

NCH . NEWS . . .

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NCH News - April 2009

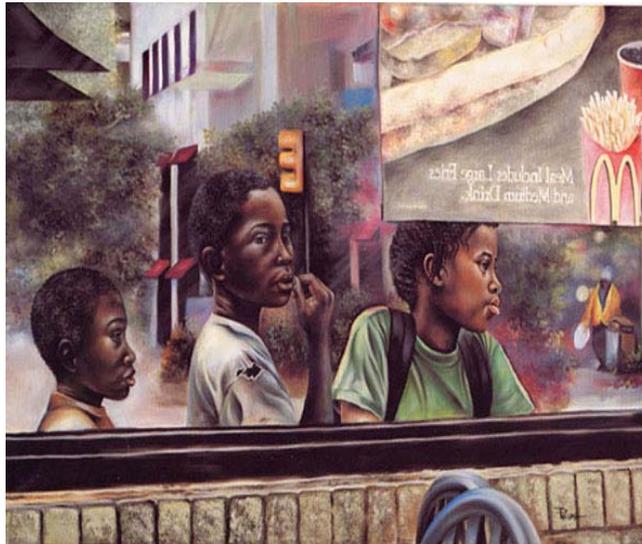
This is the April issue of NCH News.

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One in 50 U.S. Children Homeless



The U.S. is experiencing its greatest level of child homelessness since the Great Depression, according to the National Center on Family Homelessness. The Center's new report *America's Young Outcasts* reveals that one in 50 of the country's children are experiencing homelessness each year.

The report, which examined data for 2005-06 -- before the current economic crisis -- takes an in-depth look at the situation in all 50 states. The mental and physical health effects of homelessness on children are discussed, as are potential policy solutions.

To view the report, click [here](#).

“Homeless”: A Song from One of Our Members

NCH member **Lenni Lissberger** sends us this song, inspired by an article from last month's NCH News:

Wet street. Cold feet. Why did my life turn this way?
 Filthy hands. Garbage cans. Why did my life turn this way?
 No home for shelter, the ground for my bed.
 People walk round me and look straight ahead.
 Why can't they see me and hear what I say,
 why did my life turn this way?
 Child's sick. No milk. Why must her life be this way?
 Weak cry. Don't die. Why must her life be this way?
 Won't you please take her and give her a home,
 keep her and love her and make her your own.
 My heart goes with her, it tears out of me,
 but I can't help it, it's hopeless you see.
 Black sky. Why try. It's just the same every day.
 Can't sleep. Water's deep. Hopelessness calls me away.
 Someone should have helped me cause I'm human too,
 but they won't see me, so what can I do?
 I don't like living if this is true,
 so I'm doing what I've got to do,
 yes, I'm doing what I've got to do.

Public Policy Update – March 2009



It has been a busy month for national human needs advocates, highlighted by the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the signing of the fiscal year 2009 appropriations bill, and the release of the President's Fiscal Year 2010 budget. The National Coalition for the Homeless is pleased by recent developments, including the prospect of a significant infusion of funds into the National Housing Trust Fund and the housing and homeless assistance programs of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. However, much work remains to ensure that the good from the Administration and Members of Congress become a reality. NCH will release a number of Action Alerts on these matters in the coming weeks, which people experiencing homelessness, service providers, and advocates alike can use to advance the cause of preventing and ending homelessness.

FY2009 Appropriations

On March 10, the President signed a spending bill for fiscal year 2009 that included funding for homeless assistance programs in the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education, and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. Additionally, last year Congress passed appropriations legislation that included funding for homeless programs within the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Homeland Security. To view a full list of homeless assistance programs and their 2009 funding levels, visit this link to a newsletter of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness: http://www.ich.gov/newsletter/archive/03-11-09_e-newsletter.htm. Listed here are the FY 2009 funding levels for key targeted homeless assistance programs:

- \$1.67 billion in HUD McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants programs.
- \$200 million for the FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program.
- \$75 million for competitive homeless programs within the HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- \$59.7 million for the HHS Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program.
- \$191 million for the HHS Health Care for the Homeless program.
- \$115 million for HHS Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs.
- \$26.3 million for the DOL Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program.
- \$65.4 million for the DOED Education of Homeless Children and Youth program.
- \$130 million for the VA Homeless Grant and Per Diem program; and
- \$30 million for additional housing choice vouchers for homeless veterans in the HUD-VASH program.

