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Homeless Resources
Info

By Mike Rhodes

Homeless Victory in Fresno
has Implications for the
Nation

FRESNO, CA: Homeless people and their allies won a legal victory in Fresno that could have nationwide implications. The class action lawsuit against the City of Fresno resulted in a \$2.3 million settlement and has stopped the city from taking and immediately destroying homeless peoples property. City officials, including mayor Alan Autry, argued that the city had a right to keep city streets clean and that city sanitation workers were just doing their job. Government agencies in communities throughout the country make the same argument as they conduct sweeps through homeless encampments. The Federal Court in Fresno found that these sweeps are illegal and violate the 4th and 5th amendment of the U.S. constitution.

"The Court's ruling in this class-action lawsuit makes it clear that our Constitution protects the rights of everybody, rich or poor," said attorney Michael Fisher of the ACLU of Northern California. "It should send a strong message to other cities throughout our country that if they violate the rights of their most vulnerable residents, they will be held

accountable." The homeless plaintiffs in the lawsuit, Kincaid v Fresno, were represented by a team of attorneys from the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California (ACLU-NC), the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights (LCCR), and the law firm of Heller Ehrman LLP.

The lawsuit began two years ago, after the City of Fresno repeatedly used bulldozers to plow through homeless encampments in the downtown area. The city's policy, designed by a low ranking police officer in the code enforcement division, was to provide residents of the encampments with written notice that a "clean up" was about to take place. Many homeless people say they never received a copy of the notice. According to the city's policy and testimony in court, the city would deploy the sanitation department, backed up by police officers, who would then clear the area of anything that the homeless did not remove. The city claimed that everything left was rubbish. The problem with the policy, according to the court, was that it treated

homeless peoples property differently than the property of anyone else in the community. For example, if you loose your bike and the police find it, they do not call in a bulldozer, crush the bike, and put it in a garbage truck. The likely policy would be to take the bike into possession and try to find the owner.

Homeless people in Fresno, during the sweeps conducted between 2004 - 2006 lost bicycles, tents, clothing, their ID, and everything of value they had in

the world. One person lost an urn that contained her granddaughters ashes. Al Williams, who is homeless, suffered the effects of the raids on three occasions. In addition to losing clothes and food, his wife's wheelchair was destroyed and her medicines confiscated by Fresno police officers. "I felt like everything was taken away from me, but this settlement gives me hope for the future for myself and all the other people who suffered," said Williams.

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The photo above was taken in front of the Federal Courthouse immediately after the settlement was announced. The person in the picture (center) is Pamela Kincaid. She was the lead plaintiff in the case who died under suspicious circumstances on August 1, 2007.

Scrambling for a Place to Stay: Homeless Teen Moms Keep Eye on Future

Street News Service www.streetnewsservice.org

by Michael Neary

For 18-year-old Lora, a night's sleep during an unplanned two-year odyssey through the streets of Chicago often required the hospitality of a friend. During the cold weather she'd spend an evening at a friend's house, and as the clock ticked toward midnight she'd hope for an invitation from the parents to stay the night.

In the warmer months, when the weather was fine, Lora took a simpler approach to securing a

place to sleep. She'd seek out a sturdy set of church stairs.

"I was sleeping on church steps," said Lora, a teen mom who asked that her last name not be published. "I felt like those were the safest places."

The strategies used by Lora and other Illinois teens are fairly typical in a state where youth shelter space is scarce. According to Nicole Sauler, 318 beds are set aside in Illinois for homeless youth - a group of about 25,000, according to a recent study by the Chicago

Coalition for the Homeless, the Illinois Department of Human Services and the University of Illinois at Chicago.

"That's a very large number of kids who do not have a place to say," said Sauler, the government relations manager for The Night Ministry and a member of the Youth Policy Committee, organized by the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

For young women, homelessness can also increase the chances of becoming pregnant. Sixty-eight percent of the

teenage women surveyed as part of the study said they had been pregnant. That number has doubled in the past 20 years, according to the study.

In addition to facing the dangers of sexual assault, teenage girls often find themselves emotionally - as well as physically - vulnerable. The emotional component, said Lora, increases the chances of becoming pregnant.

"When it's just you, you feel like

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Teen Moms

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you're not loved," said Lora, who's now staying with her 5-month-old son Xavier at The Night Ministry's shelter for young mothers and young pregnant women. "And when some guy comes around and says, 'I love you,' we go for it. I know I do. I just needed somebody to tell me that they care about me."

Lora left her house when she was 15, after disagreements with family bubbled to the surface and after the home environment, as she explained it, had deteriorated.

Invisibly homeless

The whole cycle of teen homelessness often unfolds under the public radar, according to those who have experienced it and those working to fight it.

"When you're an adult and you don't look up to par and your clothes are messed up and you're on the street crying, people think, 'Man, that guy's homeless,'" said Lora.

But when people see youth on the streets, Lora continued, they chalk up the trouble to "teenage stuff."

"They don't believe that there are adults, parents, who don't take care of their kids or who take care of them wrong, and the kids say no and leave or are kicked out of their homes for whatever reason," she said. "They don't believe it happens."

"I call them an invisible population," said Audalee McLoughlin, president and CEO of New Moms, Inc., a Chicago-based agency. McLoughlin said many people have a tough time acknowledging two generations of homeless youth existing side by side.

"Society also wants to believe that these are kids who decided that they didn't want to follow rules at home and walked out, and that's not the case," she said. "We have had multiple cases of young women who were sexually abused by their mother's boyfriend, by their sister's boyfriend, [and who] may even be pregnant by their mother's boyfriend."

