



## National Coalition for the Homeless Newsletter

NCH NEWS

January 19, 2010

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### Thank You!

• [Thank you to all who donated to NCH this holiday season! With your help, we raised over \\$23,000, just in December. All gifts large and small help us continue the work of Bringing America Home!](#)

### Seven Hundred Killed from Hypothermia Annually in United States

The National Coalition for the Homeless has just released its report, **Winter Homeless Services: Bringing Our Neighbors in from the Cold**, to raise awareness of the dangers and often fatal consequences of hypothermia on people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. [The full report is now available here.](#)

Seven-hundred people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness are killed from hypothermia annually in the United States. Forty-four percent of the nation's homeless are unsheltered. From the urban streets of our populated cities to the remote back-country of rural America, hypothermia - or subnormal temperature in the body - remains a leading, critical and preventable cause of injury and death among those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.

NCH maintains that knowledge, networking and temporary seasonal shelter and outreach are three of the most important elements to an effective regional or local approach to the reduction and prevention of exposure and hypothermia.

This report is a snapshot of winter homeless services nationwide. NCH staff has gathered information for this report from forty states and the District of Columbia, representing urban, suburban and rural communities. NCH interviewed state and local coalitions, health care providers, and shelter operators in order to gain the best and broadest possible understanding of cold weather services available through these direct service providers and first responders. There is general consensus among public health officials, medical professionals and service providers that to reduce the incidence of hypothermia nationwide, local communities should implement effective and timely strategies to address the needs of vulnerable populations, including creating temporary homeless shelters and extending the hours of operation for existing shelters.

*The National Coalition for the Homeless will soon be releasing a full report on Tent Cities. Keep an eye out at [www.nationalhomeless.org](http://www.nationalhomeless.org)*

### National Events Wrap-Up

#### Homeless Who Died in 2009 Remembered

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 past December, Homeless Memorial Day events were held in 132 cities (including 20 in Florida) representing 43 states, Washington, DC and Canada. Florida had the most events of any state. This was the largest number of cities taking part since its inception in 1990.

The largest event was held in Minneapolis. A quiet 400 person strong procession made its way through downtown streets. The mourners marched from the Hennepin County Government Center to the Simpson United Methodist Church. The marchers carried signs bearing a name of one of the 119 people who died in 2009. This compares to the 2008 number of 131 deaths. Advocates are worried that the numbers will be higher in succeeding years.

More than 700 people attended a packed memorial service inside the church. The Church started the annual memorial 25 years ago. It has become an annual event sponsored by the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless.

Events in other cities will be featured in the forthcoming 2010 Organizing Manual for National Homeless Persons'

Memorial Day to be published by March of this year.

National Homeless Persons' Memorial is co-sponsored by the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH), National Health Care for the Homeless Council, and the National Consumer Advisory Board.

#### **VOLCOM's "Give Jeans a Chance" Clothing Campaign a Success**

VOLCOM and the National Coalition for the Homeless have partnered for the successful campaign "Give Jeans a Chance", collecting more than 10,000 donated jeans and raising awareness of homeless in America. NCH and VOLCOM joined in the fall of 2009 to match participating retail stores nationwide with NCH's membership organizations around the country. "This partnership is just beginning", said Floris Gierman, VOLCOM's Retail Marketing Manager. Plans are already in the making for the second "Give Jeans a Chance" and a t-shirt campaign for this coming fall. Thanks to all who donated jeans, and to NCH's great network of providers for helping to distribute the jeans!

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

Our Speakers' Bureau is busy as usual this Winter. To find out more information about when and where these presentations are happening, 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**

#### **NCH Position Statement on Homeless Data Collection and Reporting**

The National Coalition for the Homeless has issued a position statement on homeless data collection and reporting. The position statement is intended to guide the Coalition's public policy positions on federal homeless data collection and reporting matters, including policy decisions regarding the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and the Annual Homeless Assistance Report. State and local homeless advocates and service providers may find the position statement helpful to informing their own positions on state and local policy and practice matters. A copy of the position statement may be found [here](#)

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### **More NCH Highlights**

#### **NCH Executive Director Named 2010 "Changemaker"**

The National Coalition for the Homeless' Executive Director, Neil Donovan has just been named a 2010 Changemaker by Change.org. The Changemakers network is comprised of prominent leaders in social change from all sectors – politics, activism, nonprofits, academics, and entertainment – who are making a difference on the most important issues we face. Each Changemaker will be writing periodically on Change.org about their work, advancing public dialogue on major issues or mobilizing the community to get involved and take action.

