



StreetSense



Where the Washington area's poor and homeless earn and give their two cents

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www.streetsense.org

THE HOMELESS CHALLENGE



Sleeping on cardboard and paper. Finding a free shower. Can a real homeless man help these college students survive the street?

Moyo gets emergency blankets from the hypothermia van.

Survival 101: The Street as Classroom

By Moyo Onibuje

I recently spent two days with a dozen college students, living on the streets of Washington, D.C., foraging through trash cans, sleeping on cardboard boxes and asking strangers for money, as part of the Homeless Challenge Project. The difference was, when it was over they were going home, and I'm still struggling to find a job and a permanent place to live.

The students were from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., participating in an Alterna-

tive Spring Break program, and as a homeless resident of D.C., I was asked to show them how homeless people live.

The experience of living as homeless people at once lowered their self-esteem, and raised their consciousness. As for me, I was surprised to see that my daily routine had value for someone else. The opportunity to teach them actually made me feel more positive, more

See **Challenge**, page 12

Housing Dominates City Budget Hearings

By Brittany Aubin

When Allen Wallace shuffled to a microphone in a sun-filled room on U Street on Saturday morning, March 1, the audience of 70 snapped to attention as he told of a car accident, an eviction and a four-month stretch of homelessness. Wallace, just one of the District's more than 6,000 homeless, has relearned to walk and holds down a job, but he still can't afford to live in D.C.

"Where are the homes for the working poor?" he asked.

His question, or variations of it, was repeated often at a community town hall held by the Fair Budget

Coalition, billed as an opportunity for community members to communicate their needs to the city government in the run-up to the 2009 budget process.

The budget process began last November, when the various departments drafted requests for funding and programs. These requests are then reviewed by Mayor Adrian Fenty's office, which will turn in his proposed budget to the City Council this month, said Martina Gillis-Massey, advocacy coordinator for the Fair Budget Coalition, a local grassroots advocacy network.

See **Budget**, page 4

STREET POETRY

Art for Heart's Sake



Street poet David Harris, left, who is no longer homeless, plans to publish a poetry manuscript this summer.

By Robert Blair

Beat poet Allen Ginsberg described poetry as "ordinary magic." It's "ordinary" because human experiences, such as parenthood, war and unrequited love, provide the stimulus for poems. It's "magic" because the intensity of poetic expression can give readers a strong sense of these experiences and their emotional impact.

It's no surprise that the experience of being homeless generates its own brand of ordinary magic – a reader-friendly, lyrical, and urban-oriented "street poetry." The authors, a strong contingent of whom live in Washington, D.C., are homeless or formerly homeless men and women, few of whom self-identify as poets.

As poet David Harris writes (see story on page 5), street poetry is not created "in the comfort of coffee shops/and sidewalk cafes" or "in classrooms brimming with knowledge/or/among library stacks." Instead, it's found "among the jingle of beggars' cups/... & the sighs of those who'd lost all dreams."

In short, street poetry is born from weariness and despair, but it can still provide the author with the

same pleasures of escape, self-expression, reflection and playfulness that creative writers often get from their art. Plus, it gives readers the chance to understand the perspectives and feelings of people who are or have been homeless.

Creative Writing Workshops and Anthologies

It's impossible to know how many homeless writers, inspired by a day's events or an evening's memories, scratch out verses that go unshared. Some street poems, however, do make it into print.

There are a few forums that provide a path to print for street poets in Washington, D.C. Some of the day centers that serve the area's homeless men and women offer creative writing workshops, and a couple publish anthologies of their clients' better works.

Miriam's Kitchen, a breakfast program based in a church near George Washington University, offers four weekly after-breakfast creative writing sessions, including a poetry workshop on Wednesdays.

These workshops provide an organized way for homeless men and women to form a community

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Our Mission

Street Sense aims to serve as a vehicle for elevating voices and public debate on issues relating to poverty while also creating economic opportunities for people who are experiencing homelessness in our community.

Our Editorial Policy

Editorials and features in Street Sense reflect the perspectives of the authors. We invite the submission of news, opinion, fiction and poetry, hoping to create a means in which a multitude of perspectives on poverty and homelessness can find expression. Street Sense reserves the right to edit any material.

The Story of Street Sense

Street Sense began in August 2003 after two volunteers, Laura Thompson Osuri and Ted Henson, approached the National Coalition for the Homeless on separate occasions about starting a street newspaper in Washington, D.C.

A street paper is defined as a newspaper about poverty, homelessness and other social issues that provides an income to the homeless individuals who sell it. About 25 street papers operate in the United States and Canada in places like Seattle, Chicago, Montreal and Boston, and dozens more exist throughout the world.

After bringing together a core of dedicated volunteers and vendors, Street Sense came out with its first issue in November 2003, printing 5,000 copies. For the next three years the paper published consistently on a monthly basis and greatly expanded its circulation and vendor network.

For the first year, Street Sense operated as a project of the National Coalition for the Homeless, but in October 2004, the organization incorporated and moved into its own office space. In March 2005, Street Sense received 501(c)3 status, becoming an independent nonprofit organization.

In October 2005, Street Sense formed a board of directors, and in November, the organization hired its first employee, a full-time executive director.

A year later, in November 2006, the organization hired its first vendor coordinator.

In February 2007, the paper started publishing twice a month as the network of vendors expanded to more than 50 homeless men and women. To support the increased production, Street Sense brought on its first full-time editor in chief in April 2007.

We are proud members of:



North American Street Newspaper Association



International Network of Street Papers

Street Sense

Vendor Code of Conduct

1. Street Sense will be distributed for a voluntary donation of \$1. I agree not to ask for more than a dollar or solicit donations for Street Sense by any other means.
2. I will only purchase the paper from Street Sense staff and will not sell papers to other vendors (outside of the office volunteers).
3. I agree to treat all others – customers, staff, other vendors – respectfully, and I will not “hard sell,” threaten or pressure customers.
4. I agree to stay off private property when selling Street Sense.
5. I understand that I am not a legal employee of Street Sense but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
6. I agree to sell no additional goods or products when selling the paper.
7. I will not sell Street Sense under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
8. There are no territories among vendors. I will respect the space of other vendors, particularly the space of vendors who have been at a spot longer.
9. I understand that my badge is the property of Street Sense and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers and display my badge when selling papers.
10. I understand that Street Sense strives to be a paper that covers homelessness and poverty issues while providing a source of income for the homeless. I will try to help in this effort and spread the word.

WANNA HELP?

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, or have a great article or feature idea, please contact Koki Smith at 202-347-2006 or e-mail editor@streetsense.org

If you are interested in becoming a vendor, contact Rita Brunson at the same number or come to a vendor training session on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2 p.m. at our office (1317 G Street, NW - near Metro Center).

Where your dollar goes...



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Please also see pages 6 and 7

Thank You!

SERVICE PROFILE

Volunteer Program Renovates Homes and Restores Hope

By Mary Pat Abraham

For more than 14 years, Behrend Builders has helped restore and reconstruct facilities such as homeless shelters, public schools and low-income homes in Washington, D.C. Skilled or not, volunteers are always welcome, and the program is always seeking people who need its help.

“We work with many high school groups who want to get community service hours and provide help to the homeless and near homeless,” said Randy Bacon, the director of Behrend Builders.

Founded by Ruth Small and Amy Goldstein in memory of their parents, Behrend Builders is the largest year-round community service program at the Washington D.C. Jewish Community Center.

However, only about 30% of its volunteers are Jewish and its clients range across all faith denominations and backgrounds, Bacon said.

A recent project repaired the house of an elderly woman who had health and mobility problems. Restorations included removing clutter, building storage shelves, fixing a leaky roof, building dry wall in damaged areas and repainting hallways and bedrooms.

As a result of the extensive repairs, the woman was able to salvage the basket-making business she ran out of her basement. Her son later wrote



SARAH KIRSCHENBAUM/BEHREND BUILDERS

Volunteers build book return carts for a Southeast elementary school library as part of a program to encourage children to read. Behrend Builders has donated carts to four Southeast elementary schools so far with funding help from Toyota.

a letter to the organization, saying that the volunteers had renovated his mother's home and also her heart, Bacon said.

“Most of these people are very close to being homeless. Most of them don't have the means to fix their homes without us,” he said.

Another project assisted a single mother of five. When entering the

house, volunteers noticed missing windows, no back door and caved-in ceilings. Volunteers fixed these and installed more lighting and handrails, painted the children's bedrooms the color of their choice, and used donated furniture to provide the woman with an improved living environment.

“The older daughter said she

hadn't had friends over in six years because of the conditions,” Bacon said. “I told her that if we didn't have the house nice enough for her to have her friends over [after we finished], that I would throw a swimming party at my house for her and her friends as well as her siblings and their friends.”

A few months later, the girl told

“Most of these people are very close to being homeless. Most of them don't have the means to fix their homes without us.”

Bacon her friends had spent the night there. But that did not stop Bacon from throwing a pool party and barbecue for them anyway.

Like many social service programs, Behrend Builders has had trouble finding consistent funding and is always seeking donors and donated materials. Right now, the program needs a newer truck or van for transportation assistance with future projects. “Our current vehicle is on its last legs,” Bacon said.

The program is also always looking for ways to improve low-income and community structures.

“Behrend's important because although we can't fix all the problems, we can do it one home or shelter at a time,” Bacon said. “But even more so by offering volunteer opportunities, which allow people to see problems that affect the homeless.”

