system endures..... There is no solution to this problem except to put these unemployed at productive labor....

Our opponents have told you that we cannot put this plan through. Let me answer just this: If you should give me a chance to end poverty in California, and I should fail to do it, life would mean nothing to me thereafter.

I say ‘abolish poverty.’ This is plain language that everybody can stand.

A special effort was made to reach the churches. Sinclair said: “It is impossible for me to understand how any group of people organized in the name of Jesus can support the continuation of poverty, with all the degradation and misery it causes to the human ...bethesdahosting.com/.../397_2007...

organized in the name of Jesus can support the continuation of poverty, with all the degradation and misery it causes to the human race.”

Dirty Campaign Attacks on Sinclair

While his campaign resonated with poor Californians, he was opposed by influential enemies from major newspaper publishers to Hollywood studio owners.

Some of this was Sinclair’s own doing.

Recounting a visit to Washington, DC, Sinclair said, “I told Harry Hopkins in Washington that if I am elected half the unemployed of the United States will come to California, and he will have to make plans to take care of them.”

On another occasion he said, “If I am elected Governor, I expect one-half the unemployed in the United States will hop aboard the first freights to California.”

This turned out to be the worst gaffe of his campaign.

His enemies did a “Bums Rush” news reel video showing hordes of transients jumping off freight trains in California. This footage ran in movie theaters statewide.

Other billboards pictured an army of transients marching, marching, marching beneath the quote “I expect half the unemployed in the U.S. to flock to California if I am elected.” DO YOU WANT THIS TO HAPPEN?

The Los Angeles Times ran editorials against Sinclair with headlines like, “Hordes of Jobless Swooping on State.” One editorial calculated that ten million Americans were out of work, meaning that five million indigents would swamp the state once Sinclair took office.

“In other words,” the editorial observed, “Sinclair expects to end poverty in California by bringing in fifteen times as many poverty-stricken, jobless indigents as we already have!”

The former national Commander of the American Legion branded Sinclair’s plan a “grotesque fantasy.”

In a pre-election, satirical opinion piece in the Los Angeles Times, a writer using a pseudonym wrote that Sinclair had won and spelled out the consequences of his winning.

He wrote of how all the “paupers and ne’er-do-wells” in Florida were informed that Mr. Sinclair would keep his promises—work for all who wished to work—incomes for those who didn’t.”

Post-election there was a “great Florida-to-California migration of dead-brokes and dead-beats.”

Florida then emptied its prisons and asylums.

Other governors joined in. Forty-six other states copied the Florida measure, and in a short-time all the 12,000,000 unemployed and their families, together with all the convicts and all the insane of forty-seven states, had been hustled over the border into California.

These states then amended the U.S. Constitution making it illegal for poor people to travel from state-to-state therefore keeping all the poor contained inside of California.

Others poked fun at Sinclair by referring to EPIC as: “Every Pauper Is Coming,” “Easy Pickings in California,” “Everybody’s Poorhouse, Including Californians,” and “California, Here I Bum.”

One editorial cartoon showed two tramps reading about EPIC in an eastern newspaper and deciding to winter in California instead of Florida that year.

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Even a song parody was written.

California, here we come! Every beggar, every bum

From New York—and Jersey—down to Purdue—

By millions—we're coming—so that we can live on you.

We hear that Sinclair's got your State

That's why we can hardly wait

Open up your Golden Gate

California, here we come!

Sinclair's Legacy for the Upcoming 2008 Presidential Campaign

The campaign practices and public policy positions of Upton Sinclair should be inspirational to today's candidates and lawmakers. Poverty in the U.S. has reached devastatingly high levels and without decisive action from public officials, will continue with catastrophic results. Hopefully, the ideas and dreams of Mr. Sinclair can educate our politicians and allow them to use his own campaign to end poverty as a model in the '08 Presidential Election.

