



NCAB Newsletter

Vol. 2 Issue 3

November 2006

Homeless and Low Income Voter Registration Week a Success

We have received reports from several HCH programs around the country and wanted to share these positive results from National Homeless and Low-Income Voter Registration Week:

In Springfield, Massachusetts, HCH staff set up registration tables for a few days at some of their shelter sites and soup kitchens. All together they registered 20 new voters and changed addresses and political parties for some of their clients. While the numbers were not as high as expected, many came to either register or find out where they go to actually vote. Many were also interested in the candidates and their platforms for the Governor's race.

In Atlanta, Georgia, the Client Advisory Committee at Saint Joseph's Mercy Care Services was very active in getting low-income and homeless persons registered to vote. Voter registration took place in seven locations around the city. Registration was offered at three sites everyday and the other four locations once or twice. Client Advisory Committee members staffed all of the voter registration tables with a lot of enthusiasm. It was such a success that the Client Advisory Committee now wants to conduct voter registration drive on a quarterly basis. During the week 210 individuals were registered!

Amy Grassette; Co-chair of NCAB, works at the Family Health Center in Worcester, MA as a Food Stamp Advocate. While doing on-line applications with clients, one of the questions asked is "Would you like to register to vote today?" After looking at the applications completed in the last year, a total of 44 people had been registered.

Congratulations to Springfield, MA, Worcester, MA, Atlanta, GA and everyone else who participated in National Homeless and Low-Income Voter Registration Week. We estimate that more than 30 projects around the country participated and appreciate all of the support.

An HCH Consumer Shares His Story

In the year 1997 I had gambled heavily, my debts ran out of control, and I thought more of myself than my family. I lost my house and family, and had no where to go. My wife then moved to San Francisco with our 2 children, and I went to jail for 5 years for non-payment of Child Support.

After being released from jail, I was sent to [a shelter] where I stayed for almost a year. During my stay there I saw roaches, rats, people who overdosed on drugs, fights, and dirty living conditions; not fit for human lives. Never being homeless before, I was very sad.

While at the shelter, staff from the Community Health Link came to the shelter, and I was approached by one of their case managers from the HOAP and Heart Program for the Homeless. I was told that they could help me with things like housing, medical services, access to Food Stamps, and cash assistance.

The following week I went to CHL and was assigned a case manager, and he helped me to fill out applications for Food Stamps, medical assistance, and housing. Finally two days before Christmas I received a call telling me that the program had found housing for me. Man what a Christmas present! I was free to do what I wanted, like sleeping in late, and eating whatever I wanted to.

If it weren't for the people of CHL, and their help, I might not be writing this letter. I want to thank all of the nice people at CHL for all their help and to say to them " Job well done! "

Phillip George
Worcester, MA

Consumer Participation Outreach, Round 3

The National Consumer Advisory Board takes very seriously its role as the voice for all consumers of Health Care for the Homeless. To speak with authority to the National HCH Council and to government officials, it is critical that we know what a broad range of homeless people have to say about the issues. To get the input we need, NCAB has started to do Consumer Participation Outreach. Two Outreaches have been conducted already, and the results are reported at <http://www.nhchc.org/advisory.html>

Shortly we will send out to all CABs and HCH Projects a set of questions to start conversations with homeless people, Round Three of our Consumer Participation Outreach effort. The few simple questions will address national and local policy priorities for ending homelessness, and ask consumers how the National Council should focus its advocacy. The Outreach form looks like a questionnaire or survey. We ask that CAB members and/or HCH staff use the form to gather information from homeless people in your community; please make an effort to go beyond HCH clients in waiting rooms (though we certainly want their input!) and to reach others on the streets, even those who have not been served by HCH projects previously.

We ask that you record homeless persons' responses on the Outreach forms, and return them to us by December 31.

