

NCH . NEWS . . .

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Hello,

This is the January edition of NCH News.

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One Step Closer To Bringing America Home

As some of you may know, the Bringing America Home Act was introduced in the 109th Congress by Congresswoman Julia Carson along with 9 cosponsors, 23 cosponsors as of January 12, 2006.

The Bringing America Home Act, H.R. 4347, is the most comprehensive initiative to date to address modern homelessness. The legislation is based on research, data, and the direct experience of persons experiencing homelessness, front line service providers, and state and local officials. The bill includes housing, health, income and civil rights components, such as an affordable housing production program, expansion of job training opportunities, civil rights protections for persons without housing, emergency funds for families facing eviction, increased access to health care for all, and Congressional support for living incomes.

“The aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have brought to the forefront of the American people the socioeconomic problems that have actually existed for decades among millions of our neighbors. The needs of families and individuals displaced by the hurricanes are no different than those who were without resources long-before the storms,” said Michael Stoops, Acting Executive Director of the National
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Coalition for the Homeless. "Congress should act quickly to extend to all Americans, including the millions of our neighbors experiencing homelessness each year, guarantees to affordable housing, comprehensive health insurance, jobs that pay a living wage, and protection of their basic civil rights regardless of where they live," said Stoops.

In the United States, 3.5 million people – almost 40 percent of them children – experience homelessness each year. Many homeless adults work, but due to high rents, tight rental markets, low-paying jobs, and lack of affordable health care, they find themselves and their families living on the streets, in cars, in shelters, in abandoned buildings, in motels, or in over-crowded, temporary accommodations with others. More Americans than ever are one paycheck, one illness, or one rent hike away from homelessness.

According to Congresswoman Julia Carson, "This bill will create affordable housing units in mixed-income locations, greatly expand supportive housing, provide emergency support services for those in need, increase the quality of health care, and create job-training programs for our poorest families, whose security is at the center of this legislation...Most importantly, the bill gives poor Americans the opportunity to be self-sufficient."

"The Bringing America Home Act would end the disgrace of the worst form of poverty in the richest nation in the world. It's time for our elected officials to pledge this Holiday Season to help our most vulnerable neighbors with transformational changes in public policy. It's time to Bring America Home," said Stoops.

Timed to the bill's introduction, NCH re-launched the web site of its Bringing America Home Campaign, www.bringingamericahome.org, where information about the Bringing America Home Act may be found.

Please visit the Campaign website, find out more information, and consider endorsing and supporting this step forward to eradicate homelessness.

Use Your Will To End Homelessness

A simple way to help the National Coalition for the Homeless in our mission to end homelessness for all people is to consider a bequest to the Coalition.

Bequests can take a variety of forms. You can leave NCH a percentage of your estate, a specific sum of money, or you can make NCH the residual beneficiary of your estate after other bequests. Alternatively, you can make NCH a contingent beneficiary in the event other beneficiaries die before you. If you would like to add a bequest to NCH to your will but do not want to rewrite your current will, you can add a codicil to your existing will. Your attorney can advise you on this process.

Your support will help us bring about the end of homelessness for all people

Community Partnership to End Homelessness

The National Coalition for the Homeless has issued its statement concerning S.1801, the Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act. CPEHA, which was introduced in the 109th Congress by Senator Reed (D-RI) along with a bipartisan group of cosponsors, reauthorizes the Homeless Assistance Programs (McKinney-Vento programs) of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH).

Among NCH's list of recommendations are to expand the federal definition of homelessness, create an incentive for permanent housing for non-disabled families, and commission the GAO to conduct a study on

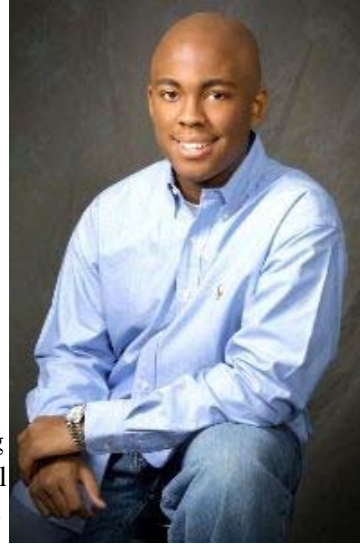
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hate crimes against people who are homeless.