Sources:

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Mitchell, Greg. The Campaign of the Century: Upton Sinclair's Race for Governor of California and the Birth of Media Politics. New York. Random House, 1992

Mattson, Kevin. Upton Sinclair and the Other American Century. Hoboken, New Jersey. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2006

*First of a two-part series. The second article entitled, I, President (_____ --fill in the blank) of the U.S. and How I Ended Poverty. A True Story of the Future, will be published soon.

**Michael Stoops is the Acting Executive Director of the Washington, DC-based National Coalition for the Homeless (www.nationalhomeless.org).

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act Celebrates 20 Years

by Lucas Hunt, NCH intern

On July 22, 2007 the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act will celebrate its twentieth anniversary as a piece of homelessness federal legislation. The Act was the first piece of federal legislation in United States history to specifically aide the homeless community. President Ronald Reagan signed the bill which originally contained fifteen programs providing a spectrum of services to homeless people. Including the Continuum of Care Programs includes the Supportive Housing Program, the Shelter Plus Care Program, and the Single Room Occupancy Program, as well as the Emergency Shelter Grant Program. McKinney established the Interagency Council on the Homeless and ensures homeless children free transportation to and from the school of their choosing and provides needy children free lunch at schools. The legislation has been amended several times since its introduction.

Before the bill was signed into law, most homeless aide programs were funded and administrated by grass-roots organizations. The federal government believed that it was the responsibility of each jurisdiction to care for its own homeless population. In 1983, a federal task force was created that helped local governments obtain surplus federal property. This aide later became Title V in the act. As pressure mounted, Congress realized that the issue of homelessness was more than local governments could handle. In 1986 Congress passed parts of the Homeless Persons' Survival Act. Later that same year, legislation containing Title I of the Homeless Persons' Survival Act was introduced making available emergency relief provisions for shelter, food, mobile health care, and transitional housing for homeless people. In 1987, after an intense advocacy campaign, the Homeless Persons' Survival Act was passed with bipartisan majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. After the death of the bill's chief Republican sponsor, Representative Stewart B. McKinney of Connecticut, the act was renamed the McKinney Homelessness Assistance Act. President Ronald Reagan signed it into law on July 22, 1987. The act became the McKinney-Vento Act after the death of Representative Bruce Vento of Minnesota in 2000.

The act contains nine major parts, or titles, which relieve many problems associated with homelessness. Title I of the McKinney-Vento Act includes a statement of six findings of Congress and provides a definition of homelessness. Title II establishes and describes the functions of the Interagency Council on the Homeless, an independent entity within the Executive Branch composed of the heads of 15 federal agencies. Title III authorizes the Emergency Food and Shelter Program, which is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Title IV authorizes the emergency shelter and transitional housing programs administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, including the Emergency Shelter Grant program (expanded from the program created by the Homeless Housing Act in 1986), the Supportive Housing Demonstration Program, Supplemental Assistance for Facilities to Assist the Homeless, and Section 8 Single Room Occupancy Moderate Rehabilitation. Title V imposes requirements on federal agencies to identify and make available surplus federal property, such as buildings and land, for use by states, local governments, and nonprofit agencies to assist homeless people. Title VI authorizes several programs administered by the Department of Health and Human Services. Title VII authorizes several programs administered by the Department of Education, the Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services. Title VIII amends the Food Stamp program to facilitate participation in the program by persons who are homeless and is administered by the Department of Agriculture. Title IX of the McKinney-Vento Act extends the Veterans Job Training Act.

Having been amended several times, the McKinney-Vento Act is still working toward its goal to end homelessness. With continued reauthorization and increased funding, the act will continue to help the homeless community and hopefully achieve its goal. This legislation stands as the touchstone for any new legislation introduced that aids the homeless. Currently there is legislation in the both the House and Senate to reauthorize McKinney programs. The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (H.R. 840) and the Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act of 2007 (S. 1518) were introduced by Representatives Julia Carson (D-ID), Geoff Davis (R-KY), Barbara Lee (D-Lee) and Rick Renzi (R-AZ) and Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Wayne Allard (R-CO). The bills work to consolidate several homeless programs into a single program and raise authorization levels for McKinney funding.