Prepare for Homeless Persons Memorial Day

National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day is every year on December 21, the first day of winter and the longest day of the year. NCAB encourages local CABs and other consumer groups in your communities to take the lead in organizing memorial services for homeless people who have died this year. Reading their names publicly, with whatever prayers or speeches you might want to offer, is a powerful reminder that homelessness is deadly, and must be ended. A Memorial Day poster can be downloaded at <http://www.nhchc.org/memorialday.html>. At the same site, you can also get ideas from others who have held Memorial Days in the past. Please let NCAB know about your events by writing to us at ncab@nhchc.org so we can give ideas to other sites who need help and include stories in our next newsletter.

The Ellen Dailey Award

Sarah Davidson, Chair of NCAB, attended the National Health Care for the Homeless Council's Governing Membership Retreat in October, where the Council decided to institute an annual consumer advocacy award in remembrance of Ellen Dailey. This award will be presented at the annual HCH conference in June. More details will be coming in the next few months. If you have any suggestions or ideas, please submit them to NCAB at ncab@nhchc.org by December 4, 2006.

Consumer Involvement in Europe

A report released recently talks about consumer participation in services for homeless persons all over Europe including Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Hungary, and the United Kingdom. They discuss why consumer participation is important, barriers to consumer participation, and other issues. It is good to know that others are struggling through the same issues and maybe we can help each other.

A Consumer from Europe shares his story:

When the Dublin Simon Community held an open election for their Board of Directors in 2005, a number of homeless people who had used their services stood for election. Two of us were elected, and by the high number of votes we received, it was clear the community thought our presence was needed at the board level. As it transpired, we were the first people in our situation to take such positions in any organizations in Ireland.

I have found that Dublin Simon are more than happy to listen to the people that they are here to help. They are taking a business-like approach to helping people. Having two members of their target demographic sitting on the Board, is a major display of the community's willingness to "walk the walk", and try to meet the needs of the people they are set up to help.

If you ask a homeless person what it is that they want, they will tell you that they want a secure and safe place to call home. This is a serious issue as it brings the local and national government authorities into the picture. It is the job of the voluntary organizations to supply the means of housing.

As I recover from the causes and effects of my homelessness, my time with Dublin Simon has shown me that one of the most important symptoms of being homeless is alienation from society.

Here in Ireland a recent poll revealed that 52% of the population thinks that it is an individual's own fault if they end up living on the streets. Increasingly, the various kinds of addiction and their causes are now being recognized as diseases. The flawed plan of leaving sufferers of mental health issues to fend for themselves in a community where it is all too easy to fall through the cracks in Ireland's completely inefficient health system, must be tackled.

By becoming involved with Dublin Simon I have been placed in different situations and met many new people. I hope I have shown others that the fact that I was once homeless does not mean I am unable, with the help of the housed community, to return and be a useful member of the community. I feel that an open mind is important for all wishing to help in this area, be it the newly clean and sober homeless person or the business person wishing to give something back to the community that they live in.

You can read more about the Homeless in Europe by linking onto the following web-site:

http://www.feantsa.org/files/Month%20Publications/EN/Magazine_Homeless_in_Europe_EN/Autumn_2006_FEANTSA_magazine_participation.pdf

Website Resources:

National Healthcare for the Homeless Council: www.nhchc.org

National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty: www.nlchp.org

National Low Income Housing Coalition: www.nlihc.org

National Coalition for the Homeless: www.nationalhomeless.org

National Alliance to End Homelessness: www.endhomelessness.org

Legislation Search: www.thomas.gov

**The NCAB Newsletter is produced with support from
the Health Resources and Services Administration.**

Send Us Your Stories

We need you!!! Hopefully, in our upcoming issues you, the readers, will send in your personal stories, poems, and articles regarding how you started your board and how it is running today. Please send any helpful comments on what you would like to see in the newsletter that might help others to ncab@nhchc.org

The NCAB Newsletter is published by the National Consumer Advisory Board, a component of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, PO Box 60427, Nashville TN 37206-0427, www.nhchc.org.

This project is supported by a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), US Department of Human Services. The views represented herein are those of the authors and not necessarily of HRSA.