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**From:** National Coalition for the Homeless**To:** {EMAIL\_ADDRESS}**Subject:** NCH News - September 2009

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### **New Report Documents 10 Years of Anti-Homeless Violence**



NCH has released the 2008 numbers of hate crimes and violent attacks against people experiencing homelessness. The numbers are from a new report entitled *Hate, Violence, And Death on Main Street USA, 2008*.



Key findings include:

- The total number of attacks for 2008: 106.
- The number of fatal attacks is the second highest since 2001: 27 deaths.
- 73 percent of the attacks were committed by individuals who were ages 25 and younger.
- Florida ranked #1 for the fourth year in a row for most attacks, California was second.

"Those experiencing homelessness are often ignored or misunderstood by society. If these brutal attacks were committed against any other religious or minority group to the same degree, there would be a national outcry and call for governmental action," said Michael Stoops, executive director of NCH. "We must respond to this dehumanization and protect homeless persons against hate crimes and violence."

The 42 percent of homeless people who are unsheltered are the most vulnerable to these attacks. Because crimes committed against homeless persons often go unreported, the actual numbers of non-lethal attacks may be much higher. While the motive for an attack is often unclear, some of the attackers said they committed the crime out of "boredom," or for a "thrill" or "fun."

The report also details ways communities and governments can act to solve the crisis of anti-homeless violence. Maryland added homeless people to its hate crimes law in May 2009. California, Florida, South Carolina and Washington, DC have similar pieces of legislation pending. The DC City Council approved adding homeless people to its hate crimes law on July 31st. The bill awaits approval from the Mayor. A bi-partisan bill, (H.R. 3419), was introduced in the U.S. House on July 30th by U.S. Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) and 13 other Members of Congress asking for hate crimes statistical data to be collected on homeless people.

"The bottom line is, people need to be housed," said David Pirtle, a victim of violence and NCH Board member. "If the federal government adequately funds permanent affordable housing, fewer people will be on the streets, and fewer men and women will be attacked."

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### **Beating the Homeless Cool, Not Cruel** By Brian Levin and Michael Stoops

Over the last two calendar years, more Americans in the United States were killed in a little-noticed spate of unprovoked attacks than were killed by terrorists, in large commercial jet crashes or in racial hate crimes.

Since 1999, more than 240 vulnerable homeless Americans have been stabbed, beaten, drowned, shot or burned to death in a revolting display of one of the last socially tolerated prejudices, this one based on class.

Despite being prime targets of prejudice and violence, particularly in today's youth subculture, the homeless are routinely excluded from lessons related to tolerance, as well as from official data collection and hate-crime penalty enhancement laws.

A newly released report from the National Coalition for the Homeless documented 27 unprovoked, apparently bias-related homicides by attackers in the United States last year, down one from the previous year and the second-highest number of killings since 2001.

Read more [here](#).

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## NCH Announces New Executive Director

The Board of Directors of the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) is pleased to announce that we have hired Neil Donovan as our new Executive Director. Michael Stoops, who has served as Executive Director for the past four years, will return to his former position and passion as Director of Community Organizing for NCH.

Neil Donovan has been working with and for persons experiencing homelessness for the past twenty-six years in positions ranging from a street outreach worker to executive director. His previous work includes administering transitional housing programs for the Pine Street Inn in Boston, the largest homeless service agency in New England, and administering employment and community programs at the Shattuck Shelter in Boston. He also worked as Senior Advisor at the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness and was the first Director of the Center for Capacity Building at the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

Michael Stoops has worked with persons experiencing homelessness since 1972. One of the prime forces behind the enactment of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in 1987, Michael was on the Board of Directors of the National Coalition for the Homeless in the 1980's and has worked on staff for NCH for the past 21 years, leading the cause of civil rights for persons experiencing homelessness as its Director of Community Organizing, interim Executive Director, and finally Executive Director. Michael is excited to be able to devote his full attention to organizing communities to preserve the rights of those who find themselves homeless while working to end homelessness.

"We are extremely fortunate to have the skills of these two long-time, passionate advocates for families and individuals experiencing homeless to lead the National Coalition during this period of national economic crisis to help us achieve our goal of ending homelessness in America" said John Parvensky, President of the NCH Board of Directors. "Their skills, along with those of the existing staff, interns and diverse Board of Directors at NCH, will complement each other, and allow the Coalition to maintain and expand its capacity to serve as the leading national voice of and for persons experiencing homelessness.:

"I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve one of our country's most remarkable coalitions, made up of a wonderfully distinct and committed network of individuals and groups" said Donovan. "The Coalition is without equal, as both a leading national voice on homelessness as well as the channel through which the voices of people experiencing homelessness can and must be heard. I look forward to the important role and responsibility of supporting the Coalition's staff, board and membership-at-large."

