

HOMELESS TIMES



Solving Housing Crises and Striving to End Homelessness in Montgomery County

Fall 2011

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The Home Builders Care Assessment Center: Emergency Shelter and Services for Men

In the summer newsletter, we wrote about the successes of our Partnership for Permanent Housing program for households exiting homelessness. Now it's time to highlight the Home Builders Care Assessment Center (HBCAC) men's emergency shelter which keeps over 800 men off the streets each year. The HBCAC provides year-round emergency shelter for men experiencing homelessness in our community and a range of on-site critical supportive services to help them address their housing crises.

During the winter months (November – March), 135 men sleep at the shelter, with an additional off-site overflow capacity of 100 beds. The shelter has the funding capacity to serve 60 during the warmer months (April – October). Residents receive breakfast, lunch, and dinner, often provided and served by volunteer groups. Men are encouraged to meet with one of the three case managers to connect with community resources, develop individual treatment plans, and relocate to more stable housing. Morning support group and recovery meetings are held daily (Monday-Friday) and additional health-related groups are held

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Susanne "Susie" Sinclair-Smith to Lead MCCH and Efforts to End Homelessness

After a nationwide search, MCCH's Board of Directors appointed Susanne "Susie" Sinclair-Smith as its new executive director. Susie now oversees the day-to-day operations of MCCH and its affiliate, Coalition Homes, Inc. MCCH Board Chair, Amy Williard, said that "throughout the search process Susie impressed both the board and the search committee with her vision for the future and her passion for serving people experiencing homelessness."



Susanne Sinclair-Smith
 New Executive Director, MCCH

Susie has an incredible depth of experience with more than 25 years in the nonprofit and public sectors focusing on homelessness and affordable housing. She was founding executive director of the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless and worked at the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and Fannie Mae Foundation. Most recently, she served as Expert Consultant for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' development of *Opening Doors, Federal Strategic Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness*. Susie holds a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and a J.D. in Poverty Law and Clinical Practice from Antioch School of Law.

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Opportunities to Help

As the weather becomes cool and the days get shorter, we look ahead to our needs during the winter, including the holiday season. Our community outreach team is ready and eager to partner with you on the following activities:

- **Holiday Collection Drives** - We are looking for groups or individuals to hold collection drives for residents in our programs. Needs include grocery, Target or Wal-Mart gift cards; new, unwrapped toys; new coats; toiletries; and much more. There are also wish lists for individual clients and houses.
- **Gift Wrapping Volunteers** - Beginning in early December, we will need gift wrappers in our office and at fundraising events.
- **Four-Wheel Drive Volunteers** - We need drivers who have four-wheel drive capability to help get essential

staffers to work at our various sites around the county during weather-related closings.

- **HBCAC Back-to-Work Program** - Volunteers with professional experience are needed to assist clients at our men's shelter with all aspects of preparing themselves for employment.
- **HBCAC Meal Program** - This continues to be the program with the greatest need for volunteers, as shelter meals consist almost entirely of food prepared and delivered by volunteers.

Please visit our website www.mcch.net to see a full list of other volunteer opportunities, including being a front desk greeter, special events volunteer, and more. Contact Teri Brenits at teri@mcch.net for details about these and other opportunities. And remember, SSL credit can be awarded for all pre-approved activities!

Follow MCCH Wherever You Are!

There are lots of ways to stay in touch with MCCH and get the latest on events and developments in our work to end homelessness. Please visit our website at www.mcch.net for updated information and to sign up for our email updates. Finally, we hope you'll join us in the social networking world if you haven't already!



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Letter from the Executive Director



I'm pleased to write this as the newly appointed Executive Director of MCCH. I am glad that my years of experience have led me here to work with the wonderful staff, board, volunteers and community partners of MCCH.

This issue highlights the important work at the Home Builders Care Assessment Center (HBCAC) – our men's emergency shelter. The HBCAC is next door to our administrative offices so before going home, I frequently stop by to get to know the staff and clients. Without fail, I meet one of MCCH's dedicated volunteers coming to serve dinner or drop off donations.

Men at HBCAC have fallen into homelessness because of the shortage of affordable housing, jobs that don't pay a living wage, and a lack of enough vital supports to help them deal with disabilities and bounce back from crises. Many face mental illness compounded by co-occurring medical and substance use conditions. Single homeless men, including those at HBCAC, have access to few benefits and low Medicaid, Medicare and food stamp enrollment rates.

In 2014, Health Reform pursuant to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will enable all of our HBCAC clients to be eligible for Medicaid for the first time. Connecting people to Medicaid can help fill the gap in critical services, and when combined with needed rental subsidies, provides increased housing stability. The ACA also calls for the integration of physical and behavioral care, meaning improved health and livelihood for the most vulnerable and chronically homeless subset of the population.

