



NCAB Newsletter

Vol. 2 Issue 1

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NCAB is the National Consumer Advisory Board, an organization of persons who are now or have been homeless. NCAB elects its own leadership, participates in the consensus decision-making of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, and works to increase the consumer role at every level of health care and to improve access to health care for everyone.

NCAB Membership is free – see how to join at the end of this newsletter.

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Homeless Person's Memorial Day Accounts from Across the Nation

The National Consumer Advisory Board works with other components of the National HCH Council and with the National Coalition for the Homeless to co-sponsor the Homeless Persons' Memorial Day events that take place in about 100 cities on or about December 21 each year. The following reports from three cities illustrate some of what happened. NCAB encourages consumers to take leadership in planning Memorial Day events for 2009.

Eugene, Oregon by Marianne Mallott, NCAB Executive Committee member

His name was Dean and he and I met under unusual conditions for some and typical for others. I am parked in an alley. Next to the alley was a newspaper collection box. One morning a man arose from that box as I was leaving for school. We were neighbors as the homeless lifestyle perceives. At night I did my homework with a flashlight hanging from my sun visor. I was writing essays for school. He would stand next to my truck, helping me with my homework by me reading my essays to him for critique. Someone gave him an old broken down Station Wagon to sleep in. I didn't see him every day but would run into him at the bus station about twice a week. He told me that he was applying for SSI. In October, 2007, I didn't see him anymore. I thought maybe he got a place off of the street. I was so hopeful for him. Each one of us, who are homeless, that get off of the streets are considered a victory.

December 21, 2007, we had the National Homeless Person's Memorial Night. I called out a name of a known homeless person as a candle was lit and the bell was tolled. As they went around the circle of people I heard Dean's name called. I then knew where he was. His struggle was over. He was a Viet Nam vet and a father of two daughters.

Eugene, OR joined with more than 100 other cities across the country in the National Homeless Person's Memorial. During the candlelight vigil, there were several local agencies reading names and tolling the bell at the First Christian Church in downtown Eugene. Thirty two names were called and the bell rang 33 times. One extra for the unknown. This is done in memory of those people who will not be forgotten.

San Antonio, Texas by Nancy Martinez, San Antonio *Express-News*, December 20, 2007

Robert Witham keeps his sweetheart's driver's license in his pocket. It's all he has to remember his "Mama Bear". Becky Sue Taylor, 44, died March 31 of a stroke after she didn't get medical treatment. Witham doesn't want her to be forgotten.

This year, she won't be.

For the first time, San Antonio will join more than 100 cities across the country in the National Homeless Person's Memorial Day, joining a national tradition that began in 1990 on the first day of Winter- the longest night of the year.

Tonight during a candlelight vigil, a local coalition will toll a bell and read the names of Taylor and 13 others who the coalition believes were homeless when they died in San Antonio this year.

“They were real people, with real lives. They were mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, friends, and spouses,” said the Rev. Becky Hamann, manager of spiritual services for SAM Ministries. “The pain of losing someone is the same for all of us, whether we have homes or not, whether we lived in poverty or wealth.”

Taylor took her last breath at 9:05 a.m. Witham said. The couple met at a homeless shelter in Fort Worth 13 years ago and then made San Antonio’s motels and shelters their home. Witham, 49, proudly talks about how sweet Taylor was. “We might not have been rich in money, but we were rich in many other ways,” said Witham, who is still homeless.

Although the names of 14 dead will be read today, no one knows how accurate that count is. No local agency tracks such information. “It is difficult to know how many people actually died while homeless,” Hamann said. “We attempted to collect as many names as possible as a way of treating each person with dignity and respect, even after death. We would like to use their names as a way of saying they are more than a statistic or ‘the homeless’.”

According to the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, the average age of death of homeless persons is about 50, compared with 78 for other Americans. Living on the streets without health care is a big reason for that. “You have to know where you’re at,” Witham said. “A lot of people take advantage of you. There are drugs and violence; they don’t fight like they did in the good old days- fisticuffs,” he said. “Now there are knives, guns, anything they can get, and they don’t fight alone.”

