

HOMELESS TIMES



A publication of the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless

600-B East Gude Drive, Rockville, MD 20850

www.mcch.net

(301) 217-0314

Spring 2005

Kicking Down Barriers at Seneca Heights Apartments

The ultimate aim of karate lies not in victory or defeat, but in the perfection of the character of its participants.

- Gichin Funakoshi, the founder of modern karate

Standing in the middle of the room surrounded by assistants, a man lunges and breaks board after board while the audience bursts into applause. What is spectacular about this scene, aside from the man's impressive physical and mental strength, is that it took place in the community room of the newest Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless program, Seneca Heights Apartments (SHA) and everyone present, from the audience to the teacher himself, were residents exiting homelessness. The purpose of this demonstration was to attract youth at SHA to free karate classes.

The demonstration was a resounding success and inspired many children to sign up for classes including one 7 year old who gushed "Karate is so cool – I'm gonna learn to break boards!" Children at SHA meet in the community room three days a week with their instructor Kyu, who is a tenant at SHA, to learn the ancient martial art form of karate which aims at improving the mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing of its participants. Kyu, a master level black belt, has noticed improvements in "the children who have been attending our classes consistently. They have not only developed well physically, but mentally as well. Marked improvements in their attitude and confidence level are clearly evident."

Families who are experiencing homelessness spend most of their energy and resources on day-to-day survival therefore making recreational activities an inaccessible luxury. Perhaps one of the most devastating long-term effects of homelessness on

children is low self-esteem, which can become the seed of many emotional, behavioral, and educational problems. Children who have experienced homelessness often have deficits in social skills and their basic font of knowledge due to lack of access to varied social and cultural experiences. Experiences such as these karate classes can improve children's self esteem and behavior, provide stress release, and help children master new skills.



The classes have become an overwhelmingly favorite activity of SHA residents. Clinical Program Director Renee Belisle notes that "the karate classes have, of course, benefited the children physically, but just as importantly, we've seen dramatic positive changes in the children's behavior and self-esteem." One mother explains that "karate class means everything to my sons." Uniforms, donated by the Bethesda Martial Arts Academy, are given to students as they show enthusiasm and progress. The

imparting of a uniform produces a sense of pride. For instance, one 10 year old remarked, "I love Mr. Kyu's class. He helped me earn my uniform." The karate classes have been so popular, in fact, that an adult karate class was formed.

These karate classes demonstrate the enthusiasm, dedication and innovation of not only the program's staff but also of its residents. The classes, in addition to the tenant's association, are a unique way of unifying the two different segments of the program's population – the single adults living in the individual living units and the families in the

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WAYS TO HELP

Please contact Sarah Mahin at 301/217-0314 with any questions regarding these activities.

SENECA HEIGHTS APARTMENTS VOLUNTEER NEEDS

- Evening tutors for GED candidates
- Computer Literacy tutors
- Art teacher to lead art lessons
- Beautification Committees to plant flowers and decorate for the holidays.
- Drivers needed for weekly, scheduled one-hour outings for clients to the grocery store, shopping mall, or library.
- Facilitator for film and book club
- Tickets to cultural or sporting events are always welcomed and appreciated

ADOPT-A-SHELTER!

The Men's Emergency Shelter is open all day on Saturdays and Sundays. We have a need for all meals on those days. Please consider if you or your organization could prepare/bring food for at least one day a month. This is a great regular activity for faith-based groups or youth groups.

MEN'S EMERGENCY SHELTER "WISH LIST"

Men's toiletries - toilet paper - lotion - towels - underwear - socks - cereal - laundry detergent - milk - bag lunches - canned goods - paper goods

ENDORSE THE PLAN

Go to www.mcch.net to learn how you can help end homelessness and show your support by endorsing "Homelessness in Montgomery County: Beginning to End," our ten-year plan to end homelessness.