FY2010 Budget

The President released the first phase of the fiscal year 2010 budget on February 26, setting forth his vision for renewing America's promise. The President's budget proposal contains funds to provide health insurance for millions of additional Americans, increase the supply of affordable housing, provide help for low-income families and individuals, and reinvest in a number of chronically under-funded programs and departments. NCH anticipates a long fight ahead to ensure that the President's budget becomes a reality. Stay tuned for NCH's forthcoming Action Alert on the FY2010 budget.

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

NCH prepared a letter to President Obama urging him to promptly appoint a Director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) with the professional skills and personal attributes necessary for mobilizing all component agencies of the Council, as well as state, local, and private partners, toward the development and implementation of a national strategic plan to end homelessness. The current Director, Philip Mangano remains in his position. However, the ICH Director is a Presidential appointment, and NCH sought to weigh in on the qualifications expected for the position. View the full letter at this link on NCH's website: http://www.nationalhomeless.org/civilrights/obama_letter.html.

The President's FY2010 budget proposal contains \$1 billion in mandatory spending for the National Housing Trust Fund. If enacted, this would mark the first stream of funding into the Trust Fund since its establishment in July 2008. The preliminary budget does not indicate a source of funds, but it does specify that the money would be mandatory and not determined by the annual appropriations cycle. NCH urges Congress to pass a budget resolution that maintains this crucial provision to increase the supply of affordable housing in America. NCH and others continue to work with key members of Congress and the Administration in developing a plan for identifying additional sources of funding.

Foreclosure and Homelessness Prevention

Among the provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 was the establishment of a \$1.5 billion Homelessness Prevention Fund, designed to prevent a surge in the number of Americans seeking homeless assistance, and to rapidly re-house those who temporarily enter the shelter system. Funding for this program is being provided through the same formula as HUD's Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) program, but can only be used for prevention and re-housing. Jurisdictions receiving ESG funds will be expected to develop a plan for funding and begin spending in the next few months. Homeless assistance providers, advocates, and people experiencing homelessness should begin immediately to provide input to ESG jurisdictional leaders to determine how these funds will be utilized. For assistance in the planning process, NCH will host an informational conference call related to the Homelessness Prevention Fund on April 8 at 4 p.m. ET, described in greater detail elsewhere in this newsletter.

Additionally, Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN) has re-introduced the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act of 2009, H.R. 1247. The bill would protect renters living in foreclosed properties by requiring the purchasers of said properties to give the tenants 90 days notice prior to eviction. The bill also provides that tenants with Housing Choice Vouchers may remain in place for the entire term of the lease. NCH and others are supportive of Rep. Ellison's efforts, and urges Congress to pass this crucial legislation to help keep innocent victims of the foreclosure crisis in their homes. An Action Alert from NCH on H.R. 1247 is forthcoming.

Moving Beyond Homelessness

By Dana Woolfolk, NCH Board Member

[Homelessness Resource Center](#)

When I reached the end of the road, I was hopeless and helpless. I was resigned to the fact that this was how my life would be, living on the streets and just getting by day-to-day, hour-to-hour and minute-to-minute. Sometimes I spoke to outreach workers, police officers or kind strangers, but nothing they said made me think that things would ever be different.

Sure, there were times when I had a moment of clarity and tried to get into a detox or treatment program, but I always heard the same thing: "Sorry, we're full. We can put you on a waiting list but it's running an average of two to four weeks before space becomes available." I don't know anyone like me - with over twenty-five years of active addiction - who could wait this long to get started with treatment.

What finally did help was when I ran into an old buddy from the streets. He was clean, had nice clothes, jewelry and a car. He told me that he had been off the streets for several years. Then he took the time to tell me how to get the help I so desperately needed, and how to use that help as a steppingstone to independence. Now I told myself, "Hell, you may as well give it a try—you've got nothing to lose." A former neighbor gave me a ride to detox, and this time they had a bed!

Now, mind you, I had no intention of stopping drugs and alcohol. I just needed to clean up a bit so that I could get a job, save some money for a room, and then I would use more responsibly than I had in the past. Who would have thought that attending all of those boring twelve-step meetings every day would make a believer out of me? I knew that I wouldn't be able to keep using. I heard so many people in the meetings talk about how they had tried to do the same thing and failed over and over again.

When the detox was complete, I decided to ask for further treatment and was sent to 90-day residential program. The program required you to find a job after the first 30 days. I was able to work without supports because without the substances in my body, the mood disorder began to clear up.