Twenty years later homelessness still plagues our nation. This year an estimated 3.5 million people will experience homelessness, and over 1/3 of those will be children. Therefore, while the National Coalition for the Homeless salutes those who helped pass this landmark piece of legislation, we also recognize that twenty years after the bill's original passage we still are a long way from ending homelessness. Without comprehensive legislation to establish a National Housing Trust Fund, living wages and universal health insurance, homelessness will continue to thrive.

Minimum Wage Bill Signed into Law

by Sarah Fontaine, NCH intern

Advocates of increasing the minimum wage had a different reason to celebrate Memorial Day weekend this year as President Bush signed legislation raising the federal minimum wage for the first time in ten years. The bill, which increases the federally mandated hourly pay from its current amount of \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 an hour, will take effect in three stages over two years. Currently, minimum wage workers number about 1.9 million U.S. workers or 2.5 percent of all hourly-paid workers of our economy.[i] Those who presently earn \$5.15 an hour will reap the benefits of an increase of 70 cents per hour before the end of the summer. An additional 70 cent increase will occur next year, and by summer 2009, all minimum wage workers will earn \$7.25 an hour.

While a long overdue increase in the federal minimum wage is certainly a reason to celebrate, we must not lose sight of what this country's minimum and low wage workers are still missing: a truly livable wage. In its most simple form, the concept of a Universal Living Wage proposes if an individual works a 40-hour week, he or she should be able to afford basic housing. As specified by Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and various banking institutions across America, Americans should not have to spend more than 30% of their incomes on housing. Apartments should also be classified and rented according to the [Fair Market Rents](#) (FMRs), which are prices established by HUD throughout the country for each municipality and all other areas. Although numbers for the average monthly cost of apartment rental for the U.S. as a whole cannot be easily determined, many sources including the National Association of Realtors expect rent to increase around 4.1 percent this year, compared to a 2.9 percent increase last year.[ii] In order to further illustrate and clarify the need for a living wage, take for example the average monthly rents of apartments in D.C.

The locally mandated minimum wage for the District of Columbia is \$7.00 per hour, or \$1.85 higher than the federally required minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour. Consequently, an individual who works a 40 hour-work week would make, on average, \$1126.00 per month, before taxes. According to both HUD standards and the tenets of the Universal Living Wage policy, this individual who earns \$7.00 per hour should be paying \$336 per month in rent, which is 30% of their \$1126 per month salary. While \$1126 may have seemed livable at first glance, factor in the average rent of a one-bedroom apartment in D.C. and it is clearly not feasible for a minimum wage worker to be able to afford their housing. According to *Rent.com*, as of June 4, 2007, the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment in D.C. falls between \$600 and \$1100 per month, with most apartments being toward the higher end of this spectrum. In order to be able to afford a one-bedroom place, the average worker needs to be earning about \$20.77, which is not even close to the \$7.25 per hour the federal government has promised workers by the end of 2009. While the cost of living in D.C. is an astounding 81% above the national average, lack of affordable housing and livable incomes is a problem throughout the United States[iii]. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2006 *Out of Reach* study reports the average worker in the US needs to be earning \$16.31 for a two bedroom apartment[iv].

Simply raising the federal minimum wage is not going to end chronic poverty in our country. Even though some believe that this raise will sweep the issue under the rug, it will not. People simply cannot live on so little money in a country that demands so much. When there are over 4 million families earning less than \$10,000/year (at or below minimum wage) it is time to take one step back, evaluate

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the situation, and realize how our economy and those who manage it are really treating their minimum wage workers.[v] All citizens must contact their Congressmen and women, letting them know that anything short of a Universal Living Wage will not suffice. For more information about the campaign for a Universal Living Wage, please visit <http://universallivingwage.org/>.