"And then," she added, "the mother chooses the boyfriend over the daughter and throws the daughter out."

Housing struggles can stay invisible in other ways, as well. Not all young people with precarious housing are trekking through the streets. Jasmine Green, 20, was staying at her sister's house while she was expecting her son

Jayden, who's now nearly two months old. With her sister and her sister's five children already living in the house, living conditions were rough.

"It was just crowded," said Green. "No room, no privacy."

The problem may also lurk undercover because the young women, not anxious to become wards of the state, learn to hide their homelessness. Lora said she became adept at painting the impression that all was well, especially at school.

"As soon as I got on the school grounds - not even inside the building - I had to have another attitude," she said. "Otherwise somebody would know something."

Nudged into seeking help

In some cases, especially among younger teens, pregnancy may precede homelessness, according to Melissa McGuire, director of the Youth Shelter Network for The Night Ministry. But McGuire said she believed that most of the older teens who become pregnant carry a history of precarious housing - a history that precludes any pregnancy. For these young women, she said, it's often the prospect of a new baby that sends them seeking help.

"For some of the girls, they might have managed for a while, but the pregnancy tipped it," she said. The pregnancy prodded them to admit they needed help.

That, said Lora, described the rhythm of her own decision to contact The Night Ministry.

"When I found out I was pregnant, it wasn't just me," she said. "It was me and baby."

For 18-year-old Labice, who stays at The Night Ministry's shelter with her 2-year-old daughter Jakilah, the tip for outside help initially came from school.

"I was talking to a counselor and she mentioned it to me once, but I didn't consider it then," she said.

If it's pregnancy that nudges young women into seeking help, then there's another group that does not feel such a nudge, and often does not seek outside help. The young men who fathered the children, according to McGuire, are far less likely to look for help than the young women.

"They've (often) not been well received by the family, so they're cautious about receiving ser-

VICES," she said.

Looking ahead

For the young women who are pregnant, the future can be tenuous. Once older than 21, they're no longer eligible for youth services, and they face a pinched supply of affordable apartments in the area. And before they hit 21, young moms find themselves in a strange in-between zone, according to McGuire.

"Their foot is between the adult world and the adolescent world," she said. Women younger than 18 can approve health care for their children but not - except in the cases of emergency or reproductive health - for themselves, McGuire said. Age-generated limitations extend into other corners, as well.

"You can't sign a lease when you're 17, but you can be the mother of two," she added.

So the young women are in a place where they don't have many legal rights, but they do - if they are fortunate - have support systems from youth agencies.

New Moms, one of a few agencies that offer transitional housing for youth, accepts pregnant parenting women ages 18 to 21 and allows them to stay as long as two years. There's a room for 20 women and up to 30 children in shared apartments at Circle Urban Ministries, in the Austin neighborhood. The program, called Cooperative Living, moved to this location in March after a fire damaged the complex on Humboldt Boulevard.

But the number of young women accepted into the program is dwarfed by the number 8-477 - who were turned away for lack of space last year.

At The Night Ministry, the Response-Ability Pregnant & Parenting Program (RAPPP) - a new program, just finishing its first year - includes a Lakeview shelter with eight beds for pregnant and parenting women from 14 through 18 years old. McGuire, who directs the program, said those are the only beds in the city exclusively for minors who are pregnant or parenting - and who are not wards of the state. The young women can stay for as long as 120 days.

The Night Ministry runs another 120-day shelter in West Town for young men and women ages 14 to 20. It also accepts young women who may also be pregnant or parenting, along with

their children. The Night Ministry runs a two-year transitional living program for youth from 16 to 20 years old, as well.

Organizers of such services stress skill-building. McLoughlin said that in the past youth advocates had not focused enough on preparing homeless teens for the future, but concentrated instead on immediate needs. New Moms currently runs an internship program that allows (and pays) young women to work 30 hours a week.

The organizers say they see real change in the women who participate in programs like these - both during and after their stays in the programs. Jasmine Green was quick to take advantage of the internship, using it to work at an after-school program. And McLoughlin read an e-mail from a former New Moms resident who, 10 years later, is thriving with a home and a good job.

Other young women, too, seem to require little coaxing to cultivate long-term plans.

"I want to feel I control something in my life, because everything else is just out of my control," said Lora, who plans to go to college and study video editing. When Lora talks about her prospects, she gives the word "career" a heavy emphasis.

"I want to obtain a job and I want to start me a career," she said. "I don't want anything temporary - I'm tired of temporary. I want all long-term things."

A bill to provide help for youth homelessness enjoys wide legislative support, and now advocates hope the wheels of an entrenched state government will speed up enough to grant it swift passage.

The bill, which would provide \$7 million for shelter and employment, has passed the state's House of Representatives and awaits action in the Senate. The bill would devote \$5 million of that total to youth shelter, more than doubling the amount of money the state currently spends in that area, said Nicole Sauler, a member of the Youth Policy Committee, organized by the Homeless Coalition for the Homeless.

Sauler, who's also the government relations manager for The Night Ministry, said Youth Policy Committee members have worked with State Rep. Greg Harris, D-Chicago, the bill's sponsor, to draft the legislation.

Harris said the bill, now under

consideration in the State Senate's Rules Committee, passed through the House with a large majority. He said the bill enjoys broad support in the Senate, as well, but he noted that the "ongoing battle between the House and the Senate and governor" threatens to slow legislation of any kind down.