Read more [here](#).



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## NCH Speaker Steve Thomas on Hear my Story Website

Steve Thomas, a member of NCH's Speakers' Bureau, is now featured on the [Hear my Story](#) website. Hear my Story aims to communicate the experiences of people living with homelessness and poverty through personal accounts, creative fiction and art.

Steve also maintains his own website, [betterbelievesteve.com](http://betterbelievesteve.com). Hear my Story is a venture of the Homeless Awareness Project, Inc.



## Policy Update

Representatives Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), Robert Wexler (D-FL), and twelve other U.S. Representatives introduced the Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act (H.R. 3419) in late July. The legislation, which enjoys bipartisan support, would add homeless status to the federal reporting system on hate crimes. This would provide the FBI and advocates with crucial data to reveal the extent of bias-motivated crimes committed against homeless people.



The National Coalition for the Homeless extends a warm congratulations to Representatives Johnson and Wexler as well as the other 12 original cosponsors of H.R. 3419 for their willingness to stand up for the safety and protection of people experiencing homelessness. Other Members of Congress joining Johnson and Wexler at the time of the bill's introduction were: Steve Cohen (TN), Danny Davis (IL), Marcia Fudge (OH), Alcee Hastings (FL), Dennis Kucinich (OH), Zoe Lofgren (CA), James McGovern (MA), Gwen Moore (WI), Grace Napolitano (CA), Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (FL) and Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL). These original cosponsors include four members of the House Judiciary Committee, one Republican, and members of the Black, Hispanic, and Progressive Caucuses.

NCH urges people experiencing homelessness, homeless advocates, and concerned Americans to contact their U.S. Representatives and request them to join as co-sponsors of the Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act (H.R. 3419). An action alert with a message and action instructions may be found at: [http://www.nationalhomeless.org/advocacy/action\\_alerts/HCAHSA\\_%20ActionAlert0709.pdf](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/advocacy/action_alerts/HCAHSA_%20ActionAlert0709.pdf).

## Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization

Twelve organizations concerned about homelessness, including the National Coalition for the Homeless, have issued a set of recommendations for improving the public workforce investment system. The organizations urged Congress and the Administration to advance them through reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act.

The organizations note that the public workforce investment system was established to help all Americans prepare for employment and re-enter the workforce. Some publicly funded programs do reach people who are homeless, but serious impediments limit this population's access to workforce programs. A key barrier is the current emphasis on providing "core" services at the expense of "enhanced" services and vocational training. Training and intensive services are essential to many persons experiencing homelessness who seek to join the workforce. Admittedly, many of these individuals offer a constellation of challenges that exceed those presented by the majority who use the workforce system. Far from receiving incentives to meet these needs, however, workforce authorities

are neither rewarded for serving people who experience homelessness nor encouraged to do so. Moreover, workforce system planners and practitioners lack the information, resources and support they need to implement evidence-based workforce development practices that have proven successful with homeless populations.

Recommendations being offered by the homelessness organizations include:

- Require Workforce Authorities' Plans to Address the Needs of Persons who are Homeless. Require Workforce Authorities to Report the Housing Status of those Served.
- Authorize Homeless Navigators at One Stop Centers.
- Enable Unaccompanied Homeless Youth to Access Workforce Services.
- Authorize the Development of Appropriate Performance and Outcome Measures.
- Offer Homeless Workforce System Development Grants.
- Create a National Center to Support Workforce Development for the Homeless.
- Increase Funding for Essential Services.

The national homelessness organizations invite endorsements of the recommendations document from additional national, state, and local organizations. To view the recommendations, please visit, [http://nationalhomeless.org/advocacy/WIA\\_ReAuth-0709.pdf](http://nationalhomeless.org/advocacy/WIA_ReAuth-0709.pdf). To add your organization name to the recommendations, please send a request to be added to [cbontrager@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:cbontrager@nationalhomeless.org).

### **Housing Choice Vouchers**

The National Coalition for the Homeless and other national low-income housing advocacy organizations are monitoring actions that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is taking to address a widespread budget shortfall currently affecting the Housing Choice Voucher program.