Donate to Street Sense

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I will donate:

\$50 for two vendor awards each month

\$70 for one restaurant review

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Another amount of \$ _____

Another amount of \$ _____ for vendor: _____

Add3tional items that Street Sense needs:

* Messenger and tote bags and backpacks for vendors

* Office chairs

* Bottled water to hand out to vendors

* Laptop computers with at least Windows 2000

* Food for vendor meetings

and 10 GB of storage space

Please call 202-347-2006 or send an e-mail to info@streetsense.org if you have any of these items to donate.

Budget, from page 1

The City Council committees next have their chance to mark up the budget before the final version is completed in early summer.

The Fair Budget Coalition works directly with the community and governmental actors at each stage of the drafting process, said Gillis-Massey. Working groups of representatives from the coalition's 65 nonprofit service organizations make recommendations for various issue areas.

Public budget hearings often occur in the workday hours when much of the city's working class is on the clock, Gillis-Massey said.

Meetings like the one held earlier this month combine testimonials, question-and-answer sessions and interaction with officials to humanize the problems that too often remain statistics.

"The council members have to see the people. They have to look folks in the face," said Gillis-Massey. "It's hard to ignore that."

Housing is typically the biggest ticket item in the coalition's recommendation, said Gillis-Massey. This year is no exception; the 2009 recommendation calls for \$57.5 million in funding for permanent affordable housing.

"Affordable housing is disappearing before our eyes," said Tenant Advocate Johanna Shreve, just one of the District representatives present at the March 1 meeting. In the period between 2000 and 2004, the city lost 22,500 housing units with rents under \$1,000, according to the coalition's budget report.

Under Shreve, the newly minted Office of the Tenant Advocate deals in advocacy, education and outreach – making sure that tenants,

Housing is typically the biggest ticket item in the Fair Budget Coalition's budget recommendation. This year is no exception: the 2009 recommendation calls for \$57.5 million in funding for permanent affordable housing.

landlords and legislators understand the laws and regulations and ensuring the rights of tenants are protected.

The office was established as part of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs in April 2006 and became an independent governmental agency in October of last year. Much of the agency's work focuses on securing legal representation for tenants.

Many people don't know what they are entitled to under housing laws, Shreve said. "They are being taken advantage of," she said.

The coalition's housing recommendations cover protection, prevention and preservation, Gillis-Massey said. This year, the organization is asking the city to fund programs that provide emergency rental assistance to tenants in crisis and housing-first strategies that provide

dwelling to those living in the city's shelter systems.

The coalition has also requested the city make funds available for tenants who wish to purchase their apartments once buildings are converted to condos, she said.

The organizations in the coalition take a holistic approach to poverty reduction, said Gillis-Massey.

Following Wallace, five other advocates spoke of inadequate child care, ineffective bureaucracies and cookie-cutter approaches to mental health and other community issues.

Reba Hunter, a mother of three living in a transitional home, has been on the waiting list for public housing for eight years.

Former D.C. Village resident Shelia Jenkins has a 16-year-old special-needs son, and cannot work without a therapeutic program to place him in, she said.

Kristi Matthews, the grassroots advocacy coordinator for the coalition, works directly in the community to find and train these advocates.

"The power lies within people's stories," she said, adding that such testimonies are essential to generating change.

The City Council adopted the majority of the coalition's recommendations in this year's supplemental budget, said the council's budget director, Eric Goulet.

The Housing Production Trust Fund received an additional \$30 million, and \$3 million was allocated for capacity building at family shelters. The council also increased funding for emergency rental assistance and energy assistance for low-income residents, Goulet said.

Upon receiving the mayor's budget on March 20, council committees will note which of the Fair Budget Coalition's recommendations were


not funded when making changes. "We do give it a lot of weight," Goulet said. "They've been good advocates."

Phyllis Jones, a spokeswoman for the Department of Mental Health who attended Saturday's meeting with department director Stephen Baron, also said such meetings are important to hold departments accountable.

The Fair Budget Coalition will continue to meet with departmental agencies, City Council members and the mayor's office until the budget is finalized, Gillis-Massey said.

Come July, the process will begin again for 2010.

Foundry
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A Reconciling
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Invites you to join us in worship on Sundays at 9:30 and 11:00 AM
 Sign Interpretation at 11:00

Homeless Outreach
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 1500 16th Street, NW
 Washington, DC 20036
 (202) 332-4010
 www.foundryumc.org

Adams Morgan
Advisory Neighborhood Commission (1C)
 Business and Committee Meeting Information

Monthly ANC 1C Business Meeting

Meets 1st Wednesday of each month
Next Meeting: May 7 at 7 p.m.
 Mary's Center (The Pink Building)
 2355 Ontario Road, NW

ANC 1C Contact List

email: anc1c@yahoogroups.com
web: www.anc1c.org
phone: 202-332-2630
mail: ANC 1C
 PO Box 21009
 Washington, DC 20009



Poetry, from page 1

around the reading, discussion and production of poems. Although many participants have no previous creative-writing experience, and there can be diversity in literacy levels, these programs encourage self-expression, creativity and socialization.

Matthew Lang, who leads the poetry workshop at Miriam's Kitchen, said he tries to gear the sessions toward what the participants want.

"One wanted to learn about iambic pentameter, so we did a session on that," Lang said. "We've done [T.S. Eliot's modernist classic] *The Waste Land* a couple of times."

Lang's poetry group has about six regular participants. "And then there are the wanderers," Lang said. "They come when the spirit moves them."

Some participants come mainly to listen but end up writing as well. Others arrive with a more intense interest in writing. They work on their poetry outside of the workshop, and sometimes post pieces online.

In addition to giving poets a space to practice their craft, the workshops provide participants with a sense of community. This camaraderie is apparent in the humorous banter among members and the supportive comments offered when someone reads one of his poems.

A typical workshop begins with a warm-up writing exercise. For example: "Love is a four letter word. Write your own poem." And for the next 10 to 15 minutes, everyone works on a poem on that theme – the air of concentration punctuated by occasional jokes or teasing comments.

Then Lang might lead a brief discussion of the theme before encouraging participants to share what they have written.

Following that, Lang might teach participants about a particular poetic form, like the limerick or sonnet, and get the poets to write a poem in that structure. The members then read their works aloud and comment on each others' efforts.

Although much street poetry never goes further than the workshop table, the author's notebook or obscure Web sites, a fraction of the pieces are available in anthologies like *Street Verses*, *Brightened Canvas of an Endless Night*, *167 Wednesdays/167 Thursdays*, and *Thoughts After Breakfast*. Funded and distributed by homeless-service providers, these anthologies offer clients a chance to reach a wider audience.

The Poetry: Simple, Lyrical and Urban

What are some characteristics of D.C.'s street poetry? First, it's reader-friendly. The poems tend to be short. Of the 69 poems in *Street Verses*, the majority are between 12 and 25 lines – and mostly short lines at that.

Also, the vocabulary is simple and the poems' development normally is straightforward. There are few wild surrealistic jumps or fantastic images, even fewer literary references, and little in the way of formal architecture like sonnet form or sestinas. Street poetry's major virtues are its simplicity and directness.

Second, street poetry tends to be lyrical. While there are some very moving story poems in the anthologies, street poems usually involve the direct expression of the poet's personal feelings, state of mind, or perceptions.

For example, in the opening stanza of "Cover Me Gray ...," from the *Brightened Canvas* anthology, Larry Heelen writes, "Cover me



COPYRIGHT BILL JENNE PHOTOGRAPHY

Street poet David Harris rediscovered poetry at Miriam's Kitchen while he was homeless.

gray and shield me ... from the cold./Cover me gray and protect me ... from the stares./Cover me gray and hold me ... because no one else will." (Gray is the color of the blankets typically provided to homeless people in Washington, D.C.)

Third, D.C.'s street poetry is mainly urban.

There are few references to the natural world. Instead, sidewalks, parking lots, park benches and chain-link fences are common images. Still, homeless people spend a good deal of time outdoors on the street and in parks, and so birds, crabapple trees, clouds and stars provide the poems' connection to nature.

Thomas Foster's "An Accounting," in *167 Wednesdays/167 Thursdays*, offers an example of that urban nature. It begins: "It was cool/That night/The rains/Had not long ceased./And the stars/ Began to glitter/Between the islands of gray mists/A subtle sweetness/The bricks/Washed clean/Fresh/As morning dew/Displayed/A tantalizing mosaic/Of rich/Red hews/..."

Fourth, street poetry has a number of common themes, treated bluntly by some writers and more subtly by others. Typical topics include loneliness, how people treat homeless men and women, the logistics of street life, the essential similarity of all human beings, and hope. References to religion or spirituality also are not uncommon.

In "Kindness," from *Street Verses*, Harris gracefully blends several of these common themes in a poem that moves from his pre-homeless days with "the certainty/of many middle-class tomorrows" to his encounter, during his first days of homelessness, with a street-corner woman to whom he used to give "dollars, coins and smiles." She helps him adjust to homeless life.

"Kindness" closes with the woman saying: "I remember/all those dollars, coins and smiles;/ last night, you gave me the joy/of helping someone/just like me."

The anthology *Street Verses* is available on Amazon.com. The other three anthologies, which contain art work as well as verse, are published by Miriam's Kitchen. See www.miriamskitchen.org/artists/index.html for information on Miriam's Poets and their newest anthology of street poetry.

STREET POETRY

David Harris: A Profile

By Robert Blair

Washington, D.C. native David Harris started writing poetry as a child and used the art form to describe his feelings and experiences when he became homeless. Now 43 and no longer homeless, Harris leads writing sessions and has published poems in local anthologies, such as *Street Verses*, *Brightened Canvas of an Endless Night*, and *167 Wednesdays/167 Thursdays*.

