

HOMELESS TIMES



A publication of the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless

600-B East Gude Drive, Rockville, MD 20850

www.mcch.net

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Fall 2007



The Coalition operates a spectrum of housing solutions that begins with the most basic of services like those provided at the Men's Emergency Shelter...

Looking Forward to the End of Homelessness



...to more permanent supportive housing solutions like that of our affiliate organization, Coalition Homes, Inc., which owns and manages units at this complex.

With the generous support of the William S. Abell Foundation, the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless has contracted with Abt Associates, a renowned social services consulting firm, for two tasks.

First, Abt has been working for almost a year with the provider network and representatives of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to implement a pilot of a Housing First program for families, which should launch by the end of the year. During the pilot period, staff will work to reduce the amount of time families are in emergency shelters or motels and help them to be rapidly rehoused. We look forward to the results. If successful, the pilot will prove one of the Coalition's main objectives – to help families achieve housing stability.

Second, Abt has developed a projection of costs associated with ending homelessness in Montgomery County. The draft report looks at the current level of funding within DHHS and projects what cost savings would accrue from a redesigned homeless system. The cost savings will occur because the revamped system will increase prevention efforts and provide support to currently housed families and individuals to help them maintain that housing. The system will promote long-term self-sufficiency and the cost savings will increase by keeping people from reversing their progress toward that self-sufficiency. Through its myriad programs and case management support, the Coalition wholeheartedly supports the goals of rapid rehousing and the proposed system.

The contract with Abt Associates is another example of the ways in which the Coalition leads the County on issues of homelessness. One example of our leadership was in the successful adoption by the County of our 10-year plan to end homelessness. Now, working with Abt Associates, the Coalition again searches for innovative approaches to homelessness and the affordable housing crisis within the County. The Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless is pleased to be working with our public and private partners as we look to serve people more effectively, provide better outcomes and reduce the amount of time people reside in housing that is not permanent.

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Staff Letter

Written by: Carolyn Amspaugh,
 Program Director, Safe Havens



Carolyn Amspaugh,
 Program Director, Safe Havens

Hello, my name is Carolyn Amspaugh and I am the new Program Director for Safe Havens. As the Coalition's first year-round program, Safe Havens has been providing transitional shelter and supportive services to homeless adults with chronic mental illness and/or substance abuse for over ten years. The program comprises four group homes

located in Rockville, Takoma Park, Gaithersburg and Laytonsville, serving 40 single adults in total. Our clients often have a long history of homelessness and have not been successful in other housing or treatment programs. When they come to Safe Havens, case managers and residential staff work with them to access appropriate treatment and necessary medical care, explore educational and vocational resources, and build coping and life skills. Once a client has become more independent and stable, the goal is for them to move on into permanent housing. The Safe Haven model stresses the importance of accepting a client and engaging at a pace that fits his or her needs. With this approach comes work that can be challenging and progress that can be slow. Nevertheless, ultimately, we witness overall changes in a person's life that can be dramatic and rewarding.

Prior to joining MCCH, I earned my MSW from the University of Michigan. Upon graduation, I worked for two years with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services where I provided case management to adolescents and their families in the foster care system. I then joined MCCH and spent the last 4 ½ years as a case manager at the Safe Havens home in Takoma Park. I have felt privileged to be a part of a team that does such important work with a vulnerable population in our community. During my time as a case manager, I learned first-hand the challenges many of our clients face in accessing treatment and stabilizing the multiple issues that have led to their homelessness. I hope to take this perspective and build on it as I continue to work with the committed staff at MCCH in my new role as Program Director.

Letter from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

I have been thinking a lot about the concept of home recently. I just became a grandmother and have been watching my daughter and her husband create a home for my new grandson, Dylan. I have seen upfront the importance of my home in their lives, now shaped in new ways by Dylan's arrival. At the same time, in the MCCH office, we are working on our first all-day conference for our provider network and have called it H.O.M.E. – Helping our Members through Education. What underlies all this is what having a home means – to any of us – but especially for someone who has spent time without one.

It's 2007 so I did what many of us do when writing – I googled the word “home” and found what wikipedia says, namely, “the concept of home is broader than a physical dwelling. Home is often a place of refuge and safety, where worldly cares fade and the things and people that one loves becomes the focus.”

I have the privilege of talking with tenants in our housing programs who are far more eloquent than I am about this subject. They speak with joy about having their own apartment. For instance, while the Seneca Heights Apartment units are less than 250 square feet, each unit has been decorated by the person living there with their individual touches. They decorate and individualize their living space – because they can. They no longer are residing in a shelter with rules about your belongings, the time you go to bed and when you get up. A tenant in one of our other permanent housing programs told me she pinches herself because she can't believe she's living in such a beautiful apartment. A mother signing her lease under our Partnership for Permanent Housing program wants to get home quickly so that her daughter will have a snack on the table when she returns home from school.

The work we do everyday – providing shelter and housing for men, women and children – is based on our strong belief that everyone deserves the dignity of a home. We hope you join us in helping to create places of refuge and safety for every person in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharan London".