HUD has advised all public housing agencies that administer HUD's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program that additional funds have been made available to help them address funding shortfalls that may limit them from serving families participating in their HCV rental assistance programs. HUD issued this guidance to minimize the impact on families and prevent terminating housing vouchers. Letters were sent to 2,400 public housing agencies that administer the HCV program, also known as Section 8, to inform them of HUD's action thus far to address challenges they may be encountering as they manage their HCV program.

HUD has already worked with several public housing agencies to assist them to take administrative actions to lessen the impact on families. HUD has also awarded \$89 million from its \$100 million set-aside fund, provided by Congress to give additional support to agencies in certain situations, such as increased leasing or unforeseen circumstances.

In the coming weeks, HUD will award the remaining \$11 million from the set-aside fund to agencies that are on the verge of terminating families. In addition, HUD will disperse another \$30 million to agencies that are eligible to receive extraordinary administrative fees for technical assistance to prevent the termination of families. These funds can also be used to fund vouchers. HUD provides fees to housing agencies to administer the HCV program.

The shortfalls have so far impacted about 15 percent of all PHAs and HUD is working aggressively to resolve PHA shortfalls with existing funds. If it is determined that additional funding is needed, HUD will work with Congress on legislative changes, for example, authority to adjust allocations of available funding, to minimize adverse consequences to families and to the other PHAs that are not experiencing shortfalls.

HUD has asked housing agencies to submit an e-mail no later than August 14th to HUD if they suspect their available funding will force them to terminate families. The National Low Income Housing Coalition issued an action alert urging state and low housing advocates to press their public housing authorities to respond to the August 14 deadline.

### **Human Right to Housing**

The National Coalition for the Homeless recently endorsed H. Res. 416, (Lewis, D-GA), which calls on the Senate to ratify key international human rights treaties, including the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights which recognizes housing as a human right for all.

Of the Resolution, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP) writes:

By conservative estimates, at least 750,000 persons are homeless in the U.S. on any given night and as many as 3.5 million are homeless over the course of the year. A July 2009 report by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found that approximately 41.7% of the homeless population is unsheltered. As an initial step to address the lack of affordable, adequate housing in the United States, the undersigned organizations ask the U.S. House of representatives to pass House Res. 416. The Resolution calls upon the Senate to Ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which recognizes housing as a basic human right.

To add your organization's support to the Resolution please email Laurel Weir at the NLCHP ([lweir@nlchp.org](mailto:lweir@nlchp.org)). The Lewis resolution can be found here at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:H.RES.416:>.

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### **Thank You from NCH**

Anita Beaty

KuWanda Brathwaite

Michael Chesser

Debra Cronmiller

Sherri Downing

Paul Kohler

Lori Courtney (in honor of James P. Conley)

Stacy Lynch

Gladys Morrow

Madeline Peyroux

Plasmanet, Inc.

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## DC City Council Adds Homeless People to Hate Crimes Law

NCH is pleased to announce that the City Council voted today to add protections for homeless people to Washington, DC's hate crimes law. The homeless hate crimes provision is part of the overall DC Public Safety Bill. The City Council's vote follows other states, such as Maryland which added homeless people to its hate crimes law in May.

From 1999 to 2007, the National Coalition has documented 774 documented acts of violence committed against homeless individuals in the United States, 217 of which have resulted in death.

In D.C. last year, two homeless men were beaten and another was killed. During October and November, one man was hit repeatedly over the head in a park and the other was accosted on a street downtown. On Christmas Eve, a man was murdered.

Last month, a 60 year old man was attacked near the L'Enfant Plaza Metro.

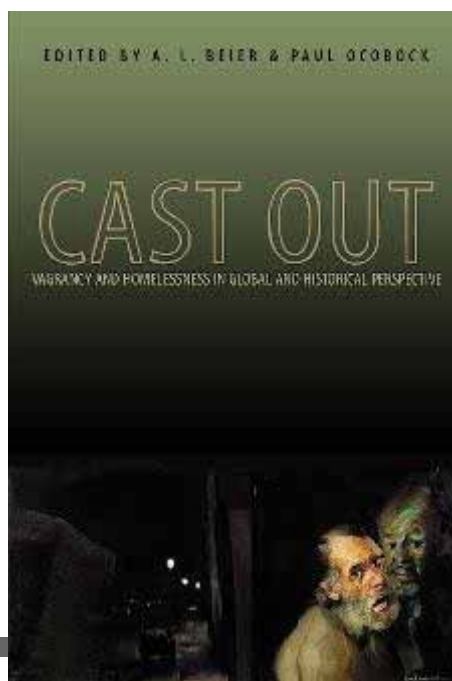
"The violence perpetrated against homeless people was something I never knew about until it happened to me. The action taken today by the DC City Council is needed to prevent violence against this very vulnerable population," said David Pirtle, formerly homeless and a NCH board member.