Harris noted his surprise to discover an estimate of 25,000 homeless youth in the state, based on a study by the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, the Illinois Department of Human Services and the University of Illinois at Chicago.

"That's a large number," he said. "I certainly did not realize it. I think there are a lot of people who don't realize it."

Sauler also noted the 25,000 homeless youth estimate and pointed out that the state currently contains only 316 beds for them.

Harris said the causes for the homelessness are multiple - and can extend to children as young as 8 or 9 years old. He mentioned substance abuse and incarceration on the part of parents as causes, as well as disputes over sexual orientation.

"A rather huge number (of youth) have come out as lesbian or gay, and their parents don't want them," he said.

Harris, along with others who have considered homeless youth, said the population tends to be invisible to the average bystanders. Many people recognize homeless adults, he said, but "they drive by a group of 12-year-olds and say, 'Why don't the parents have them home in bed?'"

Sauler said the remaining \$2 million would go toward employment help for youth. She said the work component funded "paid work experience" that could jump-start a permanent position.

"It's actually job placement," she said.

Sauler mentioned office work, food service, hospitality and "trades-oriented jobs" as among the types of work the bill could help fund.

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Fresno Win

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Lead Plaintiff Pamela Kincaid died in August of 2007. Kincaid occasionally stayed at the only women's shelter in Fresno, but she suffered from claustrophobia, which made it difficult for her to remain there. When sanitation workers and police officers seized her belongings, Kincaid lost her birth certificate, her address book, photos of her sister, daughter and mother, and a toolbox with tools she used for the recycling and crafts work she did to earn money, among other items.

In a declaration before the court in October 2006, Kincaid said "Before I became homeless, I used to have a house and a job. I lost both when I developed injuries at work... I hope that someday I will be able to get off the streets and into permanent housing. But the fact that the city keeps taking and destroying my property makes that goal seem that much harder to achieve. I always live with the fear that the city will come and take what few possessions I have left."

Charlene Clay and her husband left their apartment in 2006 because they could not afford the \$850 in rent. They were camped on a hill off of G Street when City of Fresno workers destroyed their belongings - including Clay's teeth, medications, sleeping bags, and personal papers - without warning. A second time, Clay was staying near San Bonito and H Streets when police tipped her shopping cart, threw her possessions on the ground, and hauled her cart away.

Clay said "The City of Fresno has made it clear to me by destroying my property twice and by the way in which they did that, that because I am a homeless person, I will always be vulnerable to having my property taken and destroyed by City of Fresno workers and police."

Joanna Garcia was born and raised in Fresno. She lost her job after she was mistakenly implicated in a robbery committed by her husband. She has worked at Holy Cross Women's Shelter, earning food vouchers. City workers have seized and destroyed her property five times.

"...my belongings and my boyfriend's belongings were on the grassy strip across the highway from E Street. They were neatly kept. My boyfriend and I had left for the day, I was working at Holy Cross. When we came back that evening, I said to my boyfriend, 'I can't see our home.' All of our belongings were gone, including tents, blankets, personal papers, clothes, my pink bicycle, and irreplaceable pictures of my grandmother and my

son."

Douglas Deatherage, 43, worked part time at a trucking company. He watched as City of Fresno workers threw his belongings into a garbage truck. "My relatively small amount of personal possessions were not bothering anyone and I was ready and willing to move if the City of Fresno workers wanted to clean the area where they were. It was obvious that my property was not abandoned since I was there with it. I was given no opportunity to move my personal property in order to save it from this destruction that morning."

Mayor Alan Autry Objects

On the day the historic settlement between the City of Fresno and the homeless was announced, mayor Autry issued a statement. Autry wrote that the "white collar exploitation of the homeless by the Court and the lawyers is unconscionable. I am calling upon the ACLU and Judge Wanger to require half of the exorbitant lawyer fees of \$750,000 to be donated to homeless programs."

Judge Oliver Wanger immediately issued an order, that was delivered to City Hall by a Federal Marshal, for mayor Autry to appear before the court and explain why he was attacking the agreement that the City of Fresno and the homeless plaintiffs had voluntarily entered into. Speaking before judge Wanger, Autry said his problem with the settlement was that he "felt as if the homeless and all the people of Fresno had a gun to their head." Looking at the plaintiffs' legal counsel, Autry said he felt the city was up against overwhelming power - "we are up against a group that will stop at nothing to win. These lawyer fees are outrageous." Autry said "I believe the homeless were being taken advantage of here." Autry's portrayal of big city lawyers, coming to Fresno and taking advantage of the homeless, played for days in the local media.

The mayor's ability to shift the news away from the City of Fresno's criminal attack on the homeless and gain traction with his attack on the ACLU and how out of town lawyers were exploiting the homeless was a tribute to his ability to manipulate corporate media and to re-frame the debate on this issue.

Attorneys for the homeless pointed out that there would not have been any legal fees if the City of Fresno had not violated homeless peoples rights by taking and destroying their property. In a written response to the

situation, published in The Fresno Bee, attorneys for the plaintiffs Alan Schlosser (ACLU) and Elisa Della-Pana (Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights) argued that "the city had an opportunity to avoid a lawsuit by respecting the constitutional rights of its residents. We wrote to the city attorney shortly before filing suit and asked that the city voluntarily agree to stop breaking the law. The city refused to cooperate. We were forced to obtain an emergency restraining order in federal court."

Schlosser and Della-Pana continue "The fee settlement in this case - \$750,000 - amounts to a fraction of the fees that we would have been entitled to under federal and state laws. If this case had proceeded to trial, it is extremely likely that the fee award would have been far greater." The ACLU and LCCR will use the attorneys' fees awarded in the case for programs to protect the legal rights of poor and homeless people, and to oppose the abuse of government power.

