

HOMELESS TIMES



Solving Housing Crises and Striving to End Homelessness in Montgomery County

Summer 2011

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The Partnership for Permanent Housing: Changing Lives with Housing First

In this summer's newsletter issue, we are highlighting one of MCCH's critical programs, the Partnership for Permanent Housing (PPH). In future issues you will hear more about our other housing programs. PPH changes the lives of families and individuals experiencing homelessness and demonstrates the vital importance of permanent housing for those in need. PPH provides quicker access to housing along with supportive services, thus reducing the amount of time families and individuals spend in homelessness.



Chandra Harris-Jackson,
 Program Director for PPH

The program began in 2003 as the county's pilot Housing First initiative and served 50 families with children (see box below for more information). PPH achieved tremendous success over the years and now serves over 180 households, including single adults. Residents rent units in various scattered sites throughout the county and receive supportive services as well as rental subsidies. Personalized case management focuses on maintaining financial solvency, improving household management, and

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What is Housing First?

Housing First is an approach to ending homelessness that centers on providing homeless people with housing as quickly as possible – and then providing services as needed. This approach is consistent with what most people experiencing homelessness want and seek help to achieve. Housing First programs share critical elements:

- A focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible without time limits;
- A variety of services delivered to promote housing stability and individual well-being on an as-needed basis;
- A standard lease agreement to housing – as opposed to mandated therapy or services compliance;

Program models vary significantly depending upon the population served. For chronically homeless people, there is an expectation that intensive services will be needed indefinitely. For most people experiencing homelessness, however, such intensive services are not necessary.

Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness

Opportunities to Help

We are ready and eager to work with you on existing volunteer opportunities or on creating new programs using your special skills. Please review a sampling of our current list of activities below so that we can find a way to work together to help end homelessness in Montgomery County!

- Help the Homeless Mini-Walk Coordinators- Organize a Mini-Walk at your local school, congregation, club, place of employment, etc. between now and November 6. Mini-Walks are fun, educational, easy to organize and one of our best ways to raise awareness and funds in the community.
- Front Desk Greeter- We are seeking reliable volunteers to work at our reception desk Monday-Friday during the day. Volunteers will learn about homelessness. They will greet visitors, answer and direct phone calls, assist with donation drop offs, as well as possible administrative and data entry work. Must be 18 years or older. Hours are flexible.
- Back to School Supply Collection Drives- New supplies for children are needed by August 15th. Particularly useful are backpacks, calculators, and sturdy 2" and 3"

notebooks. Please see the Montgomery County Public School website at www.mcps.org for class lists.

- Fall Cleanup Projects- Well-organized groups who can provide tools, labor, and ideally, mulch and planting materials, are needed to help us with yard maintenance at sites around the county. Additionally, we can use individuals or groups to help with weekly lawn maintenance.

There are so many ways you can give back! Please see our web site (www.mcch.net) to see a full list of volunteer opportunities such as Back-to-Work mentors and Meal Program volunteers, grants researcher, computer wizard, special event projects, and more.

Please contact Amanda Lewis at amlewis@mcch.net for further information about becoming a Help the Homeless Mini-Walk Coordinator or front desk greeter and contact Teri Brenits at teri@mcch.net for details about all other opportunities.

We appreciate your time and effort and hope to work with you in the near future. Service learning (SSL) credit can be awarded for all pre-approved activities!

Cordell Place Honored Nationally

Cordell Place, our permanent housing program which opened in downtown Bethesda in 2010, received an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties. The award recognizes innovative county government initiatives. Cordell Place provides permanent housing to 32 formerly homeless single men and women in personal living quarters, with shared kitchens, a community room, and other amenities. All tenants receive on-site case management as well as the opportunity to engage in a range of community

events and activities.

Cordell Place was made possible by a partnership between MCCH, Coalition Homes, the State of Maryland, Montgomery County government and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. This represents a large step forward in our efforts to place permanent supportive housing in all areas of the county. Congratulations to all of our partners at Cordell Place!

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Letter from Board Chair Amy Williard



During these steamy months, we continue to work with our partners to ensure the safety of vulnerable people. As you know, our work goes on all year round. The extreme heat can be just as dangerous as the cold for people living outside. We are busy; even in the summer.

Staff is working hard and making sure our clients are getting the services they need. Volunteers are calling us about back-to-school supply drives. We are also working on the Fannie Mae Help the Homeless Mini-Walk program. We pioneered the Mini-Walk in 1997 with Fannie Mae and it is a hallmark of our development and public education work (see page 8). You can help us meet our goal of 3,000 walkers this year to raise critical funds for all our programs including the Partnership for Permanent Housing (PPH).