"These incidents demonstrate the dangerous reality of life without housing and the increasing disregard for people experiencing homelessness. Extending hate crimes protections to homeless people sends a loud and clear message that these individuals are not second-class citizens and deserve the right to safety," said Michael Stoops, Executive Director, National Coalition for the Homeless.



### **Book Review: *Cast Out: Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global And Historical Perspective* by A.L. Beier and Paul Ocobock (ed.)**

**By Lauren Tatro, NCH Intern**



This book is a collection of essays that discusses the topics of vagrancy, homelessness, poverty and its global history. It starts out with an introduction on what the homeless have been called over the years. The names that homeless have been called according to this book were "beggars, bums, mendicants, idlers, indigents, itinerants, the underclass, and the homeless".

Then it gives a nice introduction about vagrancy and the laws under it. It defines vagrancy laws as "unique; while most crimes are defined by actions, vagrancy laws make no specific action or inaction illegal" (intro). It then explains that over the course of many centuries and across many countries the response to helping poverty has changed over the course of time. Some of the chapters in the book discuss the power of these vagrancy laws "as coercive engines in punishment and exploration; others highlight the failure of vagrancy policies at the hands of human agency, state incapacity, and persistent persona charity".



A great deal of the history of vagrancy was setup in fourteenth century England during the Black Death, which killed a great number of people both rich and poor. In contrast, the Greek culture had a contrast between the poor population and its beggar population. The poor were normally small landowners with barely enough to get by and beggars were just landless people. During this time it was believed that it was the duty of the Church to take care of the poor and their needs. This is then contrasted with an example for before and during the medieval Islamic period when giving to the poor by the rich was a means of "poor relief and redistribution of the wealth". It then went into speaking about the twentieth century and how the two World Wars had a huge impact on the issues of vagrancy and homelessness. During this time Europe and the United States encouraged "the development of a sedentary and permanent workforce and a blending of state and no state welfare schemes. Also this time changed people's perceptions of the poor and their personal freedoms. This presentation of ideas led into the social reforms of today and how the homeless have some social programs but more still needs to be done to completely rid the world of this global problem.

The book is broken down into chapters, which all start with a different country and its history on vagrancy and homelessness. Each gives a background on how the country progressed and the problems and improvements it had over the years. England is the first country that is discussed and then India, Brazil, Siberia, America, East Africa, China, New Guinea, and Japan. But England's history is described much further back in time than the other countries. England is also described in more detail about its labor laws and its progression of right for its working population. The other countries explained are in more current times and deal with more current issues. This book will open the eyes of its reader because it explains more in detail what issues different countries have had with vagrancy and homelessness and how they either helped or worsen the issues for their population over the years. It is very informative and will help many others understand the global history of vagrancy and homelessness.

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## NCH on the Road

Who's listening to our speakers:

August 22: Denison University students (Cincinnati, OH) at The Pilgrimage (Washington, DC)

August 23: Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning (Rockville, MD)

August 25: Boston University students at George Sherman Union, Boston University

August 27: Georgetown University

August 27: Burke Presbyterian Church (Burke, VA) at The Pilgrimage (Washington, DC)

August 27: George Washington University

August 31: Washington and Lee University students at the NCH office

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## HUD Chief Off to a Running Start

**Former NCH Intern Tony Taylor Interviews HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan**

*Editor's Note: Secretary Donovan himself interned with NCH in the summer of 1987, while an undergraduate at Harvard.*



**At a recent news conference, President Obama was asked to comment on the growing crisis of family homelessness. The President responded by acknowledging that the homelessness problem in this country “was bad even when the economy was good,” and cited the importance of creating quality jobs to help homeless families and individuals afford shelter. While job creation is certainly an important component of a federal response to homelessness, it is only part of the solution. What would you add to the President’s response?**

For many Americans, the previous economic prosperity was largely fueled by the artificial growth in home values. This put tremendous pressure on the rental marketplace as lower income families struggled to find a home or apartment they could afford. They experienced none of the benefits of a booming housing market and all of the negative consequences.