[i] U.S. Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics. May 19, 2006. Available for free at: <http://www.bls.gov/cps/minwage2005.htm>

[ii] Rose, Lacey. *America's Most Expensive Rentals*. August 16, 2006. Available for free at: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14378338/>

[iii] Rent.com. June 4, 2007. Available for free at <http://www.rent.com/rentals/washington-dc/>

[iv] National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach 2006*. December 12, 2006. Available for free at: www.nlihc.org

[v] Universal Living Wage. August 24, 2004. Available for free at: <http://www.universallivingwage.org/docsupport.htm>

Street Soccer Conference

Wherever you are in the U.S., individuals and organizations interested in fighting poverty through the positive power of sports are eligible for scholarships to attend the first ever:

Street Soccer USA

Organizing Conference

July 20-22, 2007

Charlotte, NC

What?

The Street Soccer USA Organizing Conference is offering scholarships to individuals and organizations in every state that want to form street soccer programs to compete in the **2008 Homeless USA Cup in Washington, DC**, and potentially the **2008 Homeless World Cup in Australia**.

The conference is designed to help people build successful and sustainable street soccer programs with the homeless. In addition to explaining the “**how to**,” the conference will provide participants with **equipment and other resources**. Participants also get the chance to meet others across the country engaged in the same exciting work and to build a network with them and the Homeless USA Cup organizers ahead of 2008 Cup.

Additionally, participants will meet the 2007 USA National team and watch a **street soccer tournament** in the style of the Homeless World Cup.

Finally all participants and their organizations will be part of a **documentary film** being made of the development of street soccer for the homeless in the US.

Why?

Sports, and it seems particularly soccer, is a great tool for the personal development of people on the street and likewise serves to humanize the problem of homelessness for the public, a problem that local organizations battle on a daily basis. In the brief two years such programming has been in place in the US, **over 80% of participants have made significant life changes** and millions of
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such programming has been in place in the US, **over 80% of participants have made significant life changes** and millions of Americans have been challenged to think about people who are homeless in a new way.

Homeless soccer can create social change and raise the profile of your agency and the social problems it tries to solve.

This conference will help you **secure equipment and money** for your street soccer program.

Being part of this conference means being a **founding member of the Street Soccer USA nonprofit**, the organizing body of the Homeless USA Cup.

Who?

Invitees:

Anyone or any organization interested in social change through sports, especially those interested in soccer and the Homeless World Cup.

Hosts:

Street Soccer USA

A new national nonprofit and future organizing group being incubated at the Urban Ministry Center in Charlotte, North Carolina

The US Soccer Foundation

The charitable arm of the US Soccer Federation seeking to enhance, assist and grow the sport of soccer in the US.

Street Sense

Washington DC's street newspaper that aims to empower the homeless people that sell the paper and educate readers about poverty issues.

National Coalition for the Homeless

A national advocacy group devoted to the mission of ending homelessness.

Sponsors:

Bank of America

Wachovia Securities

EUROSPORT (Soccer.Com)

Presbyterian Church (USA) Urban Ministries

Everyone interested will receive some degree of financial assistance in the form of a scholarship to the conference in Charlotte. There is **no conference registration fee** and we are working on getting accommodations provided. Those with team and the means to travel can also compete in the **2007 mini-tournament** that same weekend.

For more information visit www.homelessosccer.org or call Lawrence Cann at 704-926-0618 or Laura Thompson Osuri at 202-347-2006.

Also, please support the 2007 Homeless World Cup in Copenhagen by adding this banner to your website (please email kat@homelessworldcup.org for the banner file):

<http://www.plumdigitalmedia.com/testbed/hwcbanner/index.html>

Federal Policy Updates

Economic Justice Legislation

President George W. Bush started the Memorial Day weekend off by signing **legislation raising the federal minimum wage** for the first time in a decade. The law will take effect in 60 days.

The House approved the measure 348-73 last week, raising the federally mandated hourly pay from \$5.15 to \$7.25 in three stages over two years. The increase was part of a domestic spending package that also included extending aid for Hurricane Katrina victims. The Senate combined the minimum-wage bill with Iraq troop funding, passing it overwhelmingly, 80-14.