At my first meeting of the MCCH Board of Directors, we

concluded that MCCH has an "awesome responsibility" as the operator of the only year-round emergency men's shelter in Montgomery County. We make every effort to shorten the stays, to break the cycle of homelessness, and to ensure when men leave they are moving on to better circumstances. Darrell Butler, HBCAC Program Director, and his devoted staff work hard to create a truly dignified and service-rich environment. I look forward to building on our invaluable partnership with the Montgomery County Government to ensure our clients are able to move out of shelter and access critical rental subsidies, a range of services, and permanent supportive housing.

I hope that you enjoy learning more about the HBCAC and how you can help there and elsewhere as we work toward our mission of ending homelessness which includes incorporating opportunities in the recently released *Opening Doors, Federal Strategic Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness*. We will share more information on that plan and MCCH activities around permanent housing in future newsletters.

I look forward to working with MCCH's many friends and partners as we join together to fulfill our "awesome responsibility" we hold on behalf of our HBCAC and other clients! Thank you for your support.

Warmly,

Susie Sinclair-Smith

P.S. I look forward to seeing you at the Help the Homeless Walkathon on Saturday, November 19th! Please see the back page of this newsletter or our website for additional information.

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During an interview, Susie shared thoughts about her recent appointment and how she became interested in MCCH. "I am looking forward to building upon MCCH's successes as we implement our mission of solving housing crises and ending homelessness...I've seen firsthand the adverse effects of homelessness and the importance of advancing policies and creating resources to create a supply of permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless populations. Ensuring everyone has dignified housing is key. There was no question that MCCH shared this same belief and it is why I was drawn here."

When Susie was with the William S. Abell Foundation, she toured MCCH's Seneca Heights Apartments. "I would never have known that Seneca Heights was a former uninhabitable, run-down motel when I walked into a warm, inviting apartment complex," says Susie. "The fact that 40 formerly homeless single adults and 17 families were thriving together in their new home meant that it became a dream model in our strategic initiative to end homelessness."

After then attending a community meeting with county

www.mcch.net

agencies at MCCH, Susie recognized that "MCCH was a unique and special organization committed to ending homelessness through dignified and state-of-the-art approaches." She was also impressed by the engagement of the public sector in our community. "With the commitment of the county government and the community capacity and support that exists here, I truly believe that if any place can end homelessness in partnership with the federal government – it is Montgomery County."

After most recently spending time in the government and foundation sectors, Susie is glad to return to her community-based roots. "It's an exciting time to be implementing programs when so much is known about the different causes of homelessness, successful interventions for different groups, and opportunities to prevent people from becoming homeless."

We welcome our new executive director, Susie Sinclair-Smith, to the MCCH family!

To read more of our interview with Susie, including more about what drew her to working on behalf of those experiencing homelessness, please visit www.mcch.net.

Good News, Generous Community

School Supply Bonanza!

Over 75 children and their families in our Partnership for Permanent Housing (PPH) program attended the first Back to School Expo at Rockville United Church. PPH case managers and staff handed out over 50 flash drives, new backpacks, calculators, 200 notebooks, 100 composition books, and loads of other supplies to students for the new school year. MCCH students going off to college received “dorm packs” which included sheets, shower caddies, gift cards, water bottles, flash drives, scientific calculators, and more. Students in our Seneca Heights Apartments program also went back to school well-equipped with new supplies.



Robin Marquart and Danielle Davidson from Enterprise

We'd like to thank members of the **Baldrige Performance Excellence Program at NIST** and coordinator **Diane Harrison; Barbara Shubert; the Bethesda Community School and coordinator Jill Trainer; Captain F. Carroll McKown; members of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints and Betty Hsueh; Corwin and Virginia Atwood; Robin Marquart and the employees of Enterprise Holdings, Inc.; Fisher Bioservices and Beena Kuniuppy; George You; Holiday Inn and Frances Katsha; ICMA and Schinnell Leake; InfoZen and Laura Beard; Kathy**



Students choose from loads of school supplies provided by generous donors.

and Danny Renbaum-Koss who energized his community to action by sending an email to the local listserv which generated additional donations. Special thanks go to **Rockville United Church** for donating the space for the Expo.

“Clean House” at MCCH!

On September 10th, MCCH welcomed a volunteer team from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, a component of the Executive Office of the President, in recognition of the 10th



ONDCP volunteer team

reorganization of two large storage sheds overflowing with donated supplies from floor to ceiling. The team swiftly sorted the items, leaving us with space that will be easy for staff to navigate during the winter season. Thanks to the entire team and a special note of gratitude goes to **Commander Christopher Thomas and Christine Kourtides** for coordinating this event.