President Obama and I are convinced that any recovery must be sustainable and based on real growth, not only on the jobs front, but in the housing market as well. And this absolutely must include a more concerted effort on the part of the federal government to encourage the production of more affordable rental housing.

**What steps have the Congress and your Administration taken thus far that will prevent more people from becoming homeless and help put people experiencing homelessness back into homes?**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides \$1.5 billion in grants to rapidly re-house families who fall into homelessness or to help prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place. HUD’s new Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) allows us to fund homeless prevention activities as never before. President Obama and the Congress recognized that too many families are experiencing a sudden economic crisis and are at extremely high risk of becoming homeless. The Recovery Act is just one way we’re hoping to offer the kind of short- and medium-term help to put them on the path to self sufficiency.

**For many years, low-income families and individuals in our nation have faced a severe shortage of affordable housing. How will the Department of Housing and Urban Development address this problem under your leadership?**

The prior Administration lost sight of how the housing boom, as beneficial as it may have been for homeowners, placed much of our available rental housing stock well beyond the reach of many lower income families. In particular, families living in high-cost areas continue to face a hard choice – either move to a lower cost area or live in substandard housing.

We must take a more balanced approach to our national housing policy. This is why we are seeking to create \$1 billion Housing Trust Fund to stimulate the production of affordable housing and to increase the number of available rental vouchers. We also intend to increase funding to our long-standing CDBG and HOME programs that will go a long way toward investing in the affordable rental market. I believe the President’s proposed 2010 budget returns the federal government to its leadership role as a catalyst for expanding the availability of decent and affordable rental housing.



**What role do you believe scattered-site public housing should play in your Department's response to homelessness?**

Housing First projects have shown that homeless persons, including chronically homeless persons, can be stably housed in scattered site housing, with appropriate support. Of critical importance is the ability of the families and service providers to be reliably in contact. Placing homeless families in locations that are distant to important service providers may add a layer of complication to the provision of services.

Placing homeless families in scattered site public housing is a local decision based on the type of housing available, and the type and location of the services being provided. I encourage PHAs to connect with their community's local continuum of care to secure services and to assess what the best housing option might be for homeless families.

**What is your vision for the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness in the coming years?**

The focus of the previous USICH was to end chronic homelessness. We learned from that experience that if we assess research and then clearly define a policy objective, target resources to meet that objective and then measure results that we can make a real difference. HUD, a member of the USICH, played a key role in this initiative. It's now time to use that same process and see what can be done not just for the chronically homeless but for other homeless populations, including homeless families. This Administration intends to have more engagement and collaboration through the USICH with Federal agencies to solve homelessness.

**While many people experiencing homelessness live in city streets or in emergency shelters, countless others spend their nights in the homes of friends and family, in campgrounds, or in low-rent motels. How will this Administration plan to reach out and provide needed services to those households, as well?**

People are often forced to live with family and friends because they can't find an affordable home to rent. This is why it is critical that we do everything we can to stimulate the production of affordable rental housing. The Recovery Act's Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program will help thousands of families to avoid homelessness by offering moving expenses, security deposits and temporary rental assistance. HUD is making significant contributions toward the capital needs of local housing authorities so they, in turn, can serve more families. And we're reaffirming HUD's support for our voucher programs by proposing nearly \$18 billion in the 2010 budget, an increase of \$1.8 billion over current levels. It's clear that President Obama is intent on making sure that lower income families, and specifically those at higher risk of homelessness, must not be forgotten as we seek to put this nation back on the path of sustainable economic growth.

**Homelessness is not just a housing issue, of course, but an issue pertaining also to health care, incomes, civil rights, education, jobs. In what ways do you plan on coordinating your efforts at HUD with the efforts of the other Departments in combating homelessness?**

To solve homelessness requires not just housing but access to an array of supports. The services by agencies such as the US Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education are absolutely vital to help ensure that once persons are housed they have the services they need to become stably housed and improve their lives through education and employment. Clearly the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness will be playing a key role in coordinating government agencies on the issue.

