



NCAB Newsletter

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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 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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Highlights from the National HCH Conference

Phoenix, Arizona

The 2008 National Health Care for the Homeless Conference and Policy Symposium, themed *Striving for Inclusion: Health Care, Housing and Rights for All*, was held in Phoenix, Arizona in June. This year's conference was one of historic proportions for the National Council and NCAB. For the first time, the conference was planned and organized by the Council and NCAB was involved in the planning process. Consumer attendance at the conference was a record high number of 52 HCH consumers from all over the country. To welcome new members, the National Council and NCAB organized a Consumer Dinner. The dinner provided NCAB members and new consumers the opportunity to meet new people, rekindle old friendships, and network. NCAB received very positive feedback about the dinner and hopes to continue to organize an annual welcome event as a way to greet new consumers.



In efforts to support, *inclusion*, many NCAB members were asked to help at the conference in various capacities. Members filled roles such as moderators at conference workshops, workshops speakers, facilitators for panel discussions, and helped at the registration table and resource room. In addition to helping with conference logistics, several consumers displayed their artwork in the conference resource room.



Ellen Dailey Consumer Advocate Award

One of the highlights of the conference is the presentation of the *Ellen Dailey Consumer Advocate Award*. This distinguished award is presented each year to consumers who exhibit exceptional advocacy work to improve access to health care and housing for people experiencing homelessness. The award honors the late Ellen Daily who lived on the streets and became a remarkable advocate at the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, and who was the founder of NCAB. Read more about Ellen Daily at <http://www.nhchc.org/EllenDailey/EllenDaileyInMemoriam.pdf>

During the conference, NCAB honored two exemplary individuals who have experienced homelessness and have gone on to help other homeless people access health care and supportive services. The two consumers who received this award this year were Gary Cobb of Portland, Oregon and Randle Loeb of Denver, Colorado.



Gary Cobb



Randle Loeb

Please watch for information about nominations for the 2009 Ellen Dailey Consumer Advocate Award, to be presented at the National HCH Conference in Washington, DC.

NCAB Business Meeting

The NCAB business meeting was held during the HCH Conference in June and attracted a record-breaking attendance of 52 consumers. During this meeting, the membership elected new officers for the position of chair, co-chairs, and secretary. NCAB thanked the outgoing chair, Sarah Davidson, for her steadfast leadership and service to the organization over the past two years and elected new officers by a consensus vote. New officers are as follows:

Chair: Amy Grassetto, Worcester, Massachusetts
Co-Chair: Carol Hall, Portland, Oregon
Co-Chair: Reginald Hamilton, Detroit, Michigan
Secretary: Antoinetta Stadalman, San Francisco, California
Member at Large: Marianne Mallot, Eugene, Oregon
Member at Large: Ulysses Maner, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida
Member at Large: Joseph Benson, Houston, Texas

During the business meeting, Dr. Stephan Kertesz provided a presentation on an upcoming research project he plans to conduct on *Relevant Measures of Primary Care for Homeless People*. NCAB made the decision to endorse Dr. Kertesz's work and offered to provide him any support needed to complete his research.

Attention All Advocates

National Homeless and Low-Income Voter Registration Week September 21-27

The right to vote is fundamental in the United States. Participation in our democracy enables the ordinary American to influence important social change and policy in their local communities and at the national level. Despite substantial progress toward equal voting rights for all Americans, many voters – and particularly people experiencing homelessness – remain disenfranchised. More than 3.5 million people experience homelessness each year, approximately 63 to 75 percent of whom are of voting age. NCAB encourages consumers to promote the voting rights of people experiencing homelessness by organizing voter registration drives during National Homeless and Low-Income Voter Registration Week.

TAKE ACTION:

- **Organize your own Election Center at your clinic during the week of September 21-27.** This effort has been endorsed by the National Consumer Advisory Board, and we strongly encourage local Consumer Advisory Boards to assume a leadership role in organizing voter registration drives. Voter registration drives are an excellent way to engage HCH clients in advocacy and educate them about issues related to homelessness. Find an updated version of the National Council's voter registration guide, *Enfranchising Homeless Clients: a Resource Guide to Voter Registration for Health Care for the Homeless Projects*, at www.nhchc.org.
- **To learn more about voting requirements and procedures**, read the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty voting rights report, *Voter Registration and Voting: Ensuring the Voting Rights of Homeless Persons*, available at http://www.nlchp.org/content/pubs/2008_Voting_Report_final2.pdf
- **For more information** contact the Council's Health Policy Organizer, Adrienne Breidenstine, at abreidenstine@hchmd.org or 443-703-1337.

Upcoming Events

HCH Region 1 Panning Conference Hartford, CT

The Region 1 Conference is scheduled for November 13 and 14 in Hartford, Connecticut. The conference will be hosted at the Marriot Hotel in Hartford, CT. Please watch the Counbcil's website www.nhchc.org for more information.