To see our complete statement, please visit “breaking news” on our homepage at www.nationalhomeless.com.

Farrah Gray Named Spokesperson for the National Coalition for the Homeless

The National Coalition for the Homeless is pleased to announce Farrah Gray as a new spokesperson and partner in the fight to end homelessness. Gray will be the honorary chairperson for the Bringing America Home Campaign, a comprehensive effort designed to end homelessness in the United States and includes housing, health, income and civil rights components.



Gray is no stranger to the issues of poverty and homelessness. As a native of inner city Chicago, he both experienced and witnessed the effects of inequality. When he was just six, Farrah’s mother became seriously ill, prompting his decision to help provide for his family. He made hand-painted rocks and sold them door-to-door as paperweights, doormats and bookends. He spent the first \$50 he ever made taking his family for a real sit-down dinner. By age 14, he had an office on Wall Street and was a millionaire, founding and fostering companies as diverse as publishing and venture capital. Now, at 21 years old, he is the author of the best selling book *Reallionaire* and has become one of the great business minds and icons of his generation. He has served as the youngest member of the United Way Board of Directors and created a foundation, which provides seed money to youth aspiring to create legal means of acquiring additional funds for their struggling families through entrepreneurship.

A Dream Denied :The Criminalization of Homelessness

On January 11, 2006 the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty released their 2006 report on the criminalization of homelessness entitled “Dream Denied: Criminalization of Homelessness in US cities.” The National Coalition for the Homeless began publishing an annual report on this issue in 1999; this year NCH partnered with the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty to release this report for the first time since 2002. The two organizations collaborated to write the report which contains narratives on the “20 meanest cities” as well as other cities that have enacted laws targeted at their homeless populations. For the first time this year the report also contains a constructive alternatives section which shows ways that cities are dealing with the problem of homelessness without turning to negative punitive measures.

20 Meanest Cities for 2005

1. Sarasota, FL
2. Lawrence, KS
3. Little Rock, AR
4. Atlanta, GA
5. Las Vegas, NV
6. Dallas, TX
7. Houston, TX
8. San Juan, PR
9. Santa Monica, CA
10. Flagstaff, AZ
11. San Francisco, CA
12. Chicago, IL
13. San Antonio, TX
14. New York City, NY
15. Austin, TX
16. Anchorage, AK
17. Phoenix, AZ
18. Los Angeles, CA
19. St. Louis, MO
20. Pittsburgh, PA

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In a news conference addressing the findings of the report the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty director Maria Foscarinas alluded to the reports title stating that "For the poor justice is still a dream denied." The full report can be viewed on both organizations websites.

Hate Crime Statement

In recent days, the media has engrossed American viewers to the brutal reality of the vulnerability associated with living on the streets. On the early morning of Thursday, January 12, 2006, two teenage boys were caught on surveillance video viciously attacking a defenseless homeless man while he was sleeping. Though the man survived, a few hours later the teens, along with a third accomplice not caught on tape, struck again, this time succeeding in killing a different homeless man. The teens, after fatally beating the 2nd homeless man, went on to a final attacking, critically injuring the third man who was also sleeping on the streets. Fortunately in the second case, two of the teens were caught on film, putting substantial proof and evidence toward the plague of hate crimes/violence against those who live on the streets.

In this instance, the perpetrators were caught on film. Hidden from most Americans, however, is the number of shocking crimes committed nationwide against people experiencing homelessness each year. Homeless men, women, and children around the nation are particularly vulnerable to crimes against them because they represent an easy, visible, susceptible target and often lack a place to retreat for safety and protection.

Across the nation, people experiencing homelessness, advocates, and service providers report an alarming epidemic of hate crimes and violent murders, arson, harassment, and damage of personal property. Thrill seekers, primarily in their teens and early twenties, are the most common perpetrators of the violence. This trend has been exacerbated by the proliferation of "Bum Videos" in which homeless people are coerced to perform degrading and dangerous stunts for money, alcohol, or food.

There is so much that we, along with the Florida Legislature and U.S. Congress, can do to protect one of the most vulnerable populations in our society. It is time for legislation to be introduced in both Florida Legislature and the U.S. Congress adding homelessness to existing hate crimes statutes. Until such legislation is passed, we strongly propose that law enforcement agencies keep track of hate crimes/violence against people experiencing homelessness.