Sharan London, Executive Director

Client Finds Safe Haven and a Place to Call Home



Adrienne's Safe Haven, one of four Safe Havens homes operated by the Coalition.

George became homeless after he was unable to afford the medications needed to treat his mental illness. His condition worsened and he ended up in the hospital. Upon discharge from the hospital, he was referred to Safe Havens, where he would spend the next two years. At Safe Havens, George was able to become stable again through appropriate medication and began attending an outpatient program that supported his recovery. He states that he benefited from his relationships with the Safe Havens staff whom he describes as “really great people who care about you.”

George kept an open mind and found it helpful to “ask everyone for advice.” He found that staff members were willing to listen and

encouraged him to keep working on his goals. This sense of hope and a safe environment were essential in assisting George in the daunting process of “starting all over.”

After two years of working together, George was ready to move on from Safe Havens. He was accepted into Seneca Heights Apartments where he has now lived for the last six months. George continues to do well and has started working at a job that he loves. He states that he is “very happy” at Seneca Heights and feels that Safe Havens prepared him to manage the freedom and responsibility that he now has in permanent housing.

Give Back This Holiday Season



Members of the Islamic Center of Maryland regularly serve hot meals to the residents of the Men's Emergency Shelter.

The Coalition is gearing up for the holidays and we need your help to make the holiday season bright for the homeless and formerly homeless people we serve.

Safe Havens serves homeless, single adults with mental illness who have been living on the streets. Upon request, we can provide you with a “**wish list**” of items that a Safe Havens client needs and wants this holiday season. **Gift cards** are always appreciated too, particularly for clients who have children and would like to give them a holiday present.

The **Men's Emergency Shelter** needs extra help for its clients and welcomes gifts of **stuffed animals, board games, science kits, other toys, clothing, shoes, sleeping bags, and books for the residents to give their children.** The shelter residents also have urgent needs for themselves such as **long johns, boots and hat/glove/scarf combination sets.** Extra help is also needed during the winter months to provide **hot meals** to the residents.

The **Partnership for Permanent Housing and Seneca Heights Apartments** serve both families and single adults. These programs would appreciate donations of **gift cards** to allow parents to purchase gifts for their children, as well as family photo and cookie kits. A **family photo kit** often includes a photo album, disposable cameras, a gift card to a photo processing shop and scrapbook materials. **Cookie kits** often include baking sheets, cooking spray, sprinkles, batter ingredients, cookie cutters and holiday cookie tins.



Employees and families of MedImmune join in the holiday cheer and serve dinner to residents of Seneca Heights Apartments.

Save the Date for MCCH's Annual Dinner



CELEBRATING PARTNERSHIPS

Thursday, March 6, 2008

Bethesda North Marriott Hotel & Conference Center
Reception, 6:30 p.m. Dinner & Program, 7:30 p.m.



Underwriting Sponsor:
Aris and Marianne Mardirossian



Stay tuned for more details!

Sponsorship packages are available at the following levels:

Champion - \$15,000 | **Advocate** - \$10,000 | **Partner** - \$5,000 | **Supporter** - \$2,500 | **Friend** - \$1,000

Please contact our office at **301-217-0314** or **www.mcch.net** for more information.

Seneca Heights Apartments receives NAHRO Award of Merit



Sharan London, MCCH Director, and Stephanie Killian, Department of Housing and Community Affairs, accept the NAHRO Award of Merit.

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) awarded Seneca Heights Apartments the NAHRO Award of Merit in Housing and Community Development, which gives national recognition to innovative housing and community development projects, programs, and services provided by NAHRO agency members throughout the country. Seneca Heights Apartments, the first of its kind in Montgomery County, is an innovative housing complex providing permanent supportive housing to 40 formerly homeless individuals and transitional housing for 17 homeless families. Seneca Heights Apartments was also entered in the National Awards of Excellence competition, which recognizes outstanding innovation and achievement in housing and community development programs throughout the country.

The Coalition thanks the following donors for their generous contributions since the last newsletter.

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Christine Maier by Sharan
 and Howard London

Lillian Goldman by
 Robert Zweig



**Support the Montgomery County
Coalition for the Homeless:
Participate in Fannie Mae's 20th Annual
*Help the Homeless Walkathon!***

Designate MCCH as your beneficiary organization



Exercise your good will and join the fight to end homelessness

WHEN: Saturday, November 17, 2007
Registration opens - 7 a.m.
Pre-Walkathon Program - 8:30 a.m.
Walkathon - 9 a.m.

WHERE: On the National Mall between
7th & 14th Streets. Join MCCH staff, clients
and supporters and meet us between 8 and 9 AM
at the "M" sign.

HOW: To join Team MCCH, you can register
online at: <http://www.helpthehomelessdc.org>.

The *Help the Homeless Walkathon* raises funds and awareness to help prevent and end homelessness in the Washington, D.C. area. Join thousands of MCCH staff, clients, family, friends, supporters and other walkers in the fight against homelessness!

Remember, all registration fees go directly to MCCH, and each walker counts toward our goal of earning the \$25,000 incentive for having 1,250 walkers.



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Foundation**



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