**During your years as Commissioner of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation**

**and Development, what role did you play in providing housing resources for the city's homeless population? What lessons did you learn from that experience that will inform your work as HUD Secretary?**

In one of the most expensive housing markets in the country, we were able to make significant progress toward building and preserving 165,000 units of affordable housing, the largest municipal affordable housing plan in the nation's history. One of my proudest achievements in New York was the New York/New York III a \$1 billion agreement between the state and the city to finance and develop 9,000 new units of supportive housing in New York City. The lessons I learned are that if you hope to develop affordable housing, you have to be nimble and you have to gather a collection of partners to help make it happen.

**How did you become involved in the issues of homelessness and low-income housing?**

As an eleven year old, I was sitting in Yankee Stadium during Game 2 of the 1977 World Series when Howard Cosell's uttered his famous words: "Ladies and gentlemen, the Bronx is burning." The Bronx burning on the city skyline was just one of the many visible signs that government institutions and urban programs were failing. People were asking if our cities were dead, and American families moved out of urban cores to the suburbs in record numbers. It was a frightening and eye-opening time to live in New York. But it was a time that also sparked a deep interest in me, an interest in how I could play a part in changing the policies that shaped the urban landscape and the built environment around me. I remember very vividly walking on my way to school in the morning and seeing people sleeping on the streets. I remember constantly asking myself why. Why was the world like this? And what can I do to change it? I worked for a community housing developer in New York City after studying public policy and architecture in graduate school. Then one of my professors from graduate school asked me to join him at HUD in the Clinton Administration.

**Why do you believe it is important for the government to play a role in providing and attaining affordable housing in this country? Do you believe that the federal government can really make a difference in preventing and ending homelessness?**

The resources of the federal government can help as no other entity can, either through direct investment, tax credits, bond financing or a combination of these tools. But government can't do it alone. The only reason we were so successful in New York was because we marshaled the combined resources of a number of public and private players. I also think we have to change our general approach to affordable housing and endeavor to create sustainable communities that are transit-oriented and energy efficient. That's why HUD is working closely with the Departments of Transportation, Energy, Labor and Education to cultivate a more comprehensive and holistic approach to development. We just have to think smarter about how we build the communities of tomorrow.

In the same way, I think the federal government can make a real difference in preventing homelessness as we work to end homelessness for those experiencing long-term or chronic homelessness. As you know, there has been a shift in how the federal government, as well as State and local communities, in how we confront chronic homelessness. All across the country, you're seeing the creation of thousands of new permanent supportive housing units and a noticeable decrease in our reliance on emergency shelters. I anticipate that we will continue to see this paradigm shift in the years to come.

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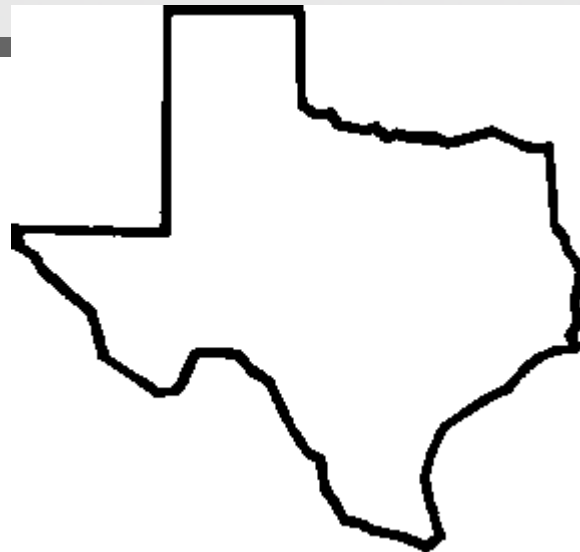
**Texas Homeless Network Conference Oct. 13-16**

Join The Texas Homeless Network October 14-16, 2009 in San Antonio, Texas, where riverboats aren't the only thing



that will move you!

Help us celebrate over 21 years of building communities! The THN conference is one of the largest and most diverse events of its kind in the southern and southwestern United States. Scores of learning and networking opportunities will be offered for the conference attendee who enjoys didactic presentations, and for those who enjoy seeing, first-hand, San Antonio area social service agencies. Visit <http://thn.org/info/static/files/2009THNConferenceRegistration.pdf> to register.



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### ***NCH News Is Going Bi-Weekly***



*NCH News* strives to serve as a comprehensive resource in the fight to end homelessness. In order to better provide our readers with the most current and relevant information, we will be switching to a bi-weekly schedule starting next month. Look for *NCH News* in your inbox every other Friday.

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