NCAB encourages consumers from HCH Projects in the New England area to participate and to share the information with their local CAB's. It's a great opportunity for consumers to meet other consumers involved nationally and locally in their communities.

Contributions

Inclusion: The View from Our World

by Marion Walls

"Inclusion is not you coming into my world, but us creating a world together"-C. Rennebohm

The 2008 National Health Care for the Homeless Conference, *Striving for Inclusion*, was my third conference as a consumer with NCAB, and the excitement of being back among my friends and peers began within minutes of checking into the hotel; when Amy Grassetto; (our illustrious chairperson), came up behind me with a bear hug and urged me to join other NCAB members in the Café. Without checking into my room, I entered the Café, luggage trailing behind me, and was greeted by Ulysses and Sarah, was introduced to another Sarah, and before I knew it I was out on the patio engaged in energized discussion with Paul Boden. The stage was set!

My normal behavior at the conference includes "networking with the smokers" between workshops. In the process, I meet people from around the country, who tell me what's going on in their "neck of the woods". This year was no different, except that I also met people who were still living on the streets in Phoenix. They shared their experiences of homelessness with me, including the resources that were available to them, the places they could get fed (St. Mary's Church), where they congregated to stay out of the heat (the public library), and how much of a circuit they travel in the Southwest—including Albuquerque, New Mexico where I was told that services are not as spread out as they are in Phoenix, and therefore easier to access.

Because the array of workshops is so plentiful, it is always difficult for me to choose which ones to attend, so I start by looking at the names of the presenters that I have been inspired by in past conferences; including Paul Boden from the Western Regional Advocacy Project and Jim O'Connell from the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program. On Friday, the choice was still difficult, as Paul and Jim were both presenting at the same hour in separate rooms (I also

learned from past conferences to take a break from all of the workshops to rejuvenate, as the amount of information is mind-boggling).

The most memorable workshops for me this year were, *It's Criminal: Contemporary Homelessness and the Erosion of Civil Rights*, *Integrating Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Physical Healthcare*, and the presentation by Phoenix's own Oasis in the Desert- Lodestar Day Resource Center, where one consumer and two administrators talked about the ten agencies housed within their program (including housing, employment, and mental health counseling services) as well as their operational history, challenges and successes. I am always quite inspired by the presence of a consumer on a presenting panel.

Which brings me to the fact that, after three years of attending HCH conferences, I have finally been inspired (initially more angered – but that too can be a motivating force) to prepare and present not just one, but two workshops for next year's conference in Washington, DC. My motivation was initiated by the unfortunate comment of one of the attendees; in which part of her caseload included "people with serious mental illness that should be in institutions where they belong."

Because I was diagnosed with manic-depression 30 years ago—and this mental health disorder was one of the underlying causes of my own homelessness—I took this comment quite personally and decided it was time to get involved beyond attending workshops and "networking with the smokers." My commitment to NCAB is to prepare a presentation on "Stigma and the Use of Language" as well as a panel presentation by consumers entitled "Walk a Mile in my Shoes." I already have a presenter for the first workshop and three consumers have expressed interest in presenting for the second one.

Finally, I need to say that I was both surprised and elated to see Craig Rennebohm, who I met at my first conference in Portland, OR, and from whom I ordered several copies of *The Gentle Bible* (which can now be downloaded from his website for free). This year I bought an autographed copy of his newest book *Souls in the Hands of a Tender God: Stories of the Search for Home and Healing on the Streets*. I was overjoyed to see that Craig was Friday morning's keynote speaker at the opening plenary session. Though he has not walked in our shoes as someone who has experienced homelessness personally, he has made it his mission to accompany us to "pay attention to the hint of hurt" and "share the horizon of possibility." He is an amazing inspiration to consumers and clinicians alike.

There is a phrase from the 1960's that says "Each One, Teach One." We have an opportunity here and now to be teachers of more than one by simply sharing our experience, strength, and hope with others. I look forward to seeing all of you next year in Washington, DC, and meeting others along the way.

P.S. My humble thanks to MCPN (Metro Community Provider Network) of Englewood, CO, for their sponsorship; which enables me to attend this conference every year.

Help If You Want It

by Charlotte A. Garner

Houston, Texas

There's help if you want it
If only we'll look
Sometimes it takes a beating from life
At least for me that's what it took

You see, I choose to do it the hard way
Yes, I tried to buck life
But the only thing that got me
Was an abundance of misery and strife

So finally I submitted
Battered and broken I came in
Never knew there were so many
With a helping hand to lend

So now I carry the message
Don't give up, just don't quit
I'm a witness you can make it through
There is help if you want it

Send Us Your Stories

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

Join NCAB

Free membership to 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/advisory.html#join> to sign up on online OR send to ncab@nhchc.org or to NCAB, PO Box 60427, Nashville TN 37206-0427 the following information:

Name

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