Harris began writing poems in an eighth-grade after-school writing program. In high school, he worked on the literary magazine. But Harris left high school without graduating and worked in a series of jobs – as a telemarketer, and in mailrooms, fast-food restaurants and delivery services – that didn't provide health care.

When he was 36, Harris suffered a stroke and was diagnosed with congestive heart disease. Unable to continue working, he eventually became homeless. For about 3.5 years, between 2001 and 2004, Harris lived on the streets and in parks in downtown D.C.

During that period, Harris discovered Miriam's Kitchen, a soup kitchen that offers workshops in art and creative writing. Harris started attending Miriam's writing programs, and rekindled his long dormant interest in poetry.

He said working in a group at Miriam's Kitchen, which is in a church near George Washington University, was a good way to nurture his writing. After the workshops, Harris would go to the library or a park bench to continue writing.

Harris, who befriended some of the other poets at Miriam's Kitchen, said the poetry sessions had both social and personal benefits.

"It gave me a sense of community and was a way to express myself and gain admiration," Harris said. "For a while, it made me feel like a special person."

In his poem "How I Became the Poet I Am," Harris wrote, "I didn't get here on an easy road;/.../After I shrank from the suicide leap/and tramped through the desert of rampaging hunger/and shivered in the cold eyes/that looked only at the space behind me/then suddenly, I heard my voice – /it screamed the news of my humanity."

In 2001, Harris was recruited for the speakers bureau of the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH). Bureau participants educate people about homelessness by telling personal stories and discussing life on the streets.

Through his involvement with NCH, Harris met Laura Thompson Osuri and Ted Hen-son, who were in the process of starting *Street Sense*. Harris published two poems, "Service with a Smile" and "The Least Among Us," in the inaugural issue of the newspaper in November 2003. His poems still appear regularly in *Street Sense*.

Harris reads many poets for enjoyment and inspiration. Muses include modern master T. S. Eliot, Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, social activist and jazz critic Amiri Baraka, and contemporary female poets Sylvia Plath, Alice Walker, Nikki Giovanni and Mary Oliver.

Conversation with a Poet

Gunshots blaze

across her tv screen
and bodies fall, oozing
blood shining black under sodium
lights

yet she can always change the channel

to enraged pounding beats
that assault her ears

brutal lyrics of her nights
are punctuated
by hoarse screaming voices

[just a prelude
to the drumbeat
of fists on flesh & bone]

dial tones
& urgent bleating touch-tones
bring her agony
to me
live, uncensored

Six months ago
in the humid classroom
where she hides all day
i perused her pages
(presented to me with the care & pride
reserved for bridal gifts)
while sirens wailed
along the sun-splashed street

i smiled & praised her youthful beauty
& yet that day i only saw
the suburbs of her city
[tidy, green & freshly manicured]

tonight, she shows my panicked ears
the ghetto where she truly lives
[a meaty fist
pulverizes a door
behind her hushed sobs
as i listen, helpless]

the soundtrack of her pain
is stopped
by a click & a familiar drone
& i sit in distant silence
while sirens wail
along the moon-drenched street.

– David Harris

Harris has not been homeless since October 2004. He conducts discussion and writing sessions for participants in the service-learning programs hosted by the Church of the Pilgrims in Northwest D.C. and continues to work with NCH's speakers bureau.

Harris is also putting together a 60-poem manuscript, tentatively titled *Street Corner Majesty* and scheduled for publication later this summer. A portfolio of almost 340 of his poems is online at <http://www.postpoems.com/members/sugarboy>

Street Politics

By
David S. Hammond



“Major Barbara,” Ebenezer Scrooge and All of Us

“Come and see the shelter and then march with us: it will do you a lot of good.”
– Major Barbara Undershaft

“In your shelter I saw poverty, misery, cold and hunger.
You gave them bread and treacle ... I give from 30 shillings a week to 12,000 a year.”
– Andrew Undershaft

Those are the words of Andrew Undershaft, born to poverty, a millionaire from the manufacture of guns and bombs, and the hero of George Bernard Shaw’s “Major Barbara,” now playing in an excellent production at The Shakespeare Theater.

Undershaft is clear on what London’s poor people of 1906 need: “Money enough for a decent life, and power enough to be your own master.”

After a crisis of conscience, his daughter Barbara, a major in the Salvation Army who works with the down and out, comes to agree with him.

Andrew Undershaft’s formula for happiness has worked for Americans. A question that’s driving a lot of punditry and campaign rhetoric this year is the viability of that formula today.

For Barbara Undershaft, the tasks are simpler – feed the hungry, shelter the homeless – and the moral calculations are easier too. She quits the Salvation Army over donations from the wrong people, a whiskey distiller and her own father.

So her story is a conversion story, but not to the cause of soup kitchens and emergency shelters. When her fiancé inherits her father’s factory, Barbara embraces the windfall, saying she can do more for people when they are well paid and well fed than when they are starving and miserable.

It’s not quite a mirror image of Ebenezer Scrooge’s conversion in “A Christmas Carol” 62 years earlier, but it’s close. Scrooge revived the warm social relationships of his youth with charity (and a raise in Bob Cratchit’s wages), and in doing so, struck a meaningful blow against hunger, disease and alienation in his corner of the world.

But that isn’t enough to end the addiction, unemployment, despair, and casual violence within Barbara’s shelter, or the threats of starvation and rioting beyond its doors. Her clients’ problems are too big for one shelter staffer, and so are England’s.

Seeing this play in a Washington under pressure from wrenching change in the neighborhoods, and historic challenges to both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, was sobering.

Scrooge’s answer to the shortcomings of industrialization was charity. And Andrew Undershaft’s answer to the shortcomings of charity was well-paying jobs to meet industrial demand, no matter how dreadful the products. Both solutions worked.

But with all the bad economic news this winter and worrying long-term trends, it’s hard to know what kind of conversion we should look for now.

Turning empty factories into artists’ studios, retail, and nonprofit office space is one kind of conversion, and retraining factory workers for new jobs is another. Those are worthy efforts but they aren’t the same as a healthy manufacturing sector.

All else aside, the Salvation Army’s effectiveness in “Major Barbara” is clear though limited: the shelter staff know what they’re doing, and they provide their clients with welcome food and comfort.

While the nation debates high finance and our future, it’s worth remembering the value of those simple tasks, even though they may not change the world.

In other words, meeting basic needs, and doing it right, may not be enough, but it’s a start. Let’s just hope the lines of people needing help don’t get too long.

What’s on your mind? E-mail StreetPoliticsDC@aol.com.

WANTED: DIGITAL VIDEO CAMERA

Street Sense vendor Leonard “LC” Cannady is looking for a donated digital video camera to continue his filmmaking. You can view LC’s clips on YouTube by searching for “Brotha LC.”

If you have a camera to donate, please contact Street Sense at 202-347-2006 and leave a message for LC. Thank you!

ON THE HILL

Appropriations 101

By Street Sense staff

Spring is here and so is talk of “appropriations.” But what exactly are they?

Every year, Congress passes 12 spending bills – called appropriations – that designate money to fund the federal government and pay for programs like food stamps, Medicaid and community health centers.

State governments, local governments and even nonprofit organizations can request funding from Congress in this annual process, which usually begins in spring.

Each appropriations bill focuses on different departments of the government, for example, “Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies,” “Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies,” or “Defense.”

As you read this, appropriations requests are being made for the 2009 fiscal year. Organizations who hope to convince lawmakers that their project deserves federal funding will lobby senators and representatives.

The next step in the process is for senators and representatives to submit the requests they receive to their chamber’s Appropriations Committee. These committees, made up of lawmakers from both the Democratic and the Republican parties, put together a package – called an appropriations bill – that includes funding for the projects they believe most deserve financial support in the coming year.

Once the committee agrees on this final package, the bill is voted on by the entire House and Senate, and if it passes, it is sent to the President. He will either sign the legislation into law or veto it, sending

it back to the Congress to make changes.

The entire process can take several months, or up to a year. In some instances, when there is no consensus on the appropriations bills, Congress may pass a “Continuing Resolution,” which maintains funding amounts at the previous year’s levels and does not add any additional funding or programs.

As noted in an earlier On the Hill column, the President also puts together a yearly budget which is not law, but serves as a recommendation to Congress about funding levels for different agencies and programs that he believes should be included in an appropriations package.

However, the president will often veto – or threaten to veto – an appropriations package that exceeds his budget.

One project being considered for appropriations funding for the coming year is the Community Health Centers program. These centers, found in both rural and urban communities, serve as the primary source of health care for 17 million Americans each year, over six million of whom do not have health insurance.

Without funding from the federal government, these centers could not continue to give quality care or expand to fill additional needs. In 2008, the program received \$2,065 million from the federal government during the appropriations process. This year’s request would increase that amount by \$248 million.

Some examples of other projects that received appropriations for fiscal year 2008 and will likely continue to receive funding include: the Public Health Emergency Fund; Black Lung Clinics; Head Start; Centers For Disease Control and Prevention; National Institutes of Health; and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration.

IN MEMORIAM: MATT IMPETT STREET SENSE VOLUNTEER

Street Sense would like to thank all those donors who contributed in honor of Matt Impett. Matt was a former volunteer photographer for Street Sense and a strong supporter of the organization. He will be missed.

Chesapeake Landing Condo
James Henson
Richard Kittredge
Tom Murray

James O’Brien
Deborah Press
Marilynn and Denny Sheldon
Sue Shellhause

Budget Cuts Threaten Maryland Dental Care Improvements

By Veena Trehan
Capital News Service (UMD)

One year after a Prince George's County boy died from untreated tooth decay, Maryland's fledgling efforts at improving access for low-income children to dentists are being threatened by the state's budget woes.