Approximately 12.5 million workers will benefit from this increase. www.acorn.org

Housing Legislation

The U.S. House of Representatives approved **H.R. 1427, the Federal Housing Finance Reform Act of 2007**, by a vote of 312-104 on May 22. The bill includes an Affordable Housing Fund estimated by the Congressional Budget Office to be valued at \$600 million a year. In the first year, 75% of the funds would go to the State of Louisiana and 25% to the State of Mississippi for the rebuilding and repair of housing affordable to very low and extremely low income families. The bill also includes a provision to reserve the funds for a future National Housing Trust Fund. www.nlihc.org

During the week of May 17th H.R. 1427, the Federal Housing Financial Reform Act of 2007, as debated and voted on by the full House of Representatives. The bill lays the foundation for the **establishment of a National Housing Trust Fund** by reserving approximately \$500 million a year from Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as a dedicated source of funding for the trust fund. The bill is expected to come up for full vote before the full House in July.

The House Committee on Financial Services passed **H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act (SEVRA)** on May 24th. Several amendments were adopted during the committee's markup of the bill. If passed the bill would amend voucher renewal funding problems, assure voucher holders of the ability to move with their vouchers, and simplify rent calculations for voucher holders and project-based and public housing residents.

Homeless Legislation

On May 24th, U.S. Senators Jack Reed (D-RI), Wayne Allard (R-CO) and 11 other U.S. Senators introduced S. 1518, the **Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act of 2007 (CPEHA)**. The bill would reauthorize HUD McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs at \$1.8 billion dollars and consolidate the current homeless assistance programs into one program. S. 1518 will have a hearing before the Senate Banking Subcommittee during the week of June 18th.

NCH On the Road

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

July

Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau:

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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.

June 27th -July 1st U.S. Social Forum, Atlanta, GA

July 14th Villanova University, Villanova, Pa

July 17th Northern Virginia Community College

July 28th Dream Center, Pittsburgh, Pa

In addition, NCH will be speaking at 19 events throughout the DC/VA/MD area

In 2006 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.

July 14th DC Homeless Soccer Team scrimmages Charlotte Homeless Soccer Team, DC

July 20-22nd Street Soccer Conference and Tournament , Atlanta GA

NCH Announcements

Homeless Empowerment Project

“STREET SENSE”

Wednesday, June 20th, 2007

2:00pm

Presenters: Jesse Smith Jr, Street Sense Vendor Manager

Location: Church of the Epiphany, 1317 G Street, NW Washington, DC

Mission: Street Sense aims to serve as a vehicle for elevating voices and public debate on issues relating to poverty while also creating economic opportunities for people who are experiencing homelessness in our community.

Benefits:

Self-Employment

Develop writing skills

Develop marketing skills

Improve communication skills

Questions? Contact Michael O'Neill at 202-462-4822 x20 or via email at moneill@nationalhomeless.org

- In order to curtail the devastating impact that tobacco use has on the homeless community, the National Coalition for Homeless, in partnership with The Association of Gospel Rescue Missions (AGRM) and The National Network on Tobacco Prevention and Poverty (NNTPP) are pleased to announce The National Survey on Tobacco Prevention at Homeless Service Agencies. The survey can be found NCH's website on the home page and under the "health care justice" section. Please take a moment to complete this survey if you work in an organization such as a shelter or soup kitchen that offers assistance to those experiencing homelessness. The results of this survey will help guide further research and funding to this issue. Thank you for your time! For more please visit www.nationalhomeless.org
- Founded in 1982, NCH is a national network of people who are currently experiencing or have experienced homelessness, activists and advocates, community-based and faith-based service providers, and others committed to a single mission. That mission, our common bond, is to end homelessness. NCH is committed to creating the systemic and attitudinal changes necessary to prevent and end homelessness by involving people who have formerly or are currently experiencing homelessness in all of our work.
- A tax-deductible donation to NCH brings tangible results that help protect homeless people and promote social justice. Our work is innovative, cost-effective, and is creating a documented paradigm shift in how homeless people everywhere are viewed by society. A gift of \$75, \$100, \$150, \$250 or whatever you can afford will enable our critically needed work to go on. Giving to NCH has never been easier. Please log onto our secure website, www.nationalhomeless.org for additional information and to donate online.

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