The School of Communication congratulates Mosaic Magazine

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives
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Letters from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 2009 edition of Mosaic, a student magazine dedicated to issues of social justice in Chicago. Mosaic is a product of Loyola University Chicago's School of Communication. In this issue, Loyola's journalism students take a closer look at homeless issues in Chicago and recognize that it is a complicated problem not easily fixed. But it is our hope that by exposing the problems of the homeless, it will spark a dialogue for positive change.

We believe the topic of homelessness is particularly timely, given the economic struggles facing every American. We look at every aspect of homelessness, including, the contributing factors, major issues, organizations and supportive services, and personal stories. You'll find insights into the lives of the homeless people in Chicago and experts who work with the homeless. We take a look at the bigger picture as well, focusing on homeless trends, and the plans to put an end to homelessness in Chicago.

Students were responsible for writing and editing all of the stories in Mosaic. They also designed the layout, sold advertisements, and promoted its publication. Making a magazine with students has been an interesting, new experience, and we hope you will enjoy this year’s Mosaic just as much as we enjoyed producing it.

Additionally, our Web site www.luc.edu/orgs/mosaic2009 offers more information on stories found in these pages, and a blog from our writers, as well. So let us know what you think. You can email our advisor, Professor John Slania, at jslania@luc.edu.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Jelenic
Stewart Wells, a homeless man in Rogers Park, occasionally sleeps under the Loyola Red Line El station with a few scraps of newspaper and extra clothing to beat the cold, windy Chicago nights.

Wells, 54, knows what a typical work day is like, having held jobs at Wal-Mart and at a local hat store. Now, he finds himself unable to find employment, possessing inadequate public assistance and having no place to live.

"Sometimes I have gotten on the El at night during the winter months to try and stay warm," Wells said. "Besides the cold weather, it's getting sick that's really an extra slap in the face."

Wells' situation mirrors that of a growing trend of an aging homeless population over 50 in Chicago. In the study, Homeless Over 50, The Graying of Chicago's Homeless Population, the Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness partnered with Loyola University Chicago's Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL). Both gathered information from Chicago homeless agencies that were experiencing a rapidly-growing older population seeking homeless services. As outlined in the study, Chicago homeless agencies Deborah's Place, Featherst and Matthew House were direct providers who specifically reported to the growing trend. A total of 55 Chicago homeless agencies were interviewed along with 1,324 homeless or near homeless individuals.

"I think the reasons outlined in the 'Homeless Over 50' report would resonate with the experience we have," said Audrey Thomas, executive director of Deborah's Place. "This is not necessarily a population growing in number, but one that's growing in age."

The specific reasons, according to Deborah's Place, include lack of education, skills, and the economy.

Deborah's Place has continued to serve primarily women since 1985 that are chronically or episodically homeless. According to Thomas, many homeless women, between the ages of 50 and 65 have difficulty finding employment as a result of their age.

"Women who are in their 50s experiencing homelessness for the first time are women who are financially hanging
on by a thread,” Thomas said. “When that thread is cut, they find themselves homeless.”

According to *Homeless Over 50*, 40 percent of the people interviewed have work histories, but face employment barriers because of a lack of educational knowledge, computer skills, physical strength or stamina.

Further evidence for an increasing older homeless population was reported by Chicago homeless shelter, Matthew House.

“The biggest factors we see contributing to problems are revolving around the current state of the economy,” said the Rev. Sanja Stinson, executive director of Matthew House. “Other reasons for homelessness can be from a lack of education, skills or substance abuse.”

*Homeless Over 50* reports that difficulty and complexity of mental health challenges appears to increase for those among the older population. Study subjects were found to have traces of dementia and situational depression as a result of disabilities and changed status.

Chronic health conditions were also found to plague older homeless individuals in the study.

“A few weeks ago, I had a problem where my hands swelled up really bad;” said Perry Harrigan, 55, a homeless man from Wicker Park. “I ended up having to take work off, and got fired because of it...doctor said I had Gout, which was from me eating some bad meat.”

*Homeless Over 50* reports poor nutrition and irregularity of meal schedules are factors that can contribute to health issues like diabetes and hypertension in homeless individuals. Quality and access to medication are also large concerns.