Deamonte Driver's cavity caused a brain infection that killed the 12-year-old after a six-week hospital stay. What could have been solved by an \$80 tooth extraction, took a life and cost taxpayers \$250,000, and it garnered international attention for the weak dental care experienced by many poor American children.

Since the boy's death, state and federal lawmakers have begun working on the problem.

Congress has:

- held hearings in May 2007 and February 2008 evaluating the state of pediatric dental care;

- passed a children's health care bill giving dental care to uninsured families, only to see it vetoed by President Bush;

- proposed a funding bill Thursday co-authored by Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Baltimore.

But Maryland experts predict the greatest impact will come from the state, by instituting the seven recommendations of the Dental Action Committee formed last May. They aim to establish a "dental home," or consistent source of dental care, for poor children. Those recommendations are:

- Replace Maryland's multiple Medicaid dental care providers with a single one by July 2009.

- Increase Medicaid dental reimbursement rates to the regional average to encourage

dentist participation.

- Expand the network of public dental facilities.

- Allow dental hygienists to provide some dental services.

- Develop a unified message for parents and caregivers.

- Ensure public school children get dental screenings.

- Train pediatricians and dentists to assess children.

It's not known what the final cost will be, however initial one-time costs are expected to run about \$26 million, with continuing costs projected at \$40 million per year. The state pays about \$33 million now for Medicaid dental costs.

Maryland approved \$16.1 million for 2009, an "absolute minimum" according to Dental Action Committee member Leigh Cobb.

And because these initiatives fund new – not existing – programs, they are especially threatened as the state tries to close a predicted \$300 million shortfall.

Had four of the recommendations been in place – consolidating contracts, raising rates, expanding public facilities, and improving medical screening – Deamonte could have been saved, supporters said.

Deamonte's death was caused in part by an inadequate supply of Medicaid dentists, although on paper the numbers look sufficient.

Maryland requires each Medicaid provider to maintain a list of dentists who serve no more than 2,000 kids. But lists aren't maintained and contain dentists who have moved, stopped taking insurance or won't enroll new patients.

Last year, Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio)

New reimbursement rates should also make it more attractive for dentists to participate in Medicaid. Maryland pays dentists less than half the regional average.

found none of the 24 dentists listed in UnitedHealthcare/AmeriChoice's Prince George's County network would have helped Deamonte.

Maryland pediatric dentist Norman Tinanoff also testified that only one-fifth of Medicaid-listed dentists would treat a new patient.

In fact, for Deamonte's brother DaShawn, it took four professionals working together to get him an appointment to pull a tooth.

A later investigation found about 10,000 Maryland kids enrolled in UnitedHealthcare/AmeriChoice hadn't seen a dentist in four or more years, meaning the premiums paid to the company by the state were left unused.

Harry Goodman, director of Oral Health for the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, said the new structure will improve accountability and oversight.

"It demonstrates to the dental community we are serious and simplifies the process for dentists and the public," said Goodman. "It's a more seamless and transparent process for everybody."

New reimbursement rates should also make it more attractive for dentists to participate in Medicaid.

For most services, Maryland pays dentists less than half the regional average, and many services fall much lower than that – below the 10th percentile.

Current funding is not sufficient, lawmakers were told.

"Maryland grossly underfunds medical care," said Dr. Burton Edelstein, chairman of the board of the Children's Dental Health Project, at a Feb. 14 congressional hearing.

The recommendation is to up dental reimbursement rates to the region's average. Medicaid funding is slated to go up \$14 million, to about \$47 million, roughly a 50 percent increase. The requested \$42 million increase would be more than a doubling of this budget.

Even so, private dentists will not be able to keep up with demand so the committee recommended public dental facilities for each county at a cost of more than \$26 million over the next five years.

Five Maryland counties now lack any public infrastructure, with rural areas the worst. The Rural Maryland Council found last year that rural Maryland children experienced twice the rate of total tooth loss as the rest of the state.

The state budget contains \$2.1 million to build clinics in Southern Maryland and the Upper Eastern Shore, and to provide mobile services.

IN OTHER NEWS

By Mandy McAnally

California: Google Offers Free Voicemail to Homeless

Google says it plans to give homeless people in San Francisco a phone number and a voicemail account that they can check from any phone in the city. The plan will let homeless people record a greeting for callers and use a special code to access voicemails.

Over 4,000 voice mailboxes have been created. The plan was set up using the infrastructure from a telecom routing firm acquired by Google last year. Mayor Gavin Newsom's Project Homeless Count is promoting the project in homeless shelters citywide (Thomson, vnunet.com, 3/3).

Florida: Palm Springs Funds Homeless Shelter

The Palm Springs City Council has given \$6,200 to Coachella Valley Association of Governments to keep a temporary warming shelter in operation for the homeless.

The shelter provides about 40 homeless people each night with a place to shower, get hot meals and sleep.

Advocacy groups pick up the people from spots in the city, take them to the shelter for the night and drop them back off at their original pick-up site the next morning. The shelter will now be operated by Riverside County and other service providers through April 15 (Frith, Desert Sun).

Massachusetts: Report Calls for Help to Teens

A new report by the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless says the state isn't doing enough to help homeless teens find a safe place to stay and the chance to graduate high school.

The report details the number of homeless teens in high school statewide and notes the link between homelessness and poor performance on the graduation exams. Advocates say the state should reinstate a cash benefit of \$303 a month to homeless teens who are in school fulltime. The report coincides with a plan by Gov. Deval Patrick to end homelessness in Massachusetts in five years (LeBlanc, AP/Boston Globe, 3/4).

California: Officials Remove Homeless From Campuses

Police in Sacramento are cracking down on homeless people who have been taking up residence at some city campuses. Authorities said the homeless began seeking shelter at school campuses after police conducted sweeps to clear out homeless from under freeways, alleys and business doorways in the downtown area. Authorities said the homeless have been leaving behind clothes, food, feces and other items at campuses. The sweep followed several complaints from the residents (KCRA.com, 3/3).

Indiana: Drop-In Center Planned for Evansville

At least 400 people in Evansville are homeless on any given night and about one-third are children, a homeless youth coalition said. The group is seeking to open an emergency shelter for youth that also provides outreach services. The center would be a place where people could apply for housing, open checking accounts, receive health care or earn their GED. Plans may be finalized in April (Ziliak, 3/7).

THANK YOU!

Street Sense would like to thank individual donors from the Internal Revenue Service who were recently in D.C. for a multi-week leadership class and who decided to serve a nonprofit in the city. They chose Street Sense.

We thank them for their generosity and wish them well in their work throughout the United States.

Preston B Benoit
Stephen G Cickay
James P Clifford
Alain Dubois
Alice R. Grant
Mary Beth Jones
Leslie A Lehrkinder
Beverly Malone
Nancy N Merthold
Ruth Perez
Karla M Tropea
Deborah A Lucas-Trumbill
Estelle R Tunley

Because

Just because no one has been fortunate
enough to realize what a gold mine you are,
Doesn't mean you shine any less.

Just because no one has been smart enough to
figure out that you can't be topped,
Doesn't stop you from being the best.

Just because no one has come along to share your life
Doesn't mean that day isn't coming.

Just because no one has made this race worthwhile,
Doesn't give you permission to stop running.

Just because no one has realized how much of an
awesome person you are,
Doesn't mean they can affect your femininity.

Just because no one has shown up who can love you
at your level
Doesn't mean you have to sink to theirs.

Just because you deserve the very best there is
Doesn't mean that you're not already a Queen.

Just because your situation doesn't seem to be
progressing right now,
Doesn't mean you need to change a thing.

Just because you woke up and everything wasn't
sunny and blue
Pray to God and He will see you through.

Just because I wasn't with you yesterday
Doesn't mean I can't love you in a special way.

Keep shining, keep running, keep hoping and keep
praying
Keep being exactly what you are already:
Complete.

—Wanda R. Brown

Francine**A Day In**

In this new photo feature, a Street Sense vendor takes
of scenes, objects and people that represent his or her
takes us through her day in D.C.



This is Michael O'Neill, the coordinator of the speakers bureau at the National Coalition for the Homeless. He calls me his "play mother" because we are close. Sitting with my "play son" while he waited in the hospital for minor surgery, I tried to cheer him up with laughter.



Here is the cafeteria of my church, Vermont Avenue Baptist Church. Sitting across from me are Mr. Clyburn and another church member, eating Sunday breakfast. I want to honor Mr. Clyburn and his recent retirement after 41 great years as Minister of Music here.

e Triplett

The Life

s a disposable camera for a day, snapping pictures
r life. This month, veteran vendor Francine Triplett



Also in the cafeteria of my church, the delicious homemade desserts wait to be eaten. I had to tell myself jokingly to stay away because it is just too much food!



These are some of the speakers for the National Coalition for the Homeless, after we spoke at Howard University. I have been part of the speakers bureau for 6 years. At left is Michael Stoops, the director of the NCH and at the far right is Jesse Smith, who used to be vendor manager at Street Sense. I am in the blue shirt.

Untitled

When I was homeless and in the streets, I got a chance to see
To overcome my obstacles, I had to start with me.
Stop blaming other people for conditions I create
Although I've made a few mistakes, I know it's not too late.
Today I strive to keep it real and I do the best I can
I advocate for homelessness to help folks understand.
The stereotypes and stigmas, I find that they're not true
Although they're going through social change
They're human just like you.