BECOME A MEMBER

The **Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless**, a nonprofit organization, provides shelter, supportive services and advocacy for the homeless in our community. Through **Safe Havens**, the Coalition provides shelter and rehabilitative programs year-round for forty homeless, mentally ill adults. The Coalition also operates the **Men's Emergency Shelter**, which offers overnight refuge to homeless men. The **Partnership for Permanent Housing** is a collaborative initiative managed by the Coalition that provides permanent housing for families using project-based housing vouchers and intensive case management. **Seneca Heights Apartments**, the first Personal Living Quarters in Montgomery County, houses 40 single adults and



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I sat down to write this issue's letter, promoting our new, revamped annual walkathon or telling you about various workgroups for the plan to end homelessness came to mind. But my eyes settled on customer satisfaction surveys filled out by tenants at Seneca Heights Apartments after the first 6 months of operation of this new program so that we can assess our services and take suggestions from tenants.



Sharan London
 Executive Director

Here's a sampling; I hope this demonstrates again what your support means to people experiencing homelessness:

- "I count it a blessing to be here."
- "The environment is very warm and friendly."
- "[My case manager is] very knowledgeable."
- "My housing unit is just enough for me. I've been blessed."
- "I [now] have clean and affordable housing."
- "I am now in a place that I can call my own, instead of shelter."

Thank you for your support. And, I still want to see you at

WHAT'S NEW AROUND MCCH

Homelessness in Montgomery County Public Education Campaign Runs a Second Time on Area Radio Stations

In November 2004, Otsuka America Pharmaceuticals Inc. sponsored another two-week series of 60-second spots about homelessness and the ten-year plan to end homelessness in our community on WTOP and WGMS. The three rotating spots told the stories of three people experiencing homelessness in our community. Our sincere thanks to Otsuka for their continued support of this exciting series of public education activities.

Seneca Heights Apartments Receives the HOME Doorknocker Award and the Governor's Housing Award

The Department of Housing and Urban Development recognized Seneca Heights Apartments with the first national HOME Doorknocker Award for its outstanding work in providing affordable housing to low-income and underserved people. One of twenty award recipients, Seneca Heights was recognized as a model for developing innovative housing solutions to meet the specific needs of its community. At the Governor's Housing Conference in November, Seneca Heights was awarded a "Commitment to Excellence Special Needs Housing Award" by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development.



New Foundation Grants

MCCH is pleased to announce two new foundation partnerships. The **Philip L. Graham Fund** awarded MCCH funds for much-needed technology infrastructure upgrades. Earlier in 2004, MCCH embarked on a technology planning process so that we can more efficiently and effectively serve our clients and meet our mission; this new grant will enable us to move forward on several elements of this plan. The **Charles S. Abell Foundation** funded an outreach case manager position and mobile medical services for the successful Safe Havens transitional housing program. Thank you to both of these foundations.

New Staff

MCCH welcomes **Maggie Hobbs**, LCSW-C, as Clinical Program Director of the Safe Havens Program. Maggie comes to us from Community Connections where she served as the Program Director of the Homeless Outreach Team. **Valerie Walker** joined MCCH in September as Administrative Officer/Comptroller; she was previously with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. She is responsible for human resources, technology, budget and finance. **Sarah Mahin** has served as Program Assistant in the administrative office since the fall. She supports volunteer management, development, and communications activities. Sarah is a graduate of Georgetown University.

Upcoming Events

Join Us at the 9th Annual ShelterWalk n' Roll

The walk-a-thon will raise awareness about homelessness in Montgomery County and funds to support the Coalition's shelters and programs. This year's event is expanded to include a family-friendly music



festival that will last all afternoon. Six local bands will perform a variety of music genres, from folk to rock.

Sunday, May 1, 2005
12 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Registration, Concessions and Music begin at 12:00 p.m.
 Walk commences at 2:00 p.m. (approximately 1.5 miles)
 Montgomery College's Rockville campus

Registration Fees

(include a ShelterWalk n'Roll t-shirt)
 Adults - \$25
 Children under 18 - \$15
 Families - \$80 (includes four t-shirts)



Please contact the MCCH office at 301/217-0314 or visit our website at www.mcch.net to learn how to become a sponsor, for more information, or to obtain registration forms and flyers.

with the Coalition

Freddie Mac's Hoops for the Homeless 2005



The Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless is proud to be a beneficiary of the annual Freddie Mac *Hoops for the Homeless* tournament. The tournament will be held on Saturday, April 16, 2005. A charitable one-day 3-on-3 tournament for all skill levels, this event features round robin play in different divisions based on experience, including a team of tenants from the MCCH Seneca Heights Apartments. Visit www.hoopsforthehomeless.org for more information on the event or call the office to purchase tickets. We thank Freddie Mac for this wonderful opportunity and look forward to a great event.