Terms of the Settlement

The settlement agreement contains a series of procedures created to ensure that the violations against the homeless will not recur. The City of Fresno will require authorities to post written notice at least three days before clearing any personal property from an encampment area, and items of apparent value will be stored for 90 days. The Department of Transportation has also agreed to comply with the legal principles set forth in the Court's preliminary injunction, throughout the state. The Court will retain jurisdiction over the case for five years to ensure that the City complies with this agreement.

Damages awarded by the Court total \$1,485,000 to be allocated as follows:

The City of Fresno will pay \$1,000,000 into a Housing Allowance Account. Funds from the account will assist the approximately 225 class members in the lawsuit to meet costs related to housing including security deposits, first and last months rent, or monthly rental payments, or to purchase a vehicle or medical care. The money will be issued by the Settlement Administrator to landlords or other providers of basic goods or services.

The City and Caltrans will set aside \$485,000 in cash to compensate a pool of individuals who suffered harm as a result of the unconstitutional seizure of property. Individuals will file claim

forms describing the extent of their losses and the number of times they were subjected to the illegal sweeps. Disbursements from this portion of the settlement will range from \$500 - \$5,000 and will be paid over time in currency or by check, or be deposited into plaintiff's individual bank accounts. The court is expected to finalize the agreement on July 25, 2008.

Where do we go from here?

In addition to the lawsuit against the City of Fresno, homeless people and their allies held a sleep-in at City Hall, the Homelessness Marathon radio show was broadcast from Fresno putting a national spotlight on this city's illegal practices, and intense pressure was brought upon city government to end their attacks on the homeless. The efforts have had an effect and mayor Autry has declared the city's previous policy a failure. Earlier this year, Autry said "we have failed, government has failed on this issue. We are the status quo that has chosen through our wisdom over the last 40 or 50 years to pick the most expensive and ineffective, dis-compassionate way to address the homeless situation."

Autry admitted this failure while addressing the joint meeting of leadership and planning councils of the County/City of Fresno as they established a task force that was empowered to develop a 10 year plan to end chronic homelessness. Autry told the task force that he wanted them to come up with a blueprint for how to develop a Housing First model that will provide homeless people a place to live without pre-conditions. The mayor said "I'm having to change my thinking because we are talking about a home in a neighborhood where a guy comes up and passes out on the front yard. That is part of the process of getting well. There is no requirement on those individuals 'I'm ready to go there.'"

The task force, which started in mid April, was given 100 days to formulate a plan to provide homeless people decent and affordable housing. Proponents of the Housing First model, including mayor Autry, claim that it will be less expensive to provide homeless people with housing than to maintain the failed model (Rescue Mission, Poverello House, etc) that currently addresses homeless needs. But, Al Williams, who is homeless and a member of the task force, has his doubts that things will change anytime soon. Williams says the task force is dominated by builders/developers, other business interests, & social service providers from the Rescue

Mission and Poverello House. Williams says that "there are powerful forces that want to maintain business as usual and the poverty pimps have too much influence in the group."

Proponents of the Housing First model say it costs up to \$100,000 a year for each homeless person under the failed social service model currently in use. The cost is high because homeless people use the emergency room for most medical care they receive, they stay in the hospital longer, return frequently, and interact with law enforcement more than people with permanent housing. For the amount of money used to maintain business as usual, every homeless person could be given a luxury apartment and limo service and it would cost less than what is being spent now.

Why then did the City of Fresno put \$3 million into this year's city budget to buy property to address the homeless issue and not spend a dime of it? Gregory Barfield, City Council member Cynthia Sterling's aide, told me it was because they are waiting for the plan from the task force so that the use of funds are coordinated for maximum utilization. Perhaps that is why the city also did not spend \$1 million that was designated for the Spirit of Women, to provide shelter and services for homeless women. A more cynical analyst might conclude that the city put millions of dollars into the budget to give the appearance that they are spending money on the issue, but the reality is the money gets re-allocated to other departments - like the police.

The task force to end homelessness is due to release the results of their recommendations in July. The Community Alliance wants to see a plan presented that provides the homeless with decent/affordable housing and a way out of the intense poverty they currently live in. We demand an end to all attacks against the homeless community, plots of public land where the homeless can live safely (with drinkable water, toilets, and trash bins), more shelter space (particularly for homeless women), and a rapid transition to a Housing First program that provides the homeless with safe and secure housing.

For a list of articles and documents about the struggle for civil liberties for homeless people in Fresno, see <http://www.fresnoalliance.com/home/homelessness.htm>

Mike Rhodes is an independent journalist writing about social and political issues on www.moby.org. Reprinted with permission of the author.

Telling the Truth About The Health Care Crisis and The Demand For The "Single Payer" Solution

by Cat Williams

On May 15, 2008, Sacramento's Homeless Leadership Project traveled to Oakland to testify at the Truth Commission and Public Hearing on Health Care sponsored by the Women's Economic Agenda Project, a social justice organization based in Oakland. The group joined leaders who came from Merced, in California's Central Valley, from San Jose and San Francisco and from neighborhoods in Oakland, testifying on behalf of unions and homeless settlements, on behalf of church groups and youth groups, on behalf of County agencies and community health clinics.