“I received some antibiotics from the doctor for my hands,” said Harrigan. “The medication helped a little bit, but not as much as I thought it would.”

Loyola University Chicago’s CURL found during individual interviews the homeless population is overall acquiring greater needs over time, but offered fewer resources by providers. *Homeless Over 50* found there were no federal benefit plans for individuals who were long-term unemployed. Only those who are 65 and older are eligible for Social Security.

“The Chicago Alliance brought it to our attention these certain homeless providers were noticing this particular growing trend,” said Dennis Watson, CURL community research coordinator. “We used different methods of gathering our information and triangulated the results.”

Information collection also came from the Illinois Regional Roundtable 2001 Archival Data Survey of Homeless Individuals, focus groups, life histories and administrative data.

“In *Homeless Over 50*, our major concern was getting all different points a view for the study,” Watson said. “People think stereotypes of homeless people. We wanted to break those stereotypes and provide people with the factual reasons for why the homeless are on the streets.”

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**Clients Aged 50+ as a Percentage of All Clients Reported by Agencies 2001-2006**

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*Source: Homeless Over 50: The Graying of Chicago’s Homeless Population*
Works of Art
Street Artist Uses Art To Tell Story Of The Homeless

by Maria Randazzo

"He is not your average person, there is something unusual and special about him," Gooch said.

Matthew, 50, has been homeless for 15 years. In his hometown of Boston, he was fired from his occupation as a truck driver when he spoke out against overworked employees. He was then trapped in a downward spiral where he juggled jobs, struggled with rent and was evicted from his apartment.

Matthew's proposition was rooted in the Christian ideology that humans are masterpieces created by God. Gooch could not refute that. Each night for a month, alongside his sketches, sculptures and paintings, Matthew slept in the balcony of Plymouth Congregation Church.

"What about me? I am a work of art too, along with everyone else."

- Matthew

However, being homeless is only one layer of Matthew's multifaceted character. He is an artist, a Christian and an activist. Six feet tall, Matthew embodies the image and spirit of a gentle giant. His curly hair compliments his boyish charm, but he is aged by its soft, gray color. His kind, soothing voice exudes patience. He speaks slowly and contemplatively, as if always grappling for a greater solution.

Matthew recalled his early homeless experiences in horrific shelters that housed the mentally ill, drug addicts, alcoholics, and criminals. He was disgusted by shelters' conditions and the apathetic volunteers. "They were run with a prison mentality, like a mental hospital," Matthew said.

In his desperate times, Matthew found similarities between his plight and the life of Jesus. Matthew stated that Jesus himself was essentially homeless, "an itinerate preacher."

"As an adult who is experiencing all of these awful things for the first
time in your life, you start to wonder where all of this fits in, where your faith and your homelessness fit together, but the more you read the gospel story of Jesus, the more you realize that it's a story about a homeless man," Matthew said.

In September of 2007, inspired by his new perspective of Jesus' work, Matthew launched a national speaking tour. His mission is to keep churches open 24 hours every day for those who need refuge. On his first tour, Matthew spoke in 15 different cities and universities including Harvard University, Dartmouth College, MIT and Loyola University Chicago.

Edward Vogel, 23, who works for a nonprofit financial sector, allowed Matthew to stay with him for a month as Matthew presented in Chicago.

"With his speaking tour, Matthew probably has the means available to him to get back on his feet, but because he believes so strongly in his cause, he forgoes that route to remain true to his message and fight for it. I think it's extremely noble," Vogel said.

On September 14, 2008, Matthew commenced his second tour and recently has returned to Plymouth Congregational. Since his last speech there, a space called "The Christ's Room" has been reserved for the homeless. Maintained by parishioners, it is always open.

Gooch identified Matthew as an integral part of "the fabric" of the church. "We are very grateful for Matthew, we think of him as a prophetic voice in our community, he speaks words that we need to hear," Gooch said.