Birdies for Charity



Birdies for Charity is a Booz Allen Classic charitable fundraising program offering local charities, including MCCH, an exciting way to complement their year-round fundraising efforts and benefit by how well the professional golfers score! The Booz Allen Classic is the only Washington, D.C.- area stop on the PGA Tour.

Here's how the Birdies for Charity Program works:

1. You may pledge a sum of money (1 penny, 2 cents, 3 cents, a nickel, dime or more) for every birdie scored during the Booz Allen Classic Pro-Am and Tournament. Typically 1,500 birdies are scored in these 5 days. A penny pledge would result in a \$15 donation, 2 cents would result in a \$30 donation, and so on. Donors can also make a straight contribution of \$25, \$50, or more.
2. Pledges and contributions can be made online or by submitting a paper-pledge form.
3. Donors select MCCH as the recipient charity from the list of participating charities.

Corporate sponsorship packages also available. Please call the office or visit www.mcch.net for more information.

HELP THE HOMELESS 2004

MCCH supporters joined over 30,000 others and participated in Fannie Mae's 17th Annual *Help the Homeless* Walkathon. In addition to raising funds to prevent and end homelessness, a significant element of this event is raising awareness about homelessness in our area. MCCH alone engaged approximately 5,500 young people through mini-walks at local schools, educational presentations and service projects over the course of the fall. We are grateful that youth of Our Lady of Mercy joined us for the Mall Walkathon. We'd like to thank all the schools that participated in our youth engagement efforts and corporate sponsors for their very generous support.



Students at Fallsmead ES show support for MCCH before their mini-walk.



SHA Clinical Director, Renee Belisle, was interviewed by students at Bannockburn ES on their morning TV show.

Mini-walk Schools

North Chevy Chase Elementary
Oakmont School
Pyle Middle
Roberto Clemente Middle
Somerset Elementary
Viers Mill Elementary

Corporate Sponsors

Gerlach Real Estate, Inc.
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A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR HOLIDAY DONORS

The joy of the holidays did not elude clients of MCCH programs thanks to the generous support of numerous companies, organizations and individuals. While it is undoubtedly important that these, often basic, needs be met all year round; the significance behind these gifts somehow seems to grow during the holiday season. There was an abundance of cheer and appreciation as exemplified by one PPH family that wrote in appreciation of their gifts: "I hope your home is filled with happiness for the holidays. The same way you filled our home with happiness. Thank you for everything always."

ABC News
Kelle Akrami
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Temple Sinai
Michael and Catherine Stanton
Whole Foods Market

THANK YOU

To those who have given \$100 or more since our last newsletter.

MCCH is only able to print donations of \$100 or more. This reflects the incredible growth in support from people since MCCH's inception. All donors are appreciated - and each gift makes a real difference in the lives of people experiencing homelessness.

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Muriel Levine by Bertram Levine.
Ruth Levinson by Frances Feder.
George Price by Judy Tarr.
John Schupp by George and Doris Mohn.

IN HONOR OF

The Barrett's and the Drea's by Ed and Peggy Bowers.
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The Boverman family by Margaret Boverman.
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Connie Chronister by Bettie Jo Chronister.
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Blair Ewing by Martha Brockway.
Alice Forcier by Julia Schwarz.
Alice Forcier by Samuel and Margery Brodsky.
Mack George by Vigen Simchian.
William Giunto by August and Susan Ganzenmuller.
The Goeke grandchildren by Mildred Goeke.
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Grous' wedding by Judy Tarr.
Lucia and Alejandro Head by Malcolm and Doris Head.
Michael Hines by David Hines.
Sandy Jarrell by Gary Emanuel.
Bernard Johnson by Beth and Todd Harrison.
Rev. Mansfield Kaseman
Jonathan Leener by Dina Leener.
Howard London by Claire London.
Sharan London by Linda Beth Berman and



Inside...
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 Homeless Children
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