All these witnesses told the story of harsh injustice in health care at the microphone and at the podium, and called for a public "single payer" universal health care system that would eliminate costly private insurance, and would cover all people living in the United States from birth to death. Such a system could be brought about by a broad social movement led by people struggling with the exorbitant cost and poor quality of health care, especially by poor people who are exposed to the worst abuses of the current system.

Nancy Lewis, nurse practitioner on the front lines at Huckleberry's Cole Street Youth Clinic and Hawkins

Village in Visitation Valley in San Francisco told the story of dedicated staff, defying cutbacks in service, refusing to turn desperately ill patients away who turn to the clinic because that is the only resource for people without insurance.

Shamako Noble of the Hip Hop Congress, which uses the culture of Hip Hop to inspire often disenfranchised youth to get involved in social action, civic service, and cultural creativity, rapped out rhymes to expose the systemic denial of health justice.

John, from Sacramento's Homeless Organizing Committee's Leadership Project, took the microphone to speak not only on behalf of homeless people denied health care, but also to point out that lack of care for infectious diseases threatens the whole community.

Ethel Long-Scott, from the Truth Commission sponsor, the Women's Economic Agenda Project, brought down the rafters with an impassioned call to action - as her message in the Truth Commission program emphasized:

Our nation has an amazing opportunity right now. We have the resources to give good health care to everyone who lives here. We have the opportunity to end the agonizing worry and

unnecessary suffering of so many people about their health care. What stands in the way is the idea that nothing can be done unless some company can make a profit from it. Our goal is to help all of America's people get quality health care while eliminating poverty.

California faces a rising tide of people who are uninsured - roughly 2.2 million more in 2006 than the previous year. California's State Medicaid offers the lowest re-imbursement rate per capita in the nation. In Los Angeles, as reported in the New York Times, 15 acute care hospitals have closed since 2000. The latest is Martin Luther King Jr-Harbor, which was opened after the Watts uprisings. Once the "jewel" of that community, it was closed in August, sending poor residents scrambling for care at scattered, overburdened clinics and causing ambulances to travel the streets for miles to look for emergency rooms to accept the severely ill and injured. This is the situation across the country: Grady Hospital, the only source for care for poor people in Atlanta, especially for the undocumented, was recently "privatized" and is under continuing pressure to close because it has no funding.

The message of the Truth Commission is that we can do it - the social movement for health care,

powered by the millions of homeless and poor people can make a public ("single payer") health care system a reality.

Here are the seven building blocks of unity for the "Single Payer" health care system:

One Tier: one payer for all medical costs, one standard of care.

Universal Care Now: Everyone in, Nobody Out!

Public Accountability and Control: not corporate control.

Comprehensive Coverage: all health needs, prescriptions, and long term care.

Choice: Freedom to choose physicians and other providers.

Protection of Health, Not Profits: eliminate insurance, advertising, administration, and the squandered costs of a profit based system.

Just Transition: protect the income and benefits of displaced workers now employed in processing insurance claims and other functions by providing training and new placements.

Homeless Connect Summary



Photo above, L-R foreground: Assemblymember Dave Jones, The Brown (now director of the Ending Chronic Homelessness Initiative), Mayor Heather Fargo and State Senator Doree Stabberg at the pre-event press conference.

Sacramento's Homeless Connect has been deemed a great success, though pitted with some great flaws that can be improved upon for next time. The committee expected that a maximum of 500 people would trickle in throughout the day, but about 600 homeless people came almost at once, leading to long lines and running out of intake forms. Besides that glitch the event proved very helpful to many homeless people.

There were 200 community volunteers and 160 staff representing 50 different agencies. 30 people received shelter or housing that day, 139 people got free ID's. Also, people filled out SSI applications, were assessed for mental

health services, made veterans service connections, were screened and triaged for illness and dental needs, received legal council, were tested for HIV/AIDS, reading and sun protection glasses, bike repair, acupuncture, GA and Food Stamps, and drug and alcohol assessments. SHOC was there to sign up new vendors for Homeward Street Journal and invite people to Homeless Leadership Project meetings.

Some people didn't access any services but said they had a great time listening or dancing to the blues bands and eating a great barbeque.

Bob & Spencer

HAPPY The Homeless Guys



by Scott & Mike



By Ray Ponce de Leon. Reprinted from The Contributor, Nashville © Street News Service: www.street-papers.org

The 2008 Homeless Count IS IN

3,196 people are homeless in Sacramento on any given night according to a January 29, 2008 homeless count organized by the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance Homeless Programs. These numbers included a count of unsheltered homeless people, those in shelters (emergency shelters and transitional housing), Sacramento Mental Health Treatment Center, the main jail, Rio Consumes Correctional Center and alcohol/drug treatment facilities.

HUD only accepts the sheltered and unsheltered counts which came to 2,678. Of those individuals counted, 730 were in emergency shelters, 682 were in transitional housing and 1,266 were unsheltered. These compare to 2007 figures where there were 709 in emergency shelters, 738 in transitional shelters and 1,005 that were unsheltered. There has been an increase of 226 (9.2%) homeless people from the 2007 count. There has been a total increase of 261 (20.6%) unsheltered homeless people. The chronic homeless count decreased by 3.9% from last year.

At the same time as the count, a survey was taken of willing participants. This provided somewhat of a picture of the population characteristics. Unaccompanied people with a disability who have been homeless for more than a year or had four episodes of homelessness in the past three years (termed "chronically homeless") made up 25.4% of the homeless population. 34.1% reported a mental illness. 53.8% reported substance abuse. Veterans made up 19.3% of the population. 1.8% had HIV/AIDS. 20.4% were victims of domestic violence. Unaccompanied youth under the age of 18 were 0.6% of the homeless population. Females were 26.3% of the unsheltered

count (sheltered females were not specified).