— Alvin Dixon El

Untitled

I'm a woman with HIV
I've overcome adversity
I'm a woman who's strong
All the day long
I once was going to die
But now I don't cry
Because I'm going to live
And let stories lie

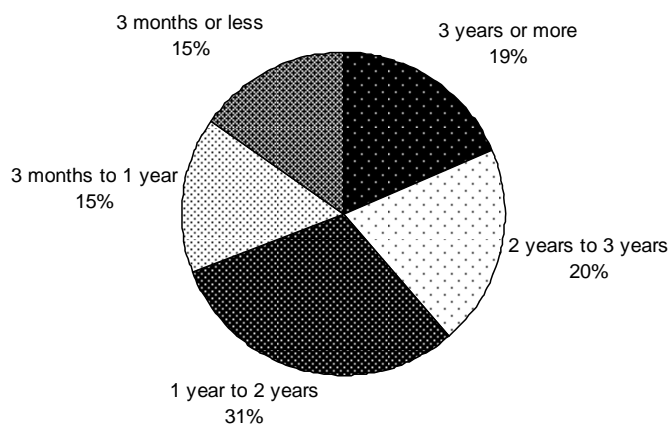
So now, lend my story
With another day
Of smiles
As I make one more day
Of running miles.

— Cheryl

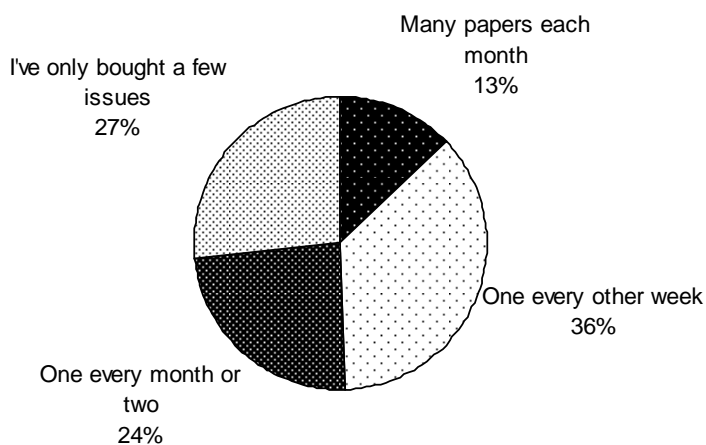
The 2008 Street Sense Reader Survey

Street Sense recently conducted a reader survey to better understand our readership and meet its needs. Our newspaper vendors passed out yellow survey postcards to their customers and our Web site www.streetsense.org guided visitors to an online survey. We heard back from about 550 readers. We've summed up some of our findings below. You can find an accompanying column by Executive Director Laura Osuri on page 14.

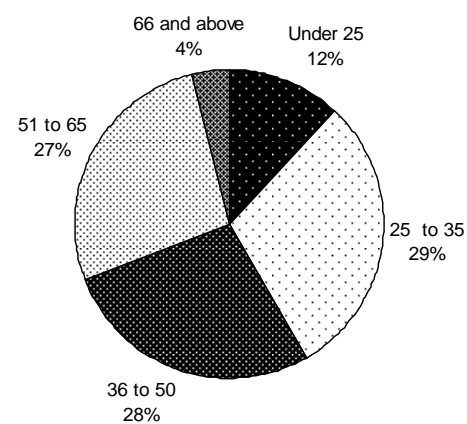
How long have you been buying Street Sense?



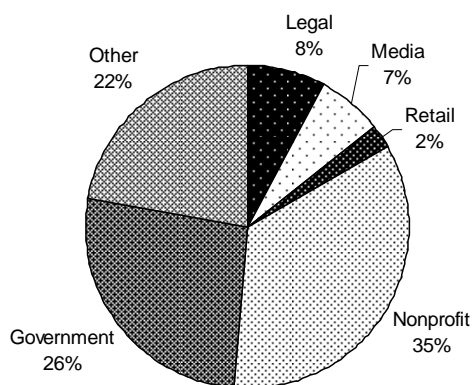
How often do you buy Street Sense?



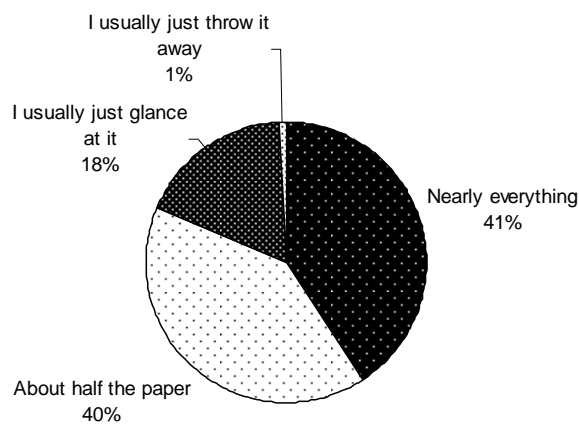
What is your age?



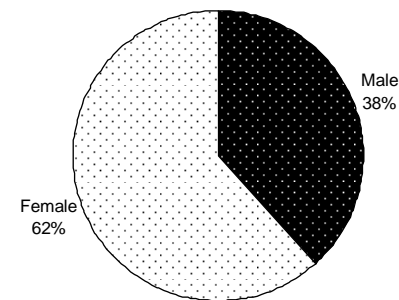
What sector do/did/will you work in?



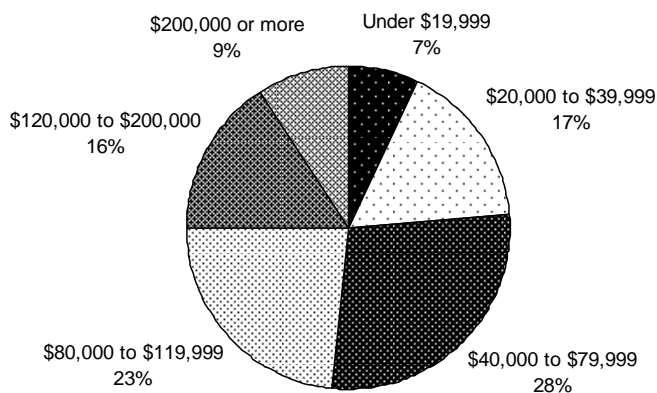
How much of the paper do you read?



What is your gender?



What is your household income?



Learning the ABCs of Your Finances

By Linda Stroman



April is Financial Literacy Month. Until recently, financial education has been a topic of very little discussion in households across the country. It's been ignored in our educational system and by employers for far too long. Now there's increased demand nationwide to help us understand and address our financial needs.

Regardless of one's income or educational background, the accelerating changes in technology and the financial services market have made the need for financial education programs crucial. Changes in laws, products, services and demographics; the retirement of baby boomers; increasing lifespans; hefty student loans for graduating college students; the rise of the subprime lending market; and other factors make it even more important to understand personal finances.

Financial literacy programs with necessary, up-to-date information are beginning to populate the curriculum of high schools, faith- and community-based organizations, state cooperative extension services, government agencies, nonprofits, banks and credit unions. Launched in April 2007, DC Saves (www.dcsaves.org) shares information about the financial education efforts of nearly 40 nonprofit, business, and government partners in our region.

Beyond learning to be informed and thoughtful consumers, we must also do our part to understand our money behaviors and the reasons why we manage our finances the way we do. Unexpected events or life-cycle transitions such as starting a family, getting married or losing a loved one can lead us to making some basic changes that could increase our overall financial wellbeing.

An initial step is to define our personal values and goals. Values are the basis for our decisions, and goals give us direction and purpose for the way we spend our money. Goals motivate and encourage us to work toward things that are important to us.

In today's world, we are responsible for our retirement status, securing the best mortgages and credit card products and services, building and maintaining adequate emergency funds, and exercising our option of delayed gratification and evaluation. We need to be able to decide if this is the moment in time when we should secure this service or purchase a particular product, and when is the best time to secure appreciating assets to build our net worth such as buying a home or starting a business. The power to control our finances lies within us.

Many Web sites offer information on financial topics and many organizations and companies provide one-on-one assistance for free or varying fees. With all of the information available, we must begin to communicate within our households, communities, and families to use these resources wisely. Some useful Web sites are www.mymoney.gov and www.moneyskill.org for high school students.

Get free tax help, meet one-on-one with a credit counselor, get information from financial institutions or open a new account at the DC Saves Financial Literacy Fair at THEARC on Saturday, April 5. See www.dcsaves.org or call 202-419-1440 or e-mail dcsaves@caab.org to register.

Sign up for the Street Sense e-mail newsletter!

We'll deliver our top stories to your inbox every two weeks.
You can unsubscribe at any time.
Visit www.streetsense.org to join our list.

Gregory's Great Game

Street Sense vendor Gregory Martin loves creating puzzles.

Simply find the following words in the grid below.

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| March | Mail |
| Manager | Male |
| Mummy | Music |
| Mother | Mission |
| Mister | Master |
| Money | Moon |
| Many | Map |
| Month | Mist |
| Matter | Mom |
| Most | Mate |
| Media | Mall |

M	A	S	T	E	R	M	M	A	L	E	M
O	O	A	M	A	R	C	H	A	M	A	C
L	M	O	N	E	Y	M	R	M	L	I	M
I	I	A	M	M	D	E	M	R	S	L	I
A	S	I	A	A	H	O	E	U	E	O	S
M	S	D	P	T	N	T	M	A	N	Y	R
T	I	E	O	T	T	O	O	L	M	M	E
T	O	M	H	A	O	A	M	A	T	E	T
S	N	M	M	N	X	Y	M	M	U	M	S
O	M	A	N	A	G	E	R	M	E	M	I
M	M	E	O	O	M	A	T	A	T	A	M
S	T	R	E	E	T	S	E	N	S	E	M

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DEMOGRAPHICS

And who your business will be reaching can't be beat. Our typical reader is a 35-year old woman who lives in D.C. and works for the government or a nonprofit earning \$70,000 a year.