Never Too Young to Make a Difference

While planning his Bar Mitzvah, **Manny Bass** of the Har Shalom Congregation in Potomac took to heart the commandment of matanot la'evionim (gifts to the needy). He wanted to raise awareness about homelessness and funds for people in need in his own community as part of his celebration. He requested that his guests make contributions to MCCH in lieu of gifts. Thank you, Manny, for your thoughtfulness.



Kalman "Manny" Bass

Help with Financial Literacy

Financial advisor **David Weinstein** meets with residents of Seneca Heights Apartments to discuss budgeting, financial goals, and debt repayment. He gives residents tips on how to save money and works with them on their budgets to identify where their money is going. Case managers report that clients are beginning to follow savings plans and pay off debts, both excellent steps on the road to financial and housing stability. Thanks, David!

Post-July 4th Music, Food and Fun at the HBCAC.

On July 6th, the outreach team from **Covenant Life Church (CLC)** found yet another way to offer support to the residents of our Home Builders Care Assessment Center in the form of a post-July 4th BBQ and concert. Read more about this and other ways the community is giving generously on our website: www.mcch.net.



HBCAC Program Director Darrell Butler converses with clients.

weekly. The Back-to-Work program provides vocational counseling at the shelter. There is also medical care on-site.

The Men's Emergency Shelter was one of the first programs of MCCH, beginning cold-weather operations in 1993 and year-round operations in 1998. For many years, men were served in inadequate facilities that included men sleeping on a cold floor with only one or two blankets. A significantly improved shelter was built in partnership with Montgomery County and the Home Builders Care Foundation in 2000. In 2009, the renovated and renamed Home Builders Care Assessment Center opened, which included a 3,780 square foot addition with more beds, new laundry, bathroom, shower and storage facilities, two medical exam rooms, private counseling areas, common areas and a computer lab.

The building expansion not only allowed for more physical space and a wider scope of services for the high volume of clients served at the shelter, but also created an improved atmosphere. According to Darrell Butler, director of the HBCAC, "we were like sardines in the small space before and the renovation made a big difference in our ability to serve people with respect and dignity." Case managers are now better able to

talk with clients in a confidential manner, and Butler also noted that staff can hold more group meetings and activities during the daytime hours.

All of this means that the shelter is much more than a safe place to sleep. Last year, 156 men moved to more stable housing after receiving services at the HBCAC. Butler said "this is what we're about, in accordance with the mission of MCCH, moving people out of homelessness and into homes. We are proud of the diligent work of our case managers to support clients in their efforts to find housing."

Would you like to help men in crisis in our community? There are a number of ways to help, including collecting various items like toiletries and earplugs or providing meals (you may read about one volunteer effort on page 6 of this newsletter). The HBCAC also accepts food from volunteers and area restaurants. For more information on our needs, or to join in a tour of the shelter, please visit our website or contact Teri Brenits at teri@mcch.net.

HBCAC By the Numbers

Last year

- 820 men slept at the shelter.
- 211 men were connected to supportive services.
- 245 men agreed to a service plan.
- 156 men moved to more stable housing.
- 97 men were between the ages of 19 and 24; 43 were over age 62.
- 101 clients were served in the Back To Work Program, including 75 new participants.
- 44 job readiness classes were held; 53 men received job retention services; 11 men attended job skills courses, and 56 men obtained employment last year.

Frank's Story: Hope and Employment for a Homeless Veteran

Frank is a 60-year-old veteran who found himself homeless after he lost his job last year. The Home Builders Care Assessment Center (HBCAC) men's emergency shelter kept him off the street, safe and warm. When he arrived in December, his case manager and the vocational counselor at the shelter encouraged Frank to get involved in our Back-to-Work program, which is our on-site vocational counseling program. He was then able to participate in the Department of Veterans Affairs Compensated Work Therapy program. We were able to help Frank pay for a training course in Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy at Montgomery College, and

also for a new suit to wear to his successful interview for temporary employment in a VA hospital's physical therapy department.

The position with the VA was part of a 50-hour summer certificate program. Because of his work ethic and specialized training, Frank's hours were increased from three to five days a week. It looks very likely that he will be offered a permanent position working for the hospital. With assistance from his MCCH case manager, Frank also received a housing voucher from the VA that enabled him to move to permanent housing this past June.