The 2007 homeless count was the first year that Sacramento used a statistically reliable research-based method of counting homeless populations. That same method was used in 2008. Though it may seem that the differences can be documented accurately, the 2007 count took place from 4:30 to 6:30 AM, where the 2008 count was conducted in the evening hours. This, and the fact that there were a different amount of counters, could have skewed the data somewhat. The homeless count, of course, is only a verifiable estimate and cannot be relied upon for exact numbers since many homeless people were hidden or not seen by the counters.

Loaves & Fishes

We are in desperate need of sleeping bags and mens shoes. We serve 1000 people each day, many of whom sleep outside at night, and they are in need of sleeping bags to keep warm during the cool nights and mens shoes to protect their feet.

If you can help, please bring donations to our warehouse
M-F 7am-2:45pm located at
1400 North C Street,
Sacramento

Public Service Ad

Remarks of a Young Woman After Meeting a Homeless Veteran

As I walked down the narrow street, I was stopped by a man who sat on the ground counting pennies. He asked me if I had any change to spare. Regrettably, I did not. He had a long, scraggly beard and long, greasy black hair. Next to him sat his friend, Charleen. He introduced himself as Larry King, better known as "Shorty," and of no relation to the talk show host. "I was in the Vietnam War." He said sadly. "When I came home, I was called a baby killer and lost everything." Gladly, I shook his hand, it being a great honor for me to talk to Veterans about their past experiences. He may have been unkempt, long past needing a bath, that didn't matter to me. What mattered was his predicament, the same many other veterans are in today. They are homeless.

long and hard look at the flag. Tears come to my eyes as I think of Charleen; her left arm severed some time back, now in the hospital because she could not take care of herself anymore. I think of Shorty and his wife, Annie, permanently in the hospital, all of his money from his GI bills going to pay for her stay.

Most days I forget how lucky I am to have great friends, clean clothes that I never wear, and plenty of food. I have people who love me and I am recognized by society as a young consumer, about to enter the world of commerce. I used to be scared to walk downtown for fear that the homeless would attack me due to dementia or some other mental illness that may have developed due to their stay on the streets. But I will not be afraid any more. I will not fear them because I know they are just like you and me. When I think of our veterans and my role in honoring them, I think of Shorty and the sacrifice that he made at Vietnam so long ago, and I pray that those brave men and women, who now remain homeless, may one day be recognized by society so that their plight may be helped. I know I will never be the same and I know that each time I drive past downtown, Sacramento, I will look for him and pray that he will make it through another night.

Rachel E. Wilson

Now, as I stand in my high school classroom, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, I take a

Letter from a Man Who's Been There

The homeless: What are they, part of the answer? Possibly, in order for them to be that they need to have a reason to get out of bed in the morning, or their partially covered place on the concrete or campground under the bridge. What do you think would be a worthwhile activity for homeless folks to boost their spirits?

that good to me, so I just didn't sleep that much. My uncle ended up sending me five hundred bucks and I found a job and got out.

When someone finds something that might be an answer, let us know, there is plenty help out there if someone had a plan that would work. I'm not kidding, people will help. If you are reading this and bought it from a homeless person, please continue to do so, trust me you wouldn't want to be in their shoes!

Adam G. Moore

I was homeless once, in Seattle; it was not a very good time. I needed a place to sleep and, well, the people in charge of the homeless, food bank said that I could sleep on a bus that ran all night. That idea didn't sound

When Later Hasn't Happened Yet

by the homeless science writer, Chongo

(This article assumes that the reader has been keeping up with our continuing description of relativity, and by now has a vague notion as to what tilting spaces across time means. For those who missed these issues, go to the web site chongonation.com, "Chongo's home page" according to most search engines, and click on "Science Articles," to see any (that you may have missed).)

The last science article described relativity's tilting, using a train, both stationary and moving, with a young mister Einstein seated in the very center seat of the center rail car of the train. While seated, he found himself thinking about how the laws of physics never changed any more than the measures for calculating the outcome of those laws never changed either, the later being the universal, accepted convention of the day: that for the then laws of physics (in particular, Maxwell's equations for electromagnetism which assigned to light a never-changing value) would work only when the measures were adjusted according to motion with respect to a "stationary" universal set of measures to which moving measures had to be adjusted.

So the world, even the scientific world, believed, until this first-of-its-kind day, when a single individual saw the fallacy of this up-until-then-universally-accepted convention, and replaced this notion with a revolutionary idea of enormous insight and profound impact on all scientific thought to follow. The existing Newtonian convention of time and space being separate "things" was revealed for the erroneous idea that it is. That is what scientific discovery often does. It exposes commonly or even universally accepted ideas, as being nothing more than pure fallacy, or moreover, convenient simplifications of convenience. But such is usually the

outcome when deeper natural truths finally reveal themselves, as was the case on this ordinary yet monumental day, for a very lucky young man.

To come closer to specifying natural truth carries the price of discarding more simple and convenient "missed" truths. Such was the case with the discovery of relativity, it dispelled ideas that people, for the most part, still embrace today, even though a brilliant and lucky young man refuted over a century ago. The truth that his insight revealed was that the common, conventional idea of a universal, all-encompassing, present-moment 'now' existed EXCLUSIVELY in our minds, BUT PHYSICALLY NOWHERE ELSE AT ALL!