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Challenge, from page 1

proud of myself.

None of the 12 students, who ranged in age from 19 to 22, had ever been homeless before. They would have to live for 48 hours on the streets, with no money. Most of them had prepared by not bathing, shaving or brushing their teeth for three days prior to the event, and by not bringing any clean laundry.

All were from upper middle class families, and they said their parents nearly had heart attacks when they heard their children were traveling thousands of miles to live homeless in the nation's capital. But they came anyway, and I was their guide, walking and talking them through the experience.

Planning for the project started in September, and the students started holding weekly meetings in October. Though many of them did not know each other before forming the group, the weekly meetings helped them build relationships before coming to Washington.

The students hired two vans and financed the trip themselves. Most said they were tired of the basic spring break experience. They wanted to get out of their comfort zone, and change their perspective on homelessness.

After the students had panhandled and straggled around for a day, I met up with them at 10 p.m. at a previously arranged rendezvous point. The complaints began immediately. They were upset over various issues like the cold, extreme fatigue, feelings of vulnerability, humiliation of standing in line for dinner, feet hurting, complaints of odors and having less than 13 cents apiece in their pockets. Meeting them with their black plastic bags over their bodies made me feel sorry for them.

On this, their first sleep-over night, there was an enormous rainstorm. The wind was blowing, trees were swaying and the kids were soaked. There would be no chance to dry their coats the next morning.

As a guide I had to act quickly, because some of them appeared extremely depressed and traumatized, with tears welling in their eyes. At this juncture I made a tactical decision to call the hypothermia hotline and order three boxes of steely looking gray blankets. It took two hours for the blankets to get there – so much for an emergency.

I also decided that sleeping outside the Martin Luther King library might be the best place since we could get some cover and also call for help if needed.

One of the young women needed to use the bathroom, but all the stores were closed. With great trepidation, I recommended a couple of shadow-encased bushes, a block away. Thankfully, this turned out to be the right choice, since in no time she came back with a smiling face. Along with another guide I stayed up with the students, exchanging ideas and information, alternating on sleep with one of us keeping an eye on the students at all times.

There were harsh personal experiences. One student was exposed to territorial issues where he nearly got knocked over by another homeless man who mistook him for a fellow homeless straggler. One pretty young woman in the group was outraged at being propositioned quite strenuously by an unscrupulous suitor, who couldn't believe his luck at seeing a pretty lady like that without a home.

It was hard for me at first, because I had to get these kids to relax. It was like, "Hey! I am

just like you. It's just that I'm homeless, that's all. I don't bite." I could tell from their defensive body language and restricted communication that they were extremely nervous about both me and the whole situation.

I had to teach them the tricks that keep you alive. Making cardboard and paper beds. Keeping their body off the cold ground. Getting about 20 newspapers and laying them on the floor, then breaking up cardboard boxes and putting them on top of the paper. That's if you have blankets. If you don't, you half break the boxes so you can slip underneath them.

I also had to instill in them the mental attitude it takes to survive. If you don't ask, you'll starve. I taught them the trick of looking in trash cans. I explained danger and protection issues, and the difference between lighting and shade in choosing shelter for the night. At night, there are a lot of sexual predators, deranged people, robbers and drunks who prey on anybody who is alone and asleep. By being in the light you can see when they're coming, but by being in shade they can't see you. So you have to choose.

We talked about hygiene and clothing issues. You want to take a bath. Sleeping on the floor, it's very easy to get ear infections, skin infections and arthritis. You need to make sure you take a bath at least once every week. Either you can go into McDonald's with a face towel, or you can go into one of the places that'll provide you with a free shower – those are few and far between.

By the second night, many of the students started to analyze their experiences and feelings. They said that 97% of the people they saw just stared at them cold-heartedly. There were, oddly enough, a couple of stories about good Samaritans.

As we walked the students around, digital photos and camcorder shots of the group were taken at sites in the capital where homeless people congregate. I tried to show them former homeless service providers, like one that had been bulldozed to make way for an office block, and most couldn't believe that the government appeared to be trying to sweep the problem under the carpet.

At the end of the experience, the students said they never wanted to be homeless again. They said in the future they would treat a fellow human being as a human being, and wouldn't judge homeless people on face value.

Many of the students reported a lowering of their self-esteem. The students were used to being independent and assertive, so essentially it was like turning the tables on their personal values. How could people be so powerless, they asked. The solitary nature of the homeless experience seemed to play on their minds, and many reported feeling lonely without no one to talk to, as well as missing families and friends. Many reported being motivated to become advocates for the homeless.

The best advice I received was from a student who told me that I am valuable, I am somebody. I need to have more faith and to realize my self-worth and how precious I am.

It is worth noting that thousands of students will be brought in on this kind of trip, and I will continue guiding them. I will tell them I am homeless, and this is how I live.

Vendor Moyo Onibuje is a former business technology teacher who has been on the D.C. Housing Authority list for public housing since 2002. He says he has been promised a Section 8 voucher soon.

IN MY OPINION

What's Being Done For the Homeless

By Eric Sheptock



Being the homeless advocate that I am, I have a bird's eye view of the many things that are being done for the homeless community of Washington,

D.C. My April Fools' Day article last year discussed the inability of various service providers to significantly reduce the number of homeless people in the city. I ranted and raved about a lack of results.

This year I've changed my tune. I'm quite pleased with all that is being done for the homeless. However, I remain slightly disgruntled with all that is not being done by the homeless.

It has been my experience that most homeless people don't like to speak out, even when the meeting or hearing was arranged with them in mind. This is something that absolutely must change.

I attend the meetings of the Interagency Council on Homelessness that take place every two months. The ICH has also begun to have quarterly hearings during which the homeless can voice their concerns.

The ICH is presently in the process of creating a Web site that will allow the homeless who have at least a little bit of tech savvy to keep up with what's being done for their community by the local government and various service providers.

The law firm Hogan & Hartson has been hired by the D.C. government to implement the Homeless Services Reform Act. They've been meeting with service providers regularly since last November and plan to bring some draft legislation to the homeless community soon to get their input.

There has also been serious discussion within local government on putting the residents of Franklin into housing. During the last ICH meeting on Feb. 14, Clarence Carter, the head of the Department

of Human Services, told me from across the room that he plans to arrange a town hall meeting with the Franklin School Shelter residents. This leads me to believe that Herb Miller of Western Development Corp. still wants the building.

Housing the men of Franklin would be bittersweet. We'd lose a much-needed downtown shelter. And those who've been waiting for housing longer than Franklin School has even been a shelter would cry, "Foul!" I recently met a woman who has been waiting to be housed through the D.C. Housing Authority for nine years. Franklin has been a shelter for five.

Finally, it may set off a ripple effect. Men from other shelters might go to Franklin so that they can be housed. Franklin might fill up as quickly as Mr. Miller and the mayor empty it.

I've listed just a few of the many things being done to help the homeless community of Washington, D.C. Some of the efforts are even aimed at creating permanent solutions.

However, I see two things that need very much to happen. The first is that the homeless need to get more involved in their issues. Some do come out to

ICH meetings and other meetings that pertain to them. However, more is better. The few who show up at these events don't truly convey the magnitude of the problem.

The other thing that needs to happen is that homelessness needs to become a political issue such that all presidential candidates are asked about their views on poverty in general and homelessness in particular. It should be taken off of the back burner. Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" needs to be revived and actually won this time.

We had a ray of hope in the person of John Edwards. That hope has since been thwarted. Let's just hope that whoever wins this quest for the White House has a heart for the poor.

Keep hope alive.

Eric Jonathan Sheptock, an advocate for homeless people, lives at Franklin School Shelter. He loves to sing and can be reached at ericshoptock@yahoo.com.

Most homeless people don't like to speak out at meetings or hearings. This absolutely must change.

Your thoughts and editorials are welcome.
Please e-mail content to editor@streetsense.org or mail to
1317 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005.

WHAT OUR READERS ARE SAYING...

This Street Sense Reader Lives in Texas

Dear Street Sense,

I'm writing because I love the things that Street Sense does for poor and homeless people. For two years I was homeless in D.C., 2006 and 2007. My hangout spot was in Chinatown. I would usually hang on the corner of 7th and I streets, NW. And although Texas is my home state, I prefer D.C. over Texas any day. Why?

Because the people in D.C. have more compassion for the poor and homeless than the people in Texas do, that's why.

I'm even having your paper sent to me here in Texas because I know what it feels like to be out there and I enjoy reading the Street Sense paper. I'm 61 years old and yes, I'm locked up, but D.C. will always be my second home; I'm not in here for nothing bad and if it's God's will I will be out soon. I love y'all at Street Sense and may God continue to bless everyone.

A Street Sense reader,
Jimmie Williams

Vendor Profiles Change Reader's Perceptions

Dear Street Sense team,

This is my first letter to Street Sense. I put off writing it for a long time but was compelled to do so today as I sat reading the vendor profile in the March 5 issue. This is by far my favorite part of your newspaper. It has changed the way I see homeless persons. I have come to realize that many of the men and women on the street are accomplished individuals who have had good jobs, families and other things that I thought only "normal" people have.