PPH, which revolutionized the way we serve people experiencing homelessness when it was established in 2003, connects clients to the services they need. You can read more about this successful program starting on the front page of this newsletter.

We rely on many individuals like you to make a difference to people like Beth in PPH and all of our programs. To show how much your support means, I'd like to share some words from another PPH resident, Jane:

It was three years ago when being homeless was a daily struggle and a nightmare. I was filled with constant fear of how it would all end, how would I ever be able to work enough hours to rent an apartment, how would I feed my children, how would I clothe them, how would I find the strength to keep going? Thanks to the support of the PPH program and its partners, I no longer have to live every day in fear. My hope has been restored as well as the confidence to be the best parent and provider for my children. Words cannot express the gratitude I feel [toward] this program.

On behalf of our staff and board, thanks again for your continued generosity. As you can see, it means the world to the people we serve.

Warmly,

continued from page 1

budgeting. The well being and academic success of children in PPH families are very important. Case managers discuss achievements and challenges with parents and assist them with developing positive working relationships with school officials.

Among our achievements this past year:

- PPH served 126 families, including 253 children.
- 27 children were able to attend summer camps or enrichment activities thanks to special funding.
- Over 80% of heads of households in the families are either employed or involved in a career development program.
- PPH served 64 single adults.
- 10 households successfully transitioned out of PPH because they no longer required supportive services or realized an income such that they no longer required a deep rental subsidy.

MCCH collaborates with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Housing and Community Affairs and the Housing Opportunities Commission on PPH. Additional funding is provided by foundations, including the Freddie Mac Foundation, MCCH's largest private funder.

Beth's Story: From Homeless to Homeowner

Beth R. and her three children became homeless when she lost her job in 2007 during a company merger. They moved in with her mother but were forced to leave in 2008. The family spent time in emergency shelter and transitional housing in the county before Beth was accepted into MCCH's Partnership for Permanent Housing program in 2009. She and her family finally had a place to call home again with the stability that comes from permanent housing and supportive services.

During her entire struggle, Beth demonstrated her intense drive to succeed. She paid off over \$3,000 in debt and works for the IRS as a receptionist while studying at the University of Maryland University College. Beth will graduate next year with a bachelor's degree in accounting. She received a pre-approval letter from her bank to purchase a home this past spring and her offer to purchase a town home in Silver Spring was accepted. She received grants for the down payment and closing costs on the home.

According to Beth, PPH "allowed my family to get back on our feet financially, emotionally and spiritually. We are now self-sufficient and couldn't have done it without your support. My case workers were always kind and never made me feel ashamed of my situation. You all are truly a blessing."

Out of respect for the privacy of our clients, names have been changed and some minor details altered.

Good News, Generous Community

Spring Beautification Complete

Children and families from KidzCare, USA, the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School, and the Servolution team from Church of the Redeemer braved the elements in order to lay out new mulch and plants at the Home Builders Care Assessment Center (HB-CAC), our Van Buren Street house, and our Lockney Avenue apartments in Takoma Park. Thanks to team leaders Jade Verity, Barbara Bender and Roosevelt Dzime-Assison for their persistence in rescheduling and organizing their volunteers despite many rained-out attempts. Our Flower Avenue location also received a mini-makeover thanks to donations of plants and labor from Mike Hill and the Chesapeake Landscaping company and the labor of John Enagonio, Director of Real Estate, Coalition Homes, Inc. Next up...fall planting!



Volunteers from the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School worked hard on spring planting.

Pet PALS Visit Seneca Heights Apartments

Case managers at Seneca Heights Apartments (SHA) coordinated pet visits for the residents with PALS, a non-profit organization that brings people and animals together. PALS volunteer, Eve Dianich, came to SHA in June with her dog Molly and is scheduled to come back on a monthly basis. However, the get-together was such a success that residents re-



Children at SHA enjoy a visit from an animal friend.

quested that the visits be weekly! PALS needs additional volunteers with trained animals. If you are interested in working with MCCH and PALS, please contact Teri Brenits at teri@mcch.net.