Albert Einstein's description for how and why nature's space and time are the same thing and the corresponding explanation of how a "spaces" and time tilt and bend stood in stark contradiction to every one else's in the world's understanding of nature (except for at least one other individual that seemed to see it yet was hardly recognized for the achievement).

Einstein's revelation was (as it still remains being today) 'true' (consistently accurate), while everyone else's understanding was at the time (and for the most part, still remains being) untrue (consistently incorrect, except in our very local world at very low speeds). When, however, we learn 'why' time and space measures vary with respect to motion and gravity (as a consequence of tilting and bending) by reading these and any other genuine science articles (as opposed to those using physical principles to advance metaphysical - e.g. religious - principles), we see nature in a demonstrably and precisely true way, regardless of how much that way contradicts the understanding of nature's truth that so many others around us might mistakenly have.

As a great many thought about Einstein's ideas at the time, many might regard a simultaneous 'now' tilting across time as absurd in the face of what seems to be a universal, all encompassing 'now' being reality, when in actuality, it exists only in our minds as folly. But, televisions, orbiting satellites, and many other modern marvels like them make a statement that relativity would flatly not work without Einstein's relativity as a basis for calculation. Its truth implies some even more amazing things, which is the subject of this article. Whether one thing happens before another or after, is based upon motion as well - that is, provided that the two events are not at the same place. For the ordering (i.e. sequence) of events to change, they must be removed in space from one another. To explain this, we must return to the train and the young Mr. Einstein as described in the previous article.

The preceding article used a moving train to demonstrate that, according to the measures of someone standing next to a light flashing at the very moment the center rail car passes, the light strikes the caboose approaching the light of the flash slightly sooner than this light strikes the engine receding from it. This article demonstrated that these two different moments for the observer watching the train were not two different moments for anyone riding on the train, but the same simultaneous moment for anyone sharing the motion of the train by being a passenger on it.

(If the reader missed the last article, then they can go online, to the website <http://www.chongonation.com> home page and click on 'Science Articles' from the Street Press' to read the last edition's science article, entitled "A Lucky Day on the Train". All other science articles are included as well.)

So, the last science article demonstrated that, if the speed of light were constant

for both observers, the one standing next to the train, stationary, and the other observer (Einstein) 'moving' by riding in the train, what was the same identical moment from one perspective (the passenger's, again, Einstein), were two distinctly different moments according to another perspective (the "stationary" observer's), standing next to the passing train, 'not moving'. This example further demonstrated that 'who' was actually moving was all a question of perspective, because according to anyone on the train, it was the train that 'seemed' stationary while the surroundings moved past it. But that is exactly what relativity says, that in essence everything in the universe can and does always do both: move and not move at the very same time, which may seem to contradict conventional notions of motion and time. It does, however, make perfect logical sense, because who is to say what is doing what, or put another way, stationary or moving is all a matter of one's perspective as much as when and where are, which is specifically, the subject of this article.

(For accuracy's sake, it should be pointed out that all of the train's motion occurred at a 'constant', that is to say unchanging, speed, in a perfectly straight line with no change whatsoever in the train's direction, which in scientific terms is called, 'uniform' motion. Motion that changes either direction or speed or any combination of the two is referred to scientifically as 'nonuniform' motion. In terms of relativity, the first, uniform motion, is described by the Theory of Special Relativity. The second, nonuniform motion, is described by the Theory of General Relativity. Among the science article at www.chongonation.com web pages, the "Bending Space and Time" article describes general relativity.)

As the preceding article demonstrated using light and

the moving train, when something happens can change with motion, placing two events that happen at the same time for one observer happening one event before the next, for another observer. What happened first and what happened next were a consequence of the direction of the moving train. For example, for a train moving from left to right, the left-hand event happens before the right-hand one. However, for a train moving in the exact opposite direction, precisely the opposite is true, the left-hand event, instead of happening before as is the case for the train moving from left to right, happens after the right-hand event. In clear terms, what happens first and what happens next can be ordered in what are two completely contradictory ways, based upon direction of motion.

Simply stated, unlike in the organization of our recollections, there is no absolute ordering of events in the universe with respect to time, though there is an absolute ordering of events with respect to each other, even though this ordering can be independent of time. One thing of which it cannot be independent is "cause and effect," for the very reason that the speed of light does not change. If it did, then the relationship between cause and effect could be lost, and our world become meaningless as a consequence.

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(From RELATIVITY IN A NUTSHELL, by Chongo in collaboration with Jose. To see all the books that Chongo has written on nature (physical theory), go to chongonation.com, which is a web site dedicated to educating those who have least opportunity for learning the scientific foundations that describe nature (accurately). Chongonation provides books that allow such opportunity, in lay terms, without any math. Simply go to the www.chongonation.com home page and click on either 'Theoretical Physics', 'Nature', or 'Products & Prices' to see just how many books on science are available.)

Sculptor's Installation Depicts the Lives and Deaths of Seattle's Homeless

Street News Service www.streetnewsservice.org

by Angle Jones

Making a Home, Honoring the Departed

Seattle's home-dwellers and street-dwellers live side by side, yet worlds apart. And although many from the middle and upper classes sympathize with the plight of their neighboring homeless, few consider what the absence of shelter would actually equate to in their lives - or deaths.

Seattle sculptor Nicki Sucec, loosely refers to these groups as the "haves" and "have nots," two classes that make up the Seattle community but seem impossible to merge. Through her recent memorial artwork, honoring Seattle's homeless who have died on the streets since 2000, Sucec endeavors to do just that.