Matthew incorporates in his presentations his handcrafted mosaics and paintings. One of his mosaics is a landscape of an illuminated church with a shepherd standing in the foreground. A quote inspired by the gospel of Luke is scrawled across the bottom. It reads, "Bringing the homeless home." A message once preached by Jesus Christ and now furthered by Matthew.
The Journalism Program congratulates Mosaic Magazine 2009

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In her fight to end homelessness, Julie Dworkin, policy director at the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, is following a tradition of social justice set by her family.

Dworkin’s grandfather, Leo Shapiro, was part of the movement to form the American Federation of Teachers, and her mother, Joan Dworkin, helped start a tenant’s right group in Evanston. They are just a few examples of people who have a long list of accomplishments in Dworkin’s family.

“My family was very social-justice oriented,” said Dworkin. “They were activists, so I sort of had that lent to me from my family.”

Born in Cambridge, Mass., Dworkin, 38, moved to Evanston at the age of five after her father received a job offer to teach at the University of Illinois-Chicago as a philosophy professor. Dworkin graduated from Vassar College in 1993 with a degree in sociology and then traveled back to Chicago.

After just moving to Chicago, Dworkin’s first job involved working at a transitional housing program for homeless families. There, Dworkin assisted families who lived under subsidized rent until they could build enough income to afford market rent.

“I just saw these families really struggling, and no matter how hard they tried, they couldn’t make ends meet,” Dworkin said. “Some of them would get a job and they would be worse off than when they were on public assistance.” According to Dworkin, costs from transportation, clothing and childcare caused them to end up with less money than before.

“Others would go to school and get a job that paid much better than minimum wage,” Dworkin said. “However, even by doing this they still could not put all the pieces together and afford even subsidized rent.”

Three years later, Dworkin began volunteering for Chicago Coalition for the Homeless in September 1995 and was hired six months later. While there, she has fought to end homelessness and help people with housing rights.

“She’s been here as long as anyone, and maybe the longest serving staff here,” said Ethne McMenamin, senior policy analyst at Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

One of Dworkin’s biggest accomplishments at the Coalition involved providing shelters to minors. In the past, shelters that took in minors could be charged with “harboring a runaway.” With the help of Dworkin and the Coalition, they were able to get the first law passed in Illinois which allowed people to provide homeless shelters to youth.

“When you’re dealing with minors, there has to be certain protections in place,” Dworkin said. Dworkin still continues to fight homelessness and lead the Coalition today.

“I think she’s the best policy person in Chicago,” said Jim Field, director of organizing at the Coalition. “She’s really excellent.”
Green For A Good Cause

Building Environmentally Friendly Affordable Houses

by Nizam Alavi

Going green is more than a way to protect the environment. To Mercy Housing Lakefront and Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago, it is a way to provide affordable housing.

"We're not being green because it's a fashionable thing to do, we're being green to lower the cost of the building," said Lisa Kuklinski, regional director for new markets and public affairs at Mercy Housing Lakefront.

Organizations that build housing aimed for the homeless are following a growing trend of adding green sustainability features to save money.

Mercy Housing Lakefront has developed 1,536 units of supportive housing for adults and families who are formerly homeless or economically poor. It offers apartments at income-based rent, which allows its Miriam Apartments to lease for as low as $50 a month.

"We build studio apartment buildings from the ground up," Kuklinski said. "We believe we are ending homelessness by creating supportive housing."

Bryan Esenberg, NeighborHomes manager of the Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago, rehabilitates uninhabitable homes using green ideas and sells them to those who need affordable housing in the Chicago area. To him, it's the most environmental effort any real estate developer can do.

"I take the worst of the worst and make it into affordable housing," Esenberg said. "I literally call it dogs to diamonds."

The rehab begins by recycling as much of the house as possible, and then adding in the green ideas. Instead of using fiberglass insulation for example, Bryan puts in blown-in insulation that's taken from recycled cotton.

Using shading on windows to reflect heat, lighter building material and shaping walls to handle wind pressure can also make an enormous impact on a building's energy use.

"A lot of it is common sense," said Louis Pounders, an associate of the American Institute of Architects and a Memphis architect. "Research has been done in the last 30 years that seems to indicate that a large portion of energy demands in environmental issues are generated by buildings... but now you're beginning to see it more and more."