Sun Salutations at Seneca Heights

Many of our residents at SHA know that exercise is part of a healthy lifestyle. Before we even had an instructor secured, seven residents had signed up to take a yoga class. Luckily, yoga instructor Jen Campbell Munn approached us and developed a class appropriate for people who are just beginning to get back into exercise. Jen recruited fellow instructor Emily Star and obtained a donation of yoga mats and other supplies. As Jen and Emily complete the first series of classes, plans are in the works for a new session of classes over the summer.

Toiletries Galore

We are always amazed at the generous donations that come our way, but recently, we have been positively overwhelmed with donations of all types of brand new toiletries for the men, women and children in our programs. Our thanks go out to Girl Scout Troop 2929, Brownie Troop 6503, the students of Lakelands Park Middle School, the JCC of Greater Washington Preschool, Julie Repetti, Mira Tignor, Christine Miller, Verna Dunmoodie, and Kaoru Yamamoto. Special mention goes to 10-year-old Caleigh Rosensweig who spent almost an entire day sorting the bounty into boxes for easy distribution to our residents.



Volunteer Caleigh Rosensweig organized toiletry donations.

Volunteer Profile: Mini-Walk Coordinator Elizabeth Kirkpatrick

In 2009, Elizabeth Kirkpatrick of Bethesda took the lead and brought the Help the Homeless Mini-Walk program to her child's school, Westbrook Elementary School.

She worked with Randi Vogel, the guidance counselor, to coordinate it that year and again in 2010. "My desire to help was really a pretty simple one. It seemed like an easy way to raise money for a good cause while increasing awareness among kids in a relatively privileged community," says Elizabeth. She mentioned that MCCH was very responsive during the Mini-Walk process and gave her all the information and materials she needed. In fact, she says that the "whole process ran very smoothly."



Students enjoy last year's Mini-Walk at Westbrook Elementary School.

Elizabeth encourages anyone thinking about coordinating a Mini-Walk to go for it. "The walk was fun and thought-provoking for the kids...After the first year it

basically runs itself with help from a few volunteers and our school counselor." We thank Elizabeth for giving her time and energy to coordinate Mini-Walks. Because of her and the many other Mini-Walk volunteer coordinators, we raise critical funds for our programs and educate thousands of area students and community members about homelessness in our community. This year, we need even more dedicated Mini-Walk Coordinators like Elizabeth. Would you be willing to help in this way?

Who Is Homeless in Montgomery County?

Every year the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) coordinates a regional enumeration of the homeless and formerly homeless population. This is a comprehensive effort that includes surveying people who are sheltered, unsheltered and living on the street, including even those living in the woods. Montgomery County participated in this year's effort on January 26, 2011.

1,132 people were homeless in Montgomery County.

- 6.4% increase over 2010.
- Includes 758 individuals and 125 families consisting of 143 adults and 231 children.

1,442 formerly homeless people were residing in permanent supportive housing.

- 3% increase over 2010.
- Includes 505 single adults and 278 families consisting of 358 adults and 579 children.

25% (224) of homeless adults in our community are employed.

32% (290) of homeless adults have a physical disability or chronic health problem.

60% (542) of homeless adults have severe mental illness, chronic substance abuse or co-occurring disorders (substance abuse and severe mental illness).

If you want to learn more about the homeless in our community and our region, please visit our website www.mcch.net. The full report may be found on the COG website at www.mwcog.org. MCCH staff is available to speak to your community or faith-based group about homelessness in Montgomery County. Please contact Teri Brenits at teri@mcch.net.

How do we define "homelessness?"

We use HUD's definition of "homelessness," which is people who reside in some form of emergency or transitional shelters, domestic violence shelters, runaway youth shelters, and places not meant for human habitation, which include streets, parks, alleys, abandoned buildings, and stairways.

MCCH Volunteer and Staff Recognition Night at the Big Train

Volunteers, staff and board members of MCCH joined together on June 15 to cheer for the Bethesda Big Train baseball team at Shirley Povich Field in Cabin John Park. Perfect weather, mugs filled with sweets and a good game provided a festive atmosphere and a chance for everyone to get to know each other a little bit better.



MCCH board members, staff and volunteers enjoy the game.

This game was an ideal opportunity to celebrate the amazing work of our volunteers and staff. We'd like to thank the Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation and the Bethesda Big Train team for the tickets and the opportunity to get together and showcase our agency and volunteer information with other fans. Perhaps next year, some of those fans will be attending as MCCH volunteers!