"Vulnerability and lack of empathy are things I find very disturbing," says Sucec. In recent years, her work has been focused on issues such as social stigmatization, economic exclusion and mental illness. She believes that "art can be a powerful force of social change."

Sucec's current installation, entitled



Sculptor Nicki Sucec converted used boxsprings into a sanctuary honoring the 270 people who have recently died on Seattle's streets. (Photo by Katia Roberts)

"Home is the Most Important Place on Earth," is on display at Seattle's Henry Art Gallery through June 15 and is part of the University of Washington MFA Thesis Exhibition.

Upon first glance, the small house nearly blends in with the sterile gallery walls. It is constructed of recycled box springs, secured by internal hardware, and covered in crisp white linens. Its appearance is reminiscent of pristine houses, modern condominiums taking the city by storm, the sleek designs found in modern architecture and furniture.

But to pass through the dark entry is to set foot into another world, in which the subtext dramatically shifts and the generic house becomes a shrine. Once through the dark curtain, the house is dimly lit. Its back wall is lined with candles, wax dripped into crevices as if it's been offered up in prayer at a cathedral.

The house/shrine is made up of everyday objects of home and shelter that Sucec scouted out at thrift shops and on Craigslist. Warm, diffused light seeps through a red sleeping bag above, and the cedar plank floor provides a sense of comfort and roots this piece in the Pacific Northwest.

From the low spring ceiling hang hand-made bronze tags, resembling price, dog or toe tags. Sucec is still in the process of engraving the names, dates of death, and abstract imagery indicating the cause or place of death into 270 tags. Leaves collected from death sites

are burnt into some. One is etched with a blackberry bush, in homage to a man who was run over by a brush mower as he slept. Sucec forcefully created a concave shape in another in memory of a man who died following a blow to the head, and inscribed railroad tracks for a man hit by a train. The dangling mementos produce a chilling affect as the deceased assume a new life.

The death rate of Seattle's homeless has been on the rise in recent years, according to King County reports. This sobering reality is displayed by Women in Black, a local group of homeless and formerly homeless women who stand in silent mourning on busy sidewalks each time a homeless person dies in King County.

Throughout her work, Sucec consulted Women in Black, along with members of the Women's Housing Equality and Enhancement League (WHEEL) for their firsthand experience and feedback.

"In working with them I discovered that one of their needs is just a way to grieve and provide acknowledgment and dignity to these people, both living and dead. And this is a small way that I want to contribute," Sucec said in a recent podcast released by the Henry Art Gallery.

This memorial was inspired in part by testimonies Sucec witnessed last January at a Seattle City Council public hearing addressing the city's encampment sweeps. Sucec used a handheld recorder to capture testimonies given by people affected by homelessness who came out against the city's proposed policy.

Inside the house, four testimonies play softly on a loop through a small custom-made speaker, adomed in water-jet cutouts of small houses, and imitating those of traditional confessionals.

Sucec says her artwork has shifted away from the personal and into the public realm over the years: "I want to use my art as a vehicle to talk about issues directly within the community," she says.

Sucec's piece may be just one of the gallery's many temporary installations, but the impact is far-reaching. Perhaps of most significance is what Sucec refers to as the "second life" of her project, which will ensue when the memorial tags are placed discreetly at each death site. It will then be possible to locate each site on a map and properly recognize and honor those who have lived and died on shared streets.

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Note to our readers: The Obituary list we normally run was unavailable for this issue. Any names will be carried over to our next issue.
- HW ED

Can Ya Spare Some Change?

Hey, can ya spare some change,
To help me rearrange,
This hunger inside of me?
I need a drink, a smoke,
Something to help me cope,
With the rest of society.

We called him Gremlin,
His beard and hair was red.
He'd help you make it,
See to it that you got fed.
Get you a shower,
Lead you to the good camps.
Saw you as family,
Instead of worthless street tramps.
He was good hearted,
And fair to one and all.
Now he's departed,
For his friend he took the fall.

In blogs they're raging,
Over who's to blame.
With words engaging,
Making it all just so insane.
When all that matters,
Is a good man had to die,
All dressed in tatters,
Instead of suit and tie.
He was our brother,
Cared about each one of us,
Was like no other,
Didn't complain or even fuss.
He loved his rver,
And the dog that he called Boy.
He was a giver,
Helping was Gremlin's greatest joy.

Now it's our duty,
To carry Gremlin's code.
Of finding beauty,
Along life's homeless road.
Help out each other,
Let no one be left behind.
Sisters and brothers,
To one and all be kind.
It's Gremlin's story,
That can be passed along,
Tell of his glory,
As you sing the Gremlin's song.
We can't forget him,
Or let his goodness die.
Help and protect them,
Each homeless gal and guy.

by Tommy

In Memory of Michael "Gremlin" Tinius

Gremlin, a friend to so many people that call outdoors their home in Sacramento, died April 30, 2008 in a senseless act of violence. Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee members knew him throughout the years as a civil rights hero. When he got a ticket for camping he would not surrender to a verdict of community service. He always insisted on a jury trial, directing his attorney on how to protect his constitutional rights to sleep outdoors. He did win a jury trial about "camping", a very rare accomplishment nationwide.

He has been more than a civil rights hero to many that spoke recently at his memorial at Loaves & Fishes. He would help people out on the streets, would share provisions, knowledge and his genuine friendship. He died as a hero, in that he was stabbed while trying to protect another homeless person. He was 47 years old.

This picture is of Gremlin and his long-time camp buddy Boo-Boy.



Photo courtesy Susanna Curry, Sacramento Ending Chronic Homeless Initiative