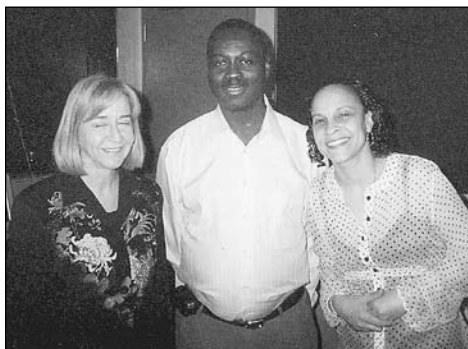
In addition to giving the homeless a history, the vendor profile gives them a sense of personality. I enjoy reading what the homeless vendor's favorite food is, or his or her favorite book or CD. Those little details do much to make me see them as real human beings like the rest of us – colorful, complex, and opinionated!

Besides learning about vendors, I learn from them. One day as I stood outside Zara's on F and 10th streets, NW, Moyo Onibuje approached me and asked if I would like to read an article he had written in the latest issue. Much to my surprise, he had written on a very germane topic to my graduate studies – Ramadan and Islam – and we spent a while talking about religion and exchanging views. I was impressed by his thirst for knowledge. Since then I have kept up with his articles, and hope to see some more about Islam soon.

Lastly, in general, the leading articles are relevant and informative. Often they provide a perspective that you just wouldn't get in a major newspaper. Please keep up the good reporting.

We need to hear all of your voices.

Sincerely,
John Musselman



ON THE ROAD By James Davis

Back to Beantown

less any given night. The largest growing segment of the homeless is women with children – single-parent families.

I also told them my personal story. I wanted to break down stereotypes and wanted them to know that not all homeless people are uneducated. I hold two associate's degrees in electronics technology and computer sciences.

I was accompanied on the speakers bureau panel by two local and dynamic speakers, Cheryl Middleton and her daughter Kyla. We also spoke together at Lesley University in Cambridge last month.

The moderator for the panel was Sam Waite, a development associate at the National Coalition for the Homeless, who did an excellent job filling in for the Speakers' Bureau Director Michael O'Neill.

That Friday of the conference I attended a workshop titled "Why Don't Young People Vote?" We were placed in groups to come up with solutions and ideas of how to get young people to register and go to the polls and vote.

The group I participated in was challenged with how to get non-college kids and low-income youths involved in the political process and vote.

My group suggested that student political groups should reach out to recreational centers, high school basketball and football games and welfare offices. The session turned out to be quite productive.

On the Sunday of the conference, a workshop entitled "Hate Crimes and Violence:

Death on Main Street USA" was conducted by Tyrone White, who did an excellent job.

The workshop included a video from a "60 Minutes" show about "Bumfights" videos that are sold across the nation and on the Internet and which many think have served as a catalyst for the increase in violence against homeless persons in the United States.

Workshop attendees were appalled that much of the violence was committed by teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19.

I have been on the speakers bureau for close to four years now and I must say that each time I go on the road is a new experience, especially traveling on Amtrak this time around.

We usually travel by plane and sometimes by rental car, depending on the distance. On the train, we could lay back and relax or go to the café and do more sightseeing. But the only bad part was that it took a long time to get to Boston from Washington – eight hours!

Vendor James Davis also serves on the Street Sense board of directors.

I had the privilege of attending the IM-PACT: National Student Conference on Service, Advocacy and Social Action from March 7 through March 9 at Northeastern University in Boston.

As a member of the speakers' bureau for the National Coalition for the Homeless, I delivered a speech to interested college students attending the conference from around the country. I told them that there are over 3.5 million people homeless in any given year and 800,000 home-

Self-Employment for Mental Health Consumers

By Jerry W. with David S. Hammond

I recently visited an opulent downtown office building, dressed in my typical jeans and Help The Homeless Walk-a-thon T-shirt with baggage in tow, for a meeting on entrepreneurship and recovery for mental health consumers. I wondered, will the guard let me in? Do I fit into this building, or am I more like the people sleeping in the park? And what have I gotten myself into?

The meeting was sponsored by the Consumer Action Network (CAN), a consumer-run peer-advocacy organization serving D.C.'s mental health community. I found an eclectic group of mental health consumers, high-level administrators, consultants and homeless people.

While I was a little bewildered by keeping over 30 new names and organizations straight, they were friendly and aimed to "keep it real." They introduced and acknowledged big challenges: the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that as many as 70%

of people with psychiatric disabilities want to work, but employment runs as low as 15%. And too many think they can't work.

I'm very aware of the divergent perspectives of clients, service providers and families, and I always wonder how a program will cope with that reality. I've been involved in creating several consumer-run, peer-to-peer organizations in Virginia and know how much they mean to the people founding them, for this isn't something you're told to do, but you create yourself with some help, as needed. As I once heard someone say, it's like the Home Depot slogan, "You can do it, we can help."

But most traditional services do not meet the raging independent spirit. How can we bridge that gap? CAN's "Entrepreneurship Initiative" has been looking to help D.C. consumers get into business for themselves with advice and resources, and with redefining the relationship with the city's Department of Mental Health.

Self-employment can help people with psychiatric disabilities get around barriers like stigma, and obtaining and holding down a job. But there are still important questions for consumers: Who takes the risk – the people who are emotionally and financially least able to afford the risks of start-ups? With substantial community involvement, can we ensure the success of this adventure?

At the meeting, we heard an even more basic question, "How does this affect my benefits?"

Fear and risk can be managed, but empowerment is necessary. Traditional vocational-rehabilitation programs for mental health consumers have often focused on lower-level service-sector jobs. This leaves out the complex interplay between unmet needs, individual and collective interests, mission, incorporation, legal advice, financial needs and the community.

But the rewards of entrepreneurship can

be great. For consumers, getting there will mean taking extraordinary risks. And even before that, they'll usually need start-up money, and a significant investment of time.

Perhaps at the next series of events more people will be aware of the opportunities, supports and risks involved in going out "On Our Own" and be invited to participate and present. Many meeting participants came from Maryland and Virginia. "We would have liked to see more D.C. consumers there," said Effie Smith, co-founder of CAN. "We've got to figure out a way to get them involved."

Meetings are one way, but sharing information online, by word of mouth, and through face-to-face, peer-to-peer relationships is more likely to be successful.

Vendor Jerry W. is the creator of a blog on Northern Virginia mental health recovery issues, novapeers.pbwiki.com. He can be reached at novapeers@gmail.com.

Street Sense Announces The First Annual David Pike Excellence in Journalism Awards

On June 12, Street Sense will give out the first annual Excellence in Journalism Awards at the National Press Club in memory of its late board member and journalist David Pike. The awards honor print journalism that changes perceptions about homelessness, draws attention to the factors affecting homelessness, and influences social responses to homelessness.

Criteria

Submissions must

- address homelessness or the causes of homelessness (affordable housing, mental illness, domestic violence, health care, for example)
- focus on the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area
- be published in a local or national print media outlet in 2007

Categories

- **Investigative Reporting.** Entries may be a single article or a series of articles and may include additional materials such as sidebars or illustrations.
- **Editorial Writing.** Entries may be one opinion piece or a series.
- **Breaking News.** Entries must showcase deadline reporting of a single event.
- **Feature Stories.** Entries may be personality profiles, trend stories, human interest stories, or any feature that is not a breaking news story. They can be a single story or a series.
- **Photography.** Entries may be a single photo or a series of no more than three.

Submission Guidelines

- Anyone can submit a story, whether you are a reader or the writer(s).
- Please submit the article electronically as a text, PDF or HTML attachment.
- Please include your contact e-mail, phone number and address.
- If you are the writer of the article, please include a brief biography about yourself.

The deadline for the receipt of all submissions is April 30, 2008.

Please send all submissions and any questions to awards@streetsense.org.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

What Our Readers Want

By Laura Thompson Osuri



After six weeks of vendors passing out yellow survey cards, our reader survey is complete.

From the look of it so far, with about 550 responses, Street Sense readers are evenly divided when it comes to age, income level and how long they have been reading the paper.

The only standout demographics are that we have more

female readers (62%) than male, and – not surprisingly – the majority of our readers work for nonprofits (36%) or the government (27%). See graphs on page 10.

Knowing the demographics our readers will be a huge help when it comes to selling advertising in the paper. Advertisers always want to know who they are going to be reaching and now we have up-to-date information on that. Surprisingly, however, little has changed since our first readers' survey back in June 2006.

Our advertisers will also love to know that 80% of our customers are reading at least half the paper every time they buy it.

Aside from learning about reader demographics, the survey has helped us gain our readers' input about the paper and its vendors. Nearly all customers buy the paper to support the vendors but about half of our customers also buy it to learn more about homeless issues.

It's great to see that so many of D.C. area residents want to learn more about this often ignored topic. In the next year, we hope to do an even better job providing this information.

How we provide this information may very well change thanks to your feedback.

I was pleased to find out that the local news section is everyone's favorite. Often times, I think that the news we are providing may be too depressing or repetitive and that readers may simply ignore it in turn to the moving poetry or amusing editorials.

But it seems people are interested in homelessness and poverty issues, no matter how many somber statistics and stories we report. As I suspected, the vendor profiles and poetry sections are also near the top of readers' lists, with games and provider profiles falling at the bottom. Maybe it's time to do away with the crossword and to run intriguing news – rather than fluffy profiles – on organizations helping the homeless.

The most surprising result, to me anyway, is that nearly half the readers think vendors should have "signs explaining the paper." This is something a few vendors have tried on their own, but not something we have tried to institute organization-wide.

That may change, thanks to your suggestions. We also apparently need more vendors to pass out our brochures, and we can definitely get going on that right away.

Besides the suggestions on how our vendors can improve sales, I really appreciate all the written suggestions on how the organization can improve its outreach. The message from readers was clear: Street Sense needs to advertise.

Hopefully in the spring, you will be seeing public service announcements about Street Sense on and inside Metro buses, on the radio and on cable television.