MCCH Real Estate Affiliate Acquires Additional Properties: New Housing for Families to Open This Fall

After many years providing transitional and permanent housing to homeless and formerly homeless families in the community, Silver Spring Interfaith Housing Coalition (SSIHC) disbanded. Because of our track record providing high quality housing and services, MCCH and Coalition Homes, our nonprofit affiliate housing development organization, were approached to assume ownership of three SSIHC properties.

We worked closely with SSIHC, the Montgomery County Departments of Health and Human Services and Housing and Community Affairs, the State of Maryland, the City of Takoma Park and the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) on the legal and financial issues. After many months, the properties were added to Coalition Homes' ever-expanding stock of housing for formerly homeless people.

www.mcch.net

Coalition Homes obtained public and private funding to renovate the properties. When renovations are completed in the fall, six homeless families will be permanently housed and will receive home-based case management through MCCH's Partnership for Permanent Housing program (you can read more about the successful PPH program throughout this newsletter). We received six project-based Housing Choice Vouchers from HOC to provide ongoing rental subsidies in the multi-unit buildings.

"We are honored that SSIHC saw us as a good partner to take over their much beloved properties. We are also thrilled that we can help expand PPH again to serve more families in our community" says Coalition Homes Director of Real Estate, John Enagonio. "Thank you to all of our partners in this process."

Shining Support at ShelterWalk 'n Roll

Rain showers and cloudy skies did not deter the many supporters who joined us in Rockville Town Square for our 15th annual ShelterWalk 'n Roll on May 1st, 2011. The fun-filled event is always an incredible opportunity to gather with our partners in the community to raise awareness about homelessness in our county and this year was no different. Thanks to generous sponsors and donors, we raised over \$18,000 for MCCH programs.

Rousing remarks from Montgomery County Councilmember George Leventhal and our event benefactor, Guy Cecala of Inside Mortgage Finance Publications, kicked off the event. Interim Executive Director Julie Maltzman relayed inspiring stories of success from the people we serve. MCCH board member Dick Pettit, Cecala and Maltzman energized the crowd to embark on the two-mile walk around the town square.



The Jack, Denise, and Neal Acoustic Rock Trio once again headlined the event, filling the square with their great mix of music.

Thanks to the following volunteers who helped the event run smoothly: Cynthia Azat, Charles Bentz, Gabby Boozer, Don Brenits, Sophie Brenits, Alvin and Alexander Chung, Betel Dejene, Mitra Hastroudi, Charlie and Philip Havens, Grace Hazlett, Kaila Jordan, Jessica Joseph, Steve Leanos, Thomas Riddle, James Roberts, Jacqueline Rommel, Jacob Shoal, Katie and Gabby Spann, Matthew Suh, Lidya Tekka, Ace Thompson, Lucy Yost, and Helana Zagami.

With our generous ShelterWalk 'n Roll sponsors, donors, volunteers and attendees, we continue to end homelessness One Step at a Time.



Many supporters joined together to walk around the town square.



Face painting, crafts and games proved fun for all.

Thank you to our 15th Annual ShelterWalk 'n Roll sponsors and donors for their generosity:



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MCCH thanks the following donors for their generous contributions.

MCCH is only able to include donations of \$100 or more made between February 1, 2011 and May 31, 2011.
All donors are truly appreciated, and each gift makes a difference in the lives of people experiencing homelessness.

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In Memory of:

Nancy Brenits
by Daniel Rosensweig

We apologize for any omissions, misspellings or other errors and welcome your corrections and suggestions. Please contact Andrea Nesby at anesby@mcch.net or 301-917-6657.



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Host a “Help the Homeless” Mini-Walk – A MCCH Tradition!



We are proud to be part of the Help the Homeless Walkathon Program, sponsored by Fannie Mae. By holding Mini-Walks, schools, camps, churches, synagogues, businesses, and other organizations can help increase awareness about the issues of homelessness while raising critical funds for our programs.

Help MCCH reach its goal of 3,000 walkers by holding a Mini-Walk! Fannie Mae will award \$50,000 if we meet our goal.

- Mini-Walks may be held from July 1st until November 6th, 2011.
- The registration fee is \$20 for youth (age 25 and younger) and \$30 for adults.
- Registered (paid) walkers receive a t-shirt for participating in the walk.
- Mini-Walk programs include at least 15 minutes of physical activity and a 30-minute homelessness awareness presentation. There are many fun ways to structure these activities.
- MCCH staff will help the Mini-Walk coordinator plan and coordinate the Mini-Walk and make it as easy and educational as possible!

For more information please contact Amanda Lewis, amlewis@mcch.net, 301-917-6654.