



## National Coalition for the Homeless Newsletter

NCH NEWS

November 9, 2009

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### Your Donation Counts!

- [Any amount that you give to NCH this holiday season shows your dedication and concern for your neighbors experiencing homelessness. Even just \\$5 will count you among the thousands working to Bring America Home this Thanksgiving! \[Donate Today!\]\(#\)](#)

### Special Message from the Executive Director

#### A Thanksgiving Letter to Members from the Executive Director

The Butler family has honored this country for generations, at first while enslaved and now free, though persistently poor. So, it came as no surprise when the youngest member of the Butler family, Adam, raised his right hand and swore to protect and defend the United States of America. Their surprise came a decade later when Adam, living in the Nation's capitol, became one of the tens of thousands of mentally ill homeless veterans hidden in the shadows of the world's wealthiest country.

For the past four decades, Americans have tried unsuccessfully to cure the social ill of modern homelessness by treating its symptoms rather than its causes. A severe lack of affordable housing and a scarceness of jobs that pay a living wage are the root causes of homelessness. But, failing a final solution-based strategy to ending homelessness, we're now assigning rank-and-resources within a hierarchy of needs and conditions, measured along a compassion scale of those who are deserving, less deserving and undeserving.

Recent efforts, over the past eight years, at reducing one of the most visible signs of America's poverty, chronic homelessness, have been moderately successful. But, the ultimate and important goal of abolishing chronic homelessness, as a tipping point to ending all homelessness, has not been reached. So like many illnesses, chronic homelessness, as social ill, will have its symptoms wane, the cures will lessen and attention will be paid elsewhere. And like most illnesses, the symptoms will reemerge stronger and more resistant.

Within our lifetime, Americans can achieve the goal of ending homelessness, by focusing our attention and resources on all those who need and lack affordable housing and living-wage jobs. This goal will have its challenges, not the least of which will be to resist a tendency to divide the homeless into competing subpopulations: young vs. old, individual vs. family, chronic vs. episodic, mental illness vs. substance abuse, veteran vs. non-veteran and on and on. The theory behind subdividing the homeless rests upon the assumption that finite resources can only work to cure a limited social ill. This divide-and-conquer mind-set, in the 1990's, led us to eight years of directing new resources towards the chronically homeless, in part to the exclusion of others experiencing homelessness.

Adam and his wife will celebrate Thanksgiving 2009 in a shelter not far from the US Capitol building. They're thankful for having each other and for the generous support of those around them. Adam is now short-listed for a housing voucher targeted for homeless veterans and their families, a process that's taken the better part of a year. Today, what concerns Adam is the thought of leaving his sheltered friends behind. Adam's military service was a sacrifice he made for all Americans. A sacrifice, he believes, that should be honored by ending the homelessness of every American – once and for all... and for this he will be forever thankful.

### National Events

#### National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day

Each year since 1990, on or near the first day of winter and the longest night of the year, National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) has sponsored National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day to bring attention to the tragedy of homelessness and to remember our homeless friends who have paid the ultimate price for our nation's failure to end homelessness. This year, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council (NHCHC) has joined us in co-sponsoring this event.

In an effort to maximize the impact of the day, NCH and the NHCHC have encouraged local and statewide organizations to hold memorials of their own. Last year, over 100 cities across the nation, from Detroit to Seattle to Washington, DC, sponsored events to honor those who had died and to recommit to the task of ending homelessness.

This Year, once again, NCH is encouraging groups to plan a special event on or around December 21, 2009. Some groups may decide to hold their event a day or so before the date. To find out more and to get involved, please visit:

<http://nationalhomeless.org/projects/memorial/index.html>

Posters commemorating this annual memorial are available at:

<http://nationalhomeless.org/store>

### **National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week Recap**

National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week took place this last week, as groups across the country held events to bring greater awareness to the problems of hunger and homelessness.

NCH's Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau was involved in nearly 30 speaking engagements across the country, speaking to more than 2,000 individuals. All 15 speakers from DC were involved in these presentations, as well as 12 local speakers in the 9 states that the Bureau travelled to. Sleep outs, workshops, panels and hunger banquets were some of the events these speakers were involved in, as they continue to work tirelessly to raise awareness and eliminate stereotypes of the issues of homelessness and hunger.

If your community would like to know how to be involved in this campaign in future years, the 2009 Event Manual can serve as an evaluator for past efforts and possibly offer fresh ideas for the future. Download the [2009 Event Manual](#) today and see how your community can get involved!

### **Upcoming Faces of Homelessness Presentations**

Our Speakers' Bureau is especially popular during November. In fact, they are speaking at more than 50 events this month all across the country! To find out more information about these events, as well as presentations in December, please visit: [The Speakers' Bureau Gig Schedule](#).