Grace Lutheran Church Pastor Curt Pedder said remembering the homeless dead is a worthwhile cause. “The homeless are a part of our society and our culture; if we are truly ‘celebrating diversity’ as the (politically correct) folks who would have us do, then we have no choice but to include those who are so often forgotten and marginalized” Pedder says.

In 2006, 2,222 people across the country were identified as homeless when they died, according to national advocates.

Portland, Oregon, , NCAB Executive Committee member

This year in Portland the crew was able to gather about 30 names and the people that came numbered about 35, so that may have been 55-60. Everyone’s names went into the fire on pieces of paper. Two Bears said that the most touching moment was when everyone had a birthday candle and all stood in a circle with each one lit and said a prayer.

Two Bears was in charge of the committee and everyone said she did a wonderful job. It all ran smoothly and I for one am very grateful that she was willing to do it. They had a few speakers and there was one youth in particular that spoke up and had a lot to say. What he said was right on and everyone listened to what he had to say.

Hope for the Homeless

By Reginald O. Hamilton, NCAB Executive Committee member

In the spring birds gather twigs to build nests for their young,
Wild animals locate caves, coves, ravines, cloisters for their young
Domestic animals choose to be fed and sheltered by humans,
Domestic animals live in apartments, condominiums, hotels and houses paid by humans.
All of God's creatures and animals need to receive care and shelter,
All of God's creatures are motivated for survival, by instinct or intelligence,
Survival is healthy, survival is sheltered,
God provides health care for all, God provides shelter for all.
God provides us with the doctor's office, clinic, health center, research, and hospitals to bring us health care,
God provides us with land, water, architects, builders, contractors, developers, and investors to bring us housing.
All for one; one for all.
We are all one with God, our Higher Power,
To provide care and shelter for all maintains our equilibrium,
All for one, one for all, is harmonious,
Our thoughts are focused on the good for all,
Our thoughts and feelings are in sync with the universe.
Where there is a happy human, there is hope.
Where there is hope, there is courage to do what is right.
Where there is courage, we provide health care and shelter for all.
Where we help another, we help ourselves.

Reginald Hamilton lives in Detroit, Michigan. He writes poetry and likes to take photographs.

Black Sheep

By Joy Bright McCorkle

Once we find their real names, the calls to relatives are made.
But often times informed they don't care where we're laid.
They don't want our animals, possessions or truck,
So, the city; with all our possessions are stuck.
All "black sheep" of the family, they seem relieved we're finally gone.
No more calls from detox, jails or pens...
It seems our only family is other homeless friends.
It's the dirty, shaggy, homeless people who remember us with love.
Hopefully, our true worth will be judged by those above.
Like the tombstones of the Gold Rush, our epitaphs seem to say,
"Arrived from Nevada; died un-named the next day".

The Old Man at the Park

By Charles L. McClain

While walking through the park one day here in my home town, I happened upon this Old Man; who appeared to be down and out. He was sitting alone under a bridge; just staring at the ground and he never looked up or said a word as I continued to walk around.....

I stopped and walked up to the Old Man; sensing something was wrong I asked him “Sir, is everything okay?” “Are you hurt or lost?” As I spoke to him, I noticed that his beard was long and a dirty grey and the clothes he wore were tattered and torn. His eyes held much dismay.

I said “Looks like a bad scrape on your arm, how did it get that way?” He lifted his head and softly spoke “Ahhh... guess it will be okay”. “I was up by the store earlier today; asking for some change, when a man pushed me to the ground; yelling, “Get the hell out of my way!”

In shock, I thought, how could someone treat this Old Man that way? With a tear in my eye and a lump in my throat, I listened as he went on to say “He called me a dirty old bum and said I should go get a job that pays.” “I just wish people would understand that I didn’t choose to live this way.”