Donovan will use this year to write about the critical advocacy work being done at NCH, with special attention paid to the importance of "Homeless in the First Person", an initiative which promotes the use and inclusion of current and formerly homeless people in all stages of planning, development and the execution of resources and services.

In his first posting, Donovan is interviewed about the possibility of ending homelessness in "One Million Acts of Extraordinary Compassion". To read the interview go to: [Neil's profile](#)

#### **NCH Research Featured in New Section on IssueLab.org**

For the online researcher, NCH now posts its reports to the IssueLab.org website, which archives, distributes and promotes the extensive body of research being published by the nonprofit community.

IssueLab has recently begun a special section on the website for organizations that publish annual updates of issue reports. NCH has been chosen as one of the organizations that offers annual issue reports, like our Hate Crimes and Criminalization reports. Archived reports can be found by searching for NCH at IssueLab.org, or by clicking on [NCH's IssueLab profile](#).

#### **Hay House Publishers Invite Agencies Serving the Homeless to Receive Free Uplifting Books**

Hay House, Inc. is the #1 publishing company for inspiration and self-help books in the world and has been offering books to people in homeless shelters in California, Nevada, Oregon and Washington for the last year and a half. The cards and letters of appreciation arrive daily at the Hay House office near San Diego from women, men and children whose lives have been positively affected by reading and applying the messages in the books they have received! Shelters receiving donated books include PATH (People Assisting the Homeless),

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority and Union Station Housing Services.

Hay House was founded 22 years ago by 83 year old Louise Hay who has written best selling books as You Can Heal Your Life, The Power is Within You and Empowering Women. Her Heart Thoughts book is especially appreciated for it's daily affirmation on every page. Other Hay House authors include Dr. Wayne Dyer, Christiane Northrop, M.D., and Dr. Robert Holden who has written a book entitled Be Happy. Hay House also publishes illustrated children's books.

If your organization would like to receive books, visit [www.hayhouse.com](http://www.hayhouse.com). You may also visit [www.youcanhealyourlife.com](http://www.youcanhealyourlife.com) to learn more about Louise Hay. Please contact: Melanie Lococo, Director of Giving at Hay House at [mlococo@hayhouse.com](mailto:mlococo@hayhouse.com) for more information. Please be prepared to share information about your organization, the work you do and how Hay House books could help the people you serve.

Hay House's goal is to offer our books to uplift people in homeless shelters and to inspire book clubs in communities across our nation.

### **Ending Homelessness from a Socio-economic Perspective**

by Richard R. Troxell

If you think that we can just put homeless people back into a broken socio-economic system ...think again. As we look at the socio-economic condition of homelessness, we recognize that we can view homelessness into two major categories, those who can work and those who cannot work.

Hard working people are falling out of our work force. They are ending up homeless on our streets. We see these people as broken individuals standing on our street corners, painfully visible and asking for help; some call it begging, others know it as panhandling. In any event, they are no longer seen as members of a family that they once were. Now, she lives in a shelter and he stands on a street corner...broken and pleading for help from his fellow human beings.