Today, it's ten years later. I'm married, I own a home, and I am employed as a Clinical Recovery Coach at a community mental health center. To anyone trying to get his or her life back, I would say, "Don't give up—there's a miracle just around the next corner." To providers, I say, "Always remember that as long as there's life, there's hope." Sometimes we need you to have hope for our recovery until we are able to have this hope for ourselves.

NCH Thanks Recent Contributors

We would like to thank the following for their generous contributions during the month of February:

Stephen D'Amato

Kathy Grappin

Lenni Lissberger

Miami Coalition for the Homeless

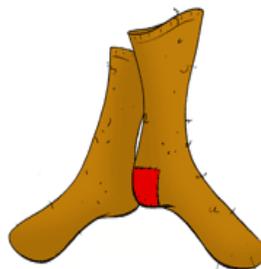
R. Bradford O'Brien

Seth Rubin

Katina Smikle

Loretta Tucker

Check Out Comfort Socks



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A dream has been placed in our hearts. This dream, simply put, is to create a national warehouse that will house and distribute new socks to any non-profit organization that services those in need.

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Putting aside for a moment the hygiene benefit of socks for the homeless, for us, this mission is one of comfort. We long to provide the secure and comfortable feeling that putting on new pair of socks can give someone who feels lost or forgotten by this world. Our desire is to help ease their pain, even if only for a short time. Comfort Socks was formed for this purpose.

Comfort Socks also recognizes that sock drives encourages kindness and purpose for young and old alike. Part of our mission is to inspire others, so that ultimately, the comfort these socks bring can be enjoyed soulfully by the provider and recipient.

[Visit Comfort Socks on the Web.](#)

Upcoming NCH Speaking Engagements

Where to Catch Our Faces of Homelessness Speakers Bureau

March 19th Steinbruck Center (Washington, DC)
March 20th NCH Office (Washington, DC)
March 20th Homewood Suites (Washington, DC)
March 21st Hyattsville Library (Aldephi, MD)
March 21st 4H Center (Bethesda, MD)
March 22nd Holiday Inn Central (Washington, DC)
March 22nd North Bethesda Marriott (Bethesda, MD)
March 23rd NCH Office
March 23rd United Methodist Building (Washington, DC)
March 23rd East Stroudsburg University (Stroudsburg, PA)
March 24th Lehigh Carbon Community College (Schnecksville, PA)
March 24th NCH Office
March 24th College of St Rose (Albany, NY)
March 25th Lesley University (Cambridge, MA)
March 25th Tysons Westpark Hotel (Washington, DC)
March 27th UNC Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC)
March 27th St. John Neumann Church (Reston, VA)
March 28th Church of the Pilgrims (Washington, DC)
March 28th Bolger Center (Potomac, MD)
March 29th Holiday Inn Central (Washington, DC)
March 30th NCH Office
March 30th Church of the Pilgrims (Washington, DC)
March 31st Emory and Henry College (Emory, VA)
April 1st Whitman Hanson High School (Whitman Hanson, MA)
April 3rd Philadelphia Biblical University (Langhorne, PA)
April 3-5th Rutgers University (New Brunswick, NJ)
April 6th SEED Public Charter School (Washington, DC)
April 8th Manhattan College (Bronx, NY)
April 15th Guilford College (Greensboro, NC)

NCH Welcomes Stephany Whitaker

NCH is joined this month by Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow Stephany Whitaker.

Originally from Richmond, KY, Stephany attended Berea College in Berea, KY, where she earned her degree in biology. She became interested in serving at NCH after seeing a Faces of Homelessness panel several years ago. She will be working mainly on completing NCH's upcoming Hate Crimes Report.

Outside of work, Stephany says, "I love cooking, corny jokes and adventures." She is considering graduate studies in Public Health.

The Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellowship is a program of the Congressional Hunger Center that provides leadership development opportunities to those interested in addressing problems of hunger and poverty. Click [here](#) for more information on the Fellowship.

Letter on Obama's ICH Appointment

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

The National Coalition for the Homeless wishes to congratulate you on your inauguration as the 44th President of the United States, and to commend you for pledging to reduce poverty during your term in office. We look forward to working with you as you implement action steps to fulfill pledges made during your campaign to address domestic poverty, including its most extreme manifestation – homelessness.