Along with this important first action, there also needs to be adequate number of beds in the shelters and an increase in outreach efforts. We need good citizens and Samaritans out on the streets to be the eyes and the ears of our law enforcement agencies along with providing help. This will hopefully serve as a deterrent for young people who might be considering copycat-like attacks. By doing so, those living on the streets may be deterred from becoming victims of hate-crime violence. Not only should law enforcement be encouraged to handle this cause, but also those experiencing homelessness themselves, participating in a crime prevention patrol which would involve the homeless population in their own well-being. Outfitting these patrollers with safety alert devices would allow efficient and effective contact to emergency agencies such as fire and ambulance companies. Homeless service providers should offer self-defense classes, like those that provide self-defense for women, the elderly, and other vulnerable populations. Our best recommendation would be for schools to invite homeless advocates and homeless/formerly homeless people to make class presentations. These speakers would share their personal stories and answer questions from the students, breaking down stereotypes, prejudices, and exposing the humanity of homeless people. NCH operates the "Faces of Homelessness," Speakers' Bureau, making nearly 300 presentations a year reaching a combined audience of 17,000 people, primarily high school students. This is our most important public education strategy. We would be willing to help Florida communities set up similar speakers' bureaus.

We send our deepest condolences to the family, friends, and acquaintances of the most recent victims of hate crimes/violence against people experiencing homelessness, as well as everyone else living on the streets that has fallen victim to such outrageous violent conditions.

Since 1999, the National Coalition for the Homeless, the oldest and largest national homeless advocacy group, has spearheaded an investigative analysis of hate crimes/violence against people experiencing homelessness, much like the Fort Lauderdale attack. What happened in Fort Lauderdale is typical of what is happening across the nation. To read about incidences around the country, please read our 2004 hate crimes/violence report, entitled [Hate, Violence and Death on Main Street USA, 2004](#). This can be found on our website under "[Civil Rights](#)." The report for 2005 will be released in the coming weeks.

Verizon Literacy Campaign

Verizon Literacy Campus, www.literacycampus.org, is pleased to announce the release of a two-part series of online courses designed for literacy program directors called *Reaching Out to Homeless and Migrant Families*. The self-paced courses are free of charge and available online 24/7.

Part I introduces the characteristics of homeless and migrant individuals and families and the daily challenges they face and circumstances in which they live; it also covers recognizing the strengths and needs of this population.

Part II examines the three steps in planning for educational services: 1) assessing community strength and needs, 2) understanding the culture of poverty in order to plan for comprehensive services to individuals and families, and 3) considering the logistics of providing services for homeless and migrant individuals and families.

Verizon Literacy Campus (VLC), www.literacycampus.org, is a website intended to motivate the public to volunteer in literacy programs and to prepare both literacy volunteers and professional staff to be more effective in their roles. VLC is generously funded by Verizon Communications and developed and managed by two leading literacy organizations, the National Center for Family Literacy, based in Kentucky, and ProLiteracy Worldwide, based in New York.

NCH On The Road

Speaker's Bureau Coordinator Mike O'Neill will be in the following locations.

February 9th-12th Philadelphia Urban Plunge with some East Coast Colleges

February 16th Bucknell University in Lewisburg, PA Faces Panel

February 20th University of Tampa Bay Faces Panel

February 24th-26th National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness East Coast Symposium at UMASS Boston Panel/Workshops

2006 Calender

Sept. 24--30--National Homeless & Low Income Voter Registration Week.

Nov. 12--18--National Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week--Co-sponsored by the National

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Coalition for the Homeless and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger & Homelessness

Dec. 21--National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day--Co-sponsored by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Health Care for the Homeless Council.

Four easy ways to help:

1. Send your gift to the National Coalition for the Homeless

2201 P. St, NW Washington, DC 20037-1033

2. Call 202-462-4822 ext 16 and speak with Angie Mescall

3. Donate online at www.nationalhomeless.org

4. Host a Bringing It Home Dinner Party. To host a dinner party/event or for more information, please contact Anna Bremner at abremner@blueskycollaborative.com or 617-731-1821

Thank you for your generosity.

Click [here](#) if you would like to be removed from this list.

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