We respond as best we know how. We, "the community," brush these individuals off, detoxify, them, teach them the art of resume writing and interview talking and place them into jobs and point them to the general housing market. Well done! Bravo! Everyone pitched in to help. The entire community rallied behind our needy...our homeless. But what has really occurred? Who knows? Without follow-up evaluation one year later, we won't learn if the minimum wage job or even the \$10.00 per hour job into which they were placed was or wasn't enough to sustain them through the economic bumps ahead. However, we do know that the minimum dollar amount needed to sustain them can be simply stated with the phrase: "Living Wage." A "Living Wage" is the base amount necessary for a person to afford basic food, clothing and shelter...no more no less. This is the same vision and understanding embraced by the U.S. Congress following the Crash of 1929 and the subsequent Great Depression in the 1930s. Then, in 1938, in response to the wage problem, the U.S. Congress created the Federal Minimum Wage. This worked fairly well until the 1980s when because the wage was not indexed to the cost of living, or anything for that matter, our nation's housing rents outstripped the wage being earned. So now we must "reset" the wage just like a clock and index the wage to the local cost of housing throughout the entire United States. Therefore, that is what we have done.

Using existing Government Guidelines, we have devised a single national formula that ensures that if a person works 40 hours in a week, they will be able to afford basic food, clothing, and shelter (including utilities). In other words, a roof over their heads...other than a bridge.

But in further examining the idea of simply putting people back into the work force, we must explore what that looks like. Minimum wage workers work 5-6 days a week, fifty-two weeks a year. They are only assured (hopefully) of a day off to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas. Additionally, the rigorous demands of daily work are ever accelerating and continue to expand exponentially. Think about the technological advances in the last ten years alone that range from desk top computers to laptops, cell phones, camera phones, Blackberries and i-phones with Apps. Think of the world as a merry-go-round full of a dozen kids spinning like crazy and holding on for dear life. As the merry-go-round accelerates, regardless of the strength of their white knuckle grips, some can't hold on and they go flying off as the speed continues to increase. It's the same in the work place. Minimum wage workers don't get two weeks paid vacation. They don't get vacation time, personal time or even the luxury of getting sick. Minimum wage workers are subject to endless stress. As the stress demands increase, so does the pressure on the individual worker. They must show up day in and day out regardless of their problems at home, their energy levels, or routine bouts of depression. The instant they say, "I can't go in tomorrow, I'm calling in sick," they get replaced. They spin off the merry go-round of life and end up homeless on the streets of America.

It makes little or no difference what kind of worker you've been. To the employer, what matters is that you show up day in and day out...no matter what. Failure to show up every single day will get the minimum wage worker the instant boot. Someone else is waiting in the wings who is desperate to fill the worker's vacant slot. Clearly, the employer must have workers present everyday to accomplish what needs to be done to advance the business.

But, what if we start "thinking outside the box with both employer and employee's welfare in mind? Example: Employer with financial means purchases production equipment beyond the means of the individual workers such as a \$5,000 hot dog stand. The employer leases the use of the equipment to an individual worker or workers. The worker operates the equipment on a daily basis as one would expect. However, to address the employee needs for time-off, another (swing) worker is tapped to come to work and fill in the vacant times so that the equipment is used to its fullest. This is referred to as "flex" work. In this fashion, both the employer and the employee attain what they need and want: job stability and economic growth. This is one simple example of the kind of change and flexibility needed to enhance our chances of successfully ending homelessness for workers.

For those who cannot work, the U.S. Congress established a government based financial support system, Supplemental Security Income, SSI, designed to provide a small monthly monetary stipend. This is presently set at \$674 nationwide.

However, ours is a nation of thousands of local economies ranging from poverty in Clay, West Virginia to the opulence of New York City. And yet, the current approach is to award a single uniform dollar amount to every individual with disabilities no matter where they live throughout America. Clearly, this "one size fits all" approach is an illogical response that has the result of leaving millions of recipients susceptible to the economic forces of homelessness.

This solution is simple. We must index this stipend to the local cost of housing throughout the United States. As with the Universal Living Wage, we can use the Housing and Urban Development, HUD, Section 8 Fair Market Rents to ensure that we properly index the SSI stipend to local economies across America. This will ensure that whether someone is working forty hours in a week or struggling with disabilities, they will be able to afford the basics of life: food, clothing, shelter (utilities included) and have access to the emergency room. And finally, if others are working by utilizing flex work days of an unlimited nature, they will be able to re-enter the work force in a calm, productive, stress free manner, that provides them a living and the employer the work performance required for a successful business.

We are committed to creating the systemic and attitudinal changes necessary to prevent and end homelessness.

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