We understand that a number of entities within the Executive Office of the President have been assigned with responsibility for policy development regarding poverty, among them the Office of Mobility and Opportunity, Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, and Office on Urban Affairs. We note the rapidity in which appointments to these new offices are being made.

Thus we are disappointed that a statutorily-established executive branch entity that must also be a central player in your Administration's poverty activities – the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) – is lacking an appointment of your choosing to its Executive Director position. We urge you to make a prompt appointment of a new ICH Executive Director – an appointee who will advance your vision for an America where all people prosper and thrive, including those among us with the greatest needs.

Moreover, we call upon you to use the appointment of a new ICH Director as your moment to signal a change in direction in the current national approach to ending homelessness and as your opportunity to articulate an aggressive mandate to eliminate homelessness from our nation during your term of office.

Regrettably, the prior Administration took a narrow approach to homelessness policy – focusing the bulk of its energy toward single adults with disabilities who experience homelessness for long periods of time (the "chronically homeless"), to the abject neglect of those people who are also homeless for lesser periods of time and/or due to factors other than disability and family status. It also foisted the preponderance of responsibility for homelessness planning on city and county governments, while failing to establish a role for the national government itself. Moreover, exorbitant sums of money were spent on population counts and information management system acquisition, while investments in affordable housing, supportive services, and emergency responses fell far short of need. The current ICH Executive Director is tied to these policy choices. It is urgent that you accept his resignation and appoint someone with fresh ideas and a new mandate, including addressing the foreclosure crisis and its impact on homelessness, particularly among renters.

President Obama, the time for definitive and decisive action to end homelessness for the 3.5 million Americans who experience it annually (and growing due to the economic recession and foreclosure crisis) is now. People experiencing homelessness or at risk of a housing loss are waiting impatiently for bold leadership on this topic from your Administration. The national government can no longer deprive any one homeless "subpopulation" from resources and services in order to fund whatever is the "current hot trend" in social policy. It can no longer let the national human needs

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budget stagnate while asking counties, cities, and towns to stand the gaps. Our elected and appointed officials at the sub-national level can no longer flail on their own without the national government as a reliable and dependable partner.

We urge you to appoint an ICH Executive Director with the professional skills and personal attributes necessary for mobilizing all component agencies of the Council, as well as state, local, and private partners, toward the development and implementation of a national strategic plan to end homelessness. The plan must end homelessness for all and single out no subgroups over others for preferential consideration. The national strategic must embrace housing for all, universal livable incomes as a minimum standard, freedom from crippling health care debts, educational opportunities for all, and federal protection or repeal of laws and actions that make it illegal to be poor. The plan must articulate concrete action steps and timetable for reaching these aims. We also encourage you to convene a White House summit on homelessness in your first term to raise awareness of the issue and to draw on the collective wisdom of government officials, advocates, services providers, and homeless families and individuals in devising strategies to prevent and end homelessness.

We believe that by your election the American people have spoken. They have said that it is time tackle once and for all time seemingly intractable national problems. Certainly homelessness is among those challenges that have plagued American society for far too long. We urge you to quickly name to the ICH Executive Director position an individual with the leadership ability to implement our shared vision of an America free of homelessness.

We look forward to being consulted in the appointment of the next Executive Director of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, and in helping that appointee advance your forthcoming national strategic plan to end homelessness.

Sincerely,

/s/

Michael Stoops
Executive Director

Sobella to Give Tote Proceeds to NCH

A collaboration with world famous graffiti artist John "CRASH" Matos and SOBELLA

Exploring the art of graffiti and translating street art into a statement bag seemed like an intriguing mix. The end result are these three extraordinary designs, that not only make a statement but 5% of all sales go to help the homeless!



Growing up in the Bronx John began his career at the early age of 13. He was first noticed through his murals on subway cars and dilapidated buildings. As he got older he transferred his art from the street to canvas, and has shown at museum's world wide.

In 1996, Crash painted a Signature Stratocaster for Eric Clapton and gave it to the artist as a gift. Clapton used the guitar through his 2001 tour. In total Crash has created 5 guitar's for Clapton and was commissioned by Fender Musical Instruments for 50 guitars he titled the "Crashcasters" Today Crash is not only recognized as a fine artist he is also regarded as a pioneer of the Graffiti art movement.



Crash



Explosion



Train

A Special Thank You

NCH would like to thank the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons for their recent gift of socks for distribution to those experiencing homelessness in the Washington, DC area. Click [here](#) to visit the American College on the Web.

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