Thanks to all those that responded to the reader survey. You can be assured your feedback will be put to good use! If you have any further suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@streetsense.org.

Get Twice as Much Street Sense Each Month Delivered Right to Your Door!

Do you want to continue to support Street Sense throughout the year?

Order a subscription today.

Not only will you receive 26 issues packed with all our latest news, poetry and photography, you will also help raise awareness about poverty in the D.C. area.

YES! I want to subscribe to Street Sense for just \$40 a year for 26 issues.

YES! I want to give half of the cost of a subscription to my favorite vendor: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please make checks payable to Street Sense.

Mail to: **Street Sense, 1317 G St. NW, Washington, DC 20005.**

Thanks for your support!

Community Service Index

WASHINGTON, D.C.

SHELTER

Calvary Women's Services
928 5th Street, NW
(202) 783-6651
www.calvaryservices.org

Central Union Mission (Men)
1350 R Street, NW
(202) 745-7118
www.missiondc.org

CCNV (Men and Women)
425 2nd Street, NW
(202) 393-1909
users.erols.com/ccnv/

Community of Hope (Family)
1413 Girard Street, NW
(202) 232-7356
www.communityofhopedc.org

DC Village (Family)
2-A DC Village Lane, SW
(202) 561-8090
www.dccfh.org/DCVillage.html

Franklin School (Men)
13th and K streets, NW
(202) 638-7424

Gospel Rescue Ministries (Men)
810 5th Street, NW
(202) 842-1731
www.grm.org

John Young Center (Women)
117 D Street, NW
(202) 639-8469
http://www.ccs-dc.org/find/services/

La Casa Bilingual Shelter (Men)
1436 Irving Street, NW
(202) 673-3592

N Street Village (Women)
1333 N Street, NW
(202) 939-2060
www.nstreetvillage.org

801 East, St. Elizabeth Hospital (Men)
2700 MLK Avenue, SE
(202) 561-4014

New York Ave Shelter (Men)
1355-57 New York Avenue, NE
(202) 832-2359

Open Door Shelter (Women)
425 Mitch Snyder Place, NW
(202) 639-8093

FOOD

Charlie's Place
1830 Connecticut Avenue, NW
(202) 232-3066
www.stmargaretsdc.org/charliesplace

Church of the Pilgrims
2201 P Street, NW
(202) 387-6612
www.churchofthepilgrims.org

Dinner Program for Homeless Women
AND the "9:30 Club" Breakfast
309 E Street, NW
(202) 737-9311
www.dphw.org

Father McKenna Center
19 Eye Street, NW
(202) 842-1112

Food and Friends
219 Riggs Road, NE
(202) 269-2277
www.foodandfriends.org

Miriam's Kitchen
2401 Virginia Avenue, NW
(202) 452-8926
www.miriamskitchen.org

The Welcome Table
Church of the Epiphany
1317 G Street, NW
(202) 347-2635
http://www.epiphanydc.org/ministry/welcometbl.htm

MEDICAL RESOURCES

Christ House
1717 Columbia Road, NW
(202) 328-1100
www.christhouse.org

Unity Health Care, Inc.
3020 14th Street, NW
(202) 745-4300
www.unityhealthcare.org

Whitman-Walker Clinic
1407 S Street, NW
(202) 797-3500
www.wwc.org

OUTREACH CENTERS

Bread for the City
1525 Seventh Street, NW
(202) 265-2400 AND
1640 Good Hope Road, SE
(202) 561-8587
www.breadforthe-city.org
food pantry, clothing, legal and social services, medical clinic

Community Council for the Homeless
at Friendship Place
4713 Wisconsin Avenue NW
(202) 364-1419
www.cchfp.org
housing, medical and psych care, substance abuse and job counseling

Bethany Women's Center
1333 N Street, NW
(202) 939-2060
http://www.nstreetvillage.org
meals, hygiene, laundry, social activities, substance abuse treatment

Green Door
(202) 464-9200
1221 Taylor Street NW
www.greendoor.org
housing, job training, supportive mental health services

Friendship House
619 D Street, SE
(202) 675-9050
www.friendshiphouse.net
counseling and mentoring, education, youth services, clothing

Georgetown Ministry Center
1041 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
(202) 338-8301
www.georgetownministrycenter.org
laundry, counseling, psych care

Martha's Table
2114 14th Street, NW
(202) 328-6608

www.marthastable.org
dinner, education, recreation, clothing, child and family services

Rachel's Women's Center
1222 11th Street, NW
(202) 682-1005
http://www.ccdsd.org/howorwc.php
hygiene, laundry, lunch, phone and mail, clothing, social activities

Sasha Bruce Youthwork
741 8th Street, SE
(202) 675-9340
www.sashabruce.org
counseling, housing, family services

So Others Might Eat (SOME)
71 "O" Street, NW
(202) 797-8806
www.some.org
lunch, medical and dental, job and housing counseling

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Bright Beginnings Inc.
128 M Street NW, Suite 150
Washington DC 20001
(202) 842-9090
www.brightbeginningsinc.org
Child care, family services

Catholic Community Services of D.C.
924 G Street, NW
(202) 772-4300
www.ccs-dc.org
umbrella for a variety of services

D.C. Coalition for the Homeless
1234 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
(202) 347-8870
www.dccfh.org
housing, substance abuse treatment, employment assistance

Community Family Life Services
305 E Street, NW
(202) 347-0511
www.cflsdc.org
housing, job and substance abuse counseling, clothes closet

Foundry Methodist Church
1500 16th Street, NW
(202) 332-4010
www.foundryumc.org
ESL, lunch, clothing, IDs

Hermano Pedro Day Center
3211 Sacred Heart Way, NW
(202) 332-2874
http://www.ccs-dc.org/find/services/
meals, hygiene, laundry, clothing

JHP, Inc.
1526 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE
(202) 544-9126
www.jobshavepriority.org
training and employment

Jubilee Jobs
1640 Columbia Road, NW
(202) 667-8970
www.jubileejobs.org
job preparation and placement

National Coalition for the Homeless
2201 P Street, NW
(202) 462-4822
www.nationalhomeless.org
activists, speakers bureau available

Shelter Hotline: 1-800-535-7252

Samaritan Ministry
1345 U Street, SE, AND
1516 Hamilton Street, NW
(202)889-7702
www.samaritanministry.org
HIV support, employment, drug/alcohol addiction, healthcare

St. Luke's Episcopal Church
1514 15th Street, NW
(202) 667-4394
http://stlukesdc.edow.org
food, counseling

St. Matthew's Cathedral
1725 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
(202) 347-3215 ext. 552
breakfast, clothing, hygiene

Travelers Aid, Union Station
50 Mass. Avenue, NE
(202) 371-1937
www.travelersaid.org/ta/dc.html
national emergency travel assistance

Wash. Legal Clinic for the Homeless
1200 U Street, NW
(202) 328-5500
www.legalclinic.org
legal services

MARYLAND

SHELTER

Comm. Ministry of Montgomery Co.
114 W. Montgomery Avenue, Rockville
(301) 762-8682
www.communityministrymc.org

The Samaritan Group
P.O. Box 934, Chestertown
(443) 480-3564

Warm Night Shelter
311 68th Place, Seat Pleasant
(301) 499-2319
www.cmpgc.org

FOOD

Bethesda Cares
7728 Woodmont Church, Bethesda
(301) 907-9244
www.bethesdacares.com

Community Place Café
311 68th Place, Seat Pleasant
(301) 499-2319
www.cmpgc.org

Manna Food Center
614-618 Lofstrand Lane, Rockville
(301) 424-1130
www.mannafood.org

MEDICAL RESOURCES

Community Clinic, Inc.
8210 Colonial Lane, Silver Spring
(301) 585-1250
www.cciweb.org

Mobile Medical Care, Inc.
9309 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda
(301) 493-8553
www.mobilemedicalcare.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Catholic Charities, Maryland
12247 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring
(301) 942-1790
www.catholiccharitiesdc.org

shelter, substance abuse treatment, variety of other services

Mission of Love
6180 Old Central Avenue
Capitol Heights
(301)333-4440
www.molinc.org
life skills classes, clothing, housewares

Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless
600-B East Gude Drive, Rockville
(301) 217-0314
www.mcch.net
emergency shelter, transitional housing, and supportiveservices

VIRGINIA

SHELTER

Alexandria Community Shelter
2355 B Mill Road, Alexandria
(703) 838-4239

Carpenter's Shelter
930 N. Henry Street, Alexandria
(703) 548-7500
www.carpentersshelter.org

Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for the Homeless
3103 Ninth Road North, Arlington
(703) 525-7177
www.aachhomeless.org

FOOD

Alive, Inc.
2723 King Street, Alexandria
(703) 836-2723
www.alive-inc.org

Our Daily Bread
10777 Main Street, Ste. 320, Fairfax
(703) 273-8829
www.our-daily-bread.org

MEDICAL RESOURCES

Arlington Free Clinic
3833 N Fairfax Drive, #400, Arlington
(703) 979-1400
www.arlingtonfreeclinic.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Abundant Life Christian Outreach,
5154 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria
(703) 823-4100
www.anchor-of-hope.net
food, clothing, youth development, and medicines

David's Place Day Shelter
930 North Henry Street, Alexandria
(703) 548-7500
www.carpentersshelter.org
laundry, shower, workshops, hypothermia shelter

Legal Services of Northern Virginia
6066 Leesburg Pike, Ste. 500
(703) 778-6800
www.lsnv.org
civil legal services

Samaritan Ministry
2924 Columbia Pike, Arlington
(703) 271-0938
www.samaritanministry.com
social services, employment services, HIV/AIDS services

