

# Health Care for the Homeless Mobilizer

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council

P.O. Box 60427

Nashville, TN 37206-0427

Vol. X No. 21

E-mail: [council@nhchc.org](mailto:council@nhchc.org)

Website: [www.nhchc.org](http://www.nhchc.org)

Telephone 615/226-2292

Fax 615/226-1656

12/6/05

## National Homeless Persons Memorial Day December 21, 2005

### Join or organize an event in your community

As advocates and service providers are acutely aware, homelessness leads to thousands of premature deaths across the nation each year. The approach of winter reminds us of the growing disparity between people with homes and those without and of the tragic consequences of life on the streets. Frostbite, hypothermia, steam grate burns, and exacerbated cases of cold and flu afflict those trapped at the confluence of plummeting temperatures and inadequate housing.

For their sake and for all of those who have passed away this year, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council joins with the National Coalition for the Homeless and other organizations to commemorate the 15<sup>th</sup> annual National Homeless Persons Memorial Day. **We call upon *Mobilizer* readers to join or organize events in your communities on or around December 21 – the first day of winter and the longest night of the year.**

### In remembrance

In 2004, commemorative events such as candlelight marches, vigils, graveside services, plays and performances, and religious activities were held in over 100 cities from Washington, DC, to Washington State. In addition to similar events planned for this year, advocates throughout the country will write letters to the editor, publish op-ed pieces, and introduce City Council resolutions to raise public awareness about the needs of people experiencing homelessness in their communities. On December 21, the National Council will release a study documenting the terribly excessive death rate of homeless persons. Given these examples, consider now what *you* will do to honor those lives lost on the streets and to work toward moral, comprehensive, universal solutions to poverty and homelessness.

On November 16, seeking to codify such solutions, Congresswoman Julia Carson (IN-7) and nine co-sponsors reintroduced the Bringing America Home Act ([H.R. 4347](#)), the most comprehensive legislative initiative to date addressing the root causes of homelessness. In the spirit of National Homeless Persons Memorial Day and in response to continuing, deadly increases in poverty and uninsurance in the United States, the National Council once again offers its support to this important legislation and encourages *Mobilizer* readers to do the same by calling (202/224-3121) or writing to their Members of Congress.

**As the year draws to a close and we again lament our nation's misappropriated resources and misguided policies, let us pay tribute to those hit the hardest and redouble our efforts to ensure housing, health care, and livable incomes for all people.**

## **ACTION:**

**Determine how many people died homeless in your city in 2005.** Shelters, HCH projects, and other service providers often maintain an annual list of deaths. The local morgue may release the names of people who died without known addresses, and the police department may keep track of people thought to be homeless who were victims of homicide. Additionally, other people experiencing homelessness can be good sources for the names and stories of their friends who have passed away. Even a partial list is useful in memorializing all of those who have died homeless.

**Organize an event to commemorate this Memorial Day.** If advocates, service providers, and/or homeless people in your community organize an annual event, please invite your clients, staff, and board members to participate. If there is not an event planned, take the initiative to convene a memorial in your community or at your HCH project. Include a reading of the names of those who have died.

**Work with your local media** to publicize Memorial Day and the relevant events. Send a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece about homelessness to your local paper, or simply ask the editor to publish the names of those who died homeless in 2005.

**Work with your City Council or local government** to pass a resolution declaring December 21 as Homeless Persons Memorial Day or simply to affirm the governing body's commitment to ending homelessness.

**For more information, event ideas, and sample resolutions and letters,** [consult the National Homeless Persons Memorial Day manual online](#). The page is also accessible from the National Council's homepage – [www.nhchc.org](http://www.nhchc.org). For additional questions about Memorial Day or organizing an event in your community, contact David Johnson at [djohnson@hchmd.org](mailto:djohnson@hchmd.org).

SUBSCRIBE TO THE HCH MOBILIZER (free!) by e-mailing [council@nhchc.org](mailto:council@nhchc.org)