If you are interested in attending any of these events, please contact Michael O'Neill, [moneill@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:moneill@nationalhomeless.org).

## **Policy Updates**

### **Hate Crimes**

Senate Judiciary Committee to vote soon on the Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act (S. 1765). [ACT NOW, call your Senators and urge them to vote "yes" on S.1765](#)

### **On December 1 or 2 Call Congress for NHTF Money**

Let's Get NHTF Money Before Congress Adjourns for Holidays

Please call your representative and both of your senators on December 1 or 2.

Tell them you want at least \$1 billion for the National Housing Trust Fund before Congress adjourns later in December. Tell them to support any bill moving through the House or Senate that contains money for the NHTF.

Our goal is to create an early-December blizzard of phone calls from all over in a compressed period of time to demonstrate strong and urgent support for an initial infusion of money for the NHTF.

877-210-5351 is the toll free number for the congressional switchboard. Ask to be connected to the housing staffer for your representative's and senators' offices.

Please pass this message on to others.

Questions? Contact the Outreach Team at (202) 662-1530 or at [outreach@nlhc.org](mailto:outreach@nlhc.org).

### **NCH Requests Advocates to Lead HEARTH Focus Groups**

The National Coalition for the Homeless requests your assistance in assuring that the views and recommendations of people experiencing homelessness are brought to the forefront in our nation's policymaking on homelessness prevention and elimination.

Our goal is to gather views from at least 250 people experiencing homelessness from across the nation. We request that focus groups be concluded by November 30, 2009.

NCH urges Advocates to send the results of their focus groups to Charles at: [cbotrager@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:cbotrager@nationalhomeless.org) by the end of November.

NCH thanks you in advance for your assistance in ensuring that the views and recommendations of people experiencing homelessness are brought to the federal level of policymaking on homelessness.

### **NCH Quarterly Public Policy Conference Call**

The National Coalition for the Homeless hosts a series of Quarterly Public Policy Calls to discuss recent developments in homelessness public policy and to gather input from advocates across the country. Any individual who wants to engage with NCH on public policy matters is invited to participate.

Our next call will be on December 9 at 4pm est. It will feature a year end wrap up with topics including homeless hate crimes, the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act, and the implementation of the HEARTH Act.

## **Other News**

### **Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureaus Continue to Educate and Grow**

*By Michael Stoops, Project Director*

Based on the model Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau in Washington, DC, the National Coalition for the Homeless has established 30 local bureaus in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina.

With the support of the AmeriCorps\*VISTA program, this expansion began in November 2007. Over the last two years, the VISTA members and their locally-based Speakers' Bureaus have presented 671 educational speaking engagements to a combined audience of 32,374.

So far this year, the VISTA members have presented 479 educational speaking engagements to 25,542 people, already surpassing the DC-based national Bureau's record 340 presentations and over 17,000 audience members in 2008.

Over 150 homeless/formerly homeless people have been recruited & trained as speakers in these local Bureaus in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina.

These accomplishments wouldn't have been possible without the hard work of our VISTA members, and the dedication and support of our local site partners, and NCH members, including:

Florida:

Alachua County Housing Authority, Coalition to End Homelessness (Ft. Lauderdale), Emergency Services & Homeless Coalition of Jacksonville, EscaRosa Coalition on the Homeless, Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County, The Tallahassee-Leon County Shelter, Florida Coalition for the Homeless, Community Council on Homelessness, Miami Coalition for the Homeless, Southernmost Homeless Assistance League, Homeless Services Network of Central Florida, Joining Hands Community Mission, Pinellas County Coalition for the Homeless, Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness, Hope Foundation and the Volusia/Flagler County Coalition for the Homeless.

Georgia:

Metro Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless, Georgia Task Force for the Homeless, Athens Area Homeless Shelter and the Central City AIDS Network/Diversity House/Rainbow Center.

South Carolina:

Upstate Homeless Coalition of South Carolina, The Haven (Spartanburg) and Lighthouse Ministries.

With the continued support of these local member organizations and the AmeriCorps\*VISTA program, we hope to continue to expand this project nationwide in 2010.

#### **NCH Supports Its Members Through New Corporate Partnerships**

The National Coalition for the Homeless is supporting state and local coalitions through its new partnerships with corporate partners LANDS' END and VOLCOM CLOTHING. Each partner is launching a national donation and awareness campaign: Lands' End's – **The Big Warm Up** and VOLCOM Clothing's – **Give Jeans a Chance**. Our corporate partners have retail outlets in communities across the country and will be making donations to many of our local membership coalitions and organizations.

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National Coalition for the Homeless  
2201 P Street, NW  
Washington, District of Columbia 20037-1033  
US

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