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, buildings account for 39 percent of total energy use, 12 percent of total water consumption, 68 percent of total electricity consumption and 38 percent of carbon dioxide emissions in the United States.

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program from the U.S. Green Building Council is the leading certification program for green buildings in the United States. Buildings certified with its LEED program are 30 to 50 percent more energy efficient.

"Increasingly, LEED status is a requirement by City ordinance," Esenberg said. "LEED certifies the project is actually green according to their standards. No one authenticates a builder's specs, so what they say may not be what is actually built."

Salt Lake City, for example, re-
quires all city-financed buildings to be certified by LEED. In Illinois, The Capital Development Board is considering requiring LEED certification on public projects.

Mercy Lakefront Housing intends to apply for LEED certificates for all new buildings on the design table. Its latest building, the Schiff Residences on 1244 N. Clybourn, received a silver rating from LEED.

But following LEED creates financial issues because it costs extra money to earn certification and follow all the guidelines.

A report released by Northbridge Environmental Management Consultants states that soft costs of obtaining LEED certification adds 1.5 to 3.1 percent to a building’s total. Natural Logic, an environmental consulting and design firm, estimates it could cost $15,000 to $30,000 per project.

Esenberg says that in a recent project, standard construction would have cost him $140,000 to rebuild a home. Adding sustainability and green features raised it to $170,000.

To offset costs, Mercy Housing Lakefront and Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago receive grants and funding from the City of Chicago.

Esenberg uses the Chicago Rehab Initiative Program or Asset Control Area 2 which gives him properties classified as revitalization areas at a discount, usually 15 to 50 percent cheaper than market rate. Both of these are sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Other subsidies he uses include the City of Chicago’s Troubled Buildings Initiative 2 program. It is an amount up to $40,000 for a single family home that allows him to sell a house to lower-income families.

Esenberg says his houses sell for as low as $109,000 because of city subsidies. And the added benefit of going green is that it pays for itself.

Features such as wind turbines and solar panels on the Schiff Residences allow Mercy Housing Lakefront to save $18,000 a year on energy costs. They will pay for themselves after 16 to 18 years.

Green housing also benefits typical homeowners who are looking for a return on investment. Esenberg says a green house means as much as $1,600 saved per year, for a savings of as much as $48,000 over the course of a 30-year mortgage.

But to these organizations, the savings are for a higher cause.

"It costs less operating the building," Kuikinski said. "So we can pass the savings onto homeless people."
Serving A Second Chance
Cafe Offers Former Prisoners Jobs...And Hope

by Kamil Zawadzki

Looking through the glass into Blue Sky Inn Bakery & Café, passersby might not think of it as anything more than a small business in Chicago's Albany Park neighborhood. With tables and chairs set up in between the entrance and the counter with a cash register, it might just seem like a generic family-owned bakery. Beyond the counter, however, there is a different story. The skeletal staff of three defines why this bakery-café is so unique: they are youths who have been homeless and, often, spent time in prison.

Caseworkers refer troubled youths between the ages of 14 and 24 to Blue Sky Inn to be accepted and vetted by founder and Executive Director Lisa Thompson, 35. The organization's employment program began in June 2007; the following April saw the café's grand opening, to be staffed by these youths.

"They want to get their dignity back," Thompson said. "They would rather work for $8 an hour and have their self-respect than stand on the corner."

Whether her employees have permanent housing or not, Thompson leaves that issue to their discretion, drawing a sometimes-blurry line between teaching them jobs skills as their boss and assisting them outside the café.

"It's hard, I care about all of them," she said. "I do want to help them to an extent, but I'm also making sure to refer them to services that they need."

Community partners such as the Broadway Youth Center and Teen Living Program provide shelter for homeless youth; the Center on Halsted can also offer them comprehensive computer training.

Thompson considers those youth who stay for 12 weeks to be the café's success stories. She said some choose to stay longer, but admits that some quit within a week. She believes that drop-outs simply are unprepared for the switch to a real wage job as opposed to getting quick and easy money on the street.

Thompson is confident that basic work protocols, such as being on time, are important skills the café employees will learn. Her only permanent employee, Assistant Program