Volunteer Profile: Junie Nathani Community Service with a Culinary Flair

Junie Nathani of Bethesda was inspired to serve her Montgomery County neighbors after hearing messages about public service during the 2008 presidential election. Her supervisor at Georgetown University, Mary Ann Mahin, told her about the opportunity to prepare and serve meals to the men staying at the Home Builders Care Assessment Center (HBCAC) men's emergency shelter. Junie immediately recruited friends, family, and colleagues to prepare and serve a hot dinner once a month.

There are sixteen members of the group who rotate preparing and serving meals. Junie emails participants a recipe from which to cook, but, even so, the dishes are all unique to the preparer. One volunteer is the group's resident gourmet who may elevate a simple baked chicken with stuffed goat cheese. They prepare healthy meals, including vegetables, fruit, and salad whenever possible. Last winter, Junie's two nephews came along to play instruments and they all sang during dinner. According to Junie, "[the meal group members] all had me in common, but our bond has really evolved over time." The group even gathers in November to prepare gifts for the clients in one of the MCCH Safe Havens houses.



Junie (2nd from right) along with her group serve a delicious meal at the HBCAC.

"One of life's greatest unifiers is to cook meals with friends and family," says Junie. "Several of us grew up in India and it's rare to have weekend meals that don't include sharing with others. This project embodies the spirit of hospitality and volunteering with which we grew up." And what is her favorite part? "Pulling up to the shelter and the men coming right away to help carry the food into the kitchen. It is such a warm feeling!" Junie notes that not only do the men appreciate the food; they also seem to enjoy her group's presence.

Junie revels in the fact that this is "a real group effort — everyone is so enthusiastic!" She expected that some of that enthusiasm might wane over time, but the opposite has proved true as participants have stayed involved. Now, due to logistics of a large group, she has to turn down other people who ask to participate. Junie encourages them, as well as anyone else, to contact MCCH to start their own projects. [Will you join her?](#)

Seneca Heights Celebrates Seven Years of Keeping Dreams Alive

On September 15th, over 80 current and former residents, along with MCCH staff and board members, celebrated Seneca Heights Apartments' (SHA) 7th anniversary. Residents also participated in SHA's first Help the Homeless Mini-Walk. This year's theme was "keeping the dream alive."

Attendees gathered in SHA's community room where a colorful tree mural, created by staffer Alice Chen and residents, brightened the room. The vice president of SHA's Tenant Council, Antoine Fomufod, explained that the tree represents a firm foundation for someone to grow and branch out. The multitude of colored leaves symbolizes residents' unique dreams. Susanne Sinclair-Smith, the new executive director of MCCH, spoke about the importance of advocating for dignified housing, noting that "shelters are not the solution; dignified housing like Seneca Heights is the way to end homelessness."

SHA residents spoke about their dreams. Nihma Burrow yearns to move into a house so her child will have room to play. Another resident told the group about the family-like support system he found at SHA.

Everyone joined together to reflect on their experiences at SHA. Program Director Alice Forcier said that the celebration was "about keeping the dream alive for ourselves and advocating for more affordable housing for those less fortunate than us."

Over the past 7 years, SHA has served a total of 400 residents, including single adults and families. Within the past two years, 15 single adults and 19 families have moved into more independent housing.



Attendees gather in front of the tree mural created by Alice Chen and SHA residents.

MCCH thanks the following donors for their generous contributions.

MCCH is only able to include donations of \$100 or more made between June 1, 2011 and September 30, 2011. All donors are truly appreciated, and each gift makes a difference in the lives of people experiencing homelessness.

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Alexander and Nancy Lewin
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Thomas and Denise Lionetti
Alfred Luce
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by Martha Brockway

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.

Please Remember MCCH at the End of the Year

This is the perfect time to consider your end-of-year charitable giving priorities. Carefully considering what to give – and when to give it – can help increase the impact of your gifts to MCCH while also helping to meet personal priorities. Cash gifts, gifts of other assets such as stocks, bonds, and mutual funds, and legacy gifts are all possibilities.

Please contact Diane Aten, Director of Development and Communications, at 301-917-6644 to talk about your giving. Your accountant or tax advisor can provide you with more information specific to your needs. We know that many worthy causes ask for your support and we thank you for including MCCH in your philanthropic plans.



Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless

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Join Us at the Help the Homeless Walkathon



Help the Homeless Walkathon!

Saturday, November 19, 2011

Help raise critical funds for our programs by joining us on November 19th for Fannie Mae's final annual walkathon on the National Mall. We'll be there at 8:30 a.m. with doughnuts and coffee – please meet us at the large letter “M”! Go to www.helpthehomelessdc.org to register!

For more information, please contact Amanda Riddle (ariddle@mcch.net; 301-917-6654) or visit www.mcch.net.

Remember to designate agency code MD023 when you register!