I stood there completely dumbfounded, as his words tugged at my heart and I wondered how many others there are, like this Old Man at the park. How many similar stories like his, that most of them never tell because no one bothers to ask them or wants to hear of their living hell...I asked him if there’s anything I could do to help ease his pain. He softly replied, “Naahh... I guess not, unless..... you could spare some change.” I reached down into my pocket and I checked it really good and, with sadness in my heart, I gave him all I could.

Remembering the Old Man’s story and thinking about what little I did, I wonder if there’s more I could have done and whatever happened to him. So, if this story rings familiar, or strikes a chord in your heart, please lend a helping hand to someone in need, or volunteer to do your part.

I never saw the Old Man around the park again. Not sure of whatever happened to him, or how he faired after that, but, with my words I pay homage and try to shed some light; a beacon of hope and knowledge above all, to bring cause to his plight.

National Consumer Advisory Board

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINATION FORM

Members of the National Consumer Advisory Board (NCAB) will elect the NCAB Executive Committee during the NCAB Membership meeting at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, June 11, during the National HCH Conference & Policy Symposium in Phoenix, Arizona.

This announcement invites nominations for all NCAB Executive Committee positions by May 12, 2008, including.

- Chairperson – two year term
- Co-Chair – one year term
- Co-chair – two year term
- Secretary – one year term
- Member at Large – one year term
- Member at Large – one year term
- Member at Large – two year term

To see this announcement and make a nomination on-line, please go to
<http://www.nhchc.org/NCABnominations2008.html>

Terms of office begin immediately after the election. The NCAB Operating Rules, available at www.nhchc.org/advisory.html describe the responsibilities of these positions and the process of the election.

Nominees must be currently or formerly homeless persons who are actively involved on a CAB or Board of Directors. They should be members of NCAB, and may join now simply by signing up at www.nhchc.org/ncab_join.html

Any member of NCAB, local Consumer Advisory Board, or representative of a homeless health care project (including Medical Respite Care programs) may nominate someone. Self-nominations are welcome.

Nominations should be made on line at <http://www.nhchc.org/NCABnominations2008.html>. They may also be made by printing out, completing and sending the form below **no later than May 12, 2008:**

- Mail: NCAB, PO Box 60427, Nashville TN 37206
- Fax: 615-226-1656, or
- e-mail: ncab@nhchc.org.

NCAB EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINATION FORM

Name of Nominee:

Mailing address (if any):

City, State, Zip Code:

Telephone (if any):

e-mail (if any):

Position sought (check one or more)

- ☐ Chairperson – two year term
- ☐ Co-Chair – one year term
- ☐ Co-chair – two year term
- ☐ Secretary – one year term
- ☐ Member at Large – one year term
- ☐ Member at Large – one year term
- ☐ Member at Large – two year term

This nominee (check all that apply)

- ☐ Is currently homeless
- ☐ Is formerly homeless
- ☐ Has used Health Care for the Homeless services
- ☐ Is a member of NCAB
- ☐ Is a member of a Consumer Advisory Board for (Name of Agency): _____
- ☐ Is a member of the Board of Directors for (Name of Agency): _____

Statement by Nominee

Please provide a few sentences written by the nominee, describing his or her experience as a consumer, including involvements with agency decision-making or governance:

Nominator Information

Name:

Position:

Agency:

Address (if any):

City/State/Zip:

Telephone (if any):

E-mail (if any):

Thank you for your interest in the National Consumer Advisory Board.

Send Us Your Stories

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

Join NCAB

Free membership in the National Consumer Advisory Board is available to anyone who has experienced homelessness and has received services from an HCH project. To join NCAB, please go to http://www.nhchc.org/ncab_join.html to sign up on-line OR send an email to ncab@nhchc.org or a letter to NCAB, PO Box 60427, Nashville TN 37206-0427 with the following information:

Name

Mailing Address (if any)

Telephone (if any)

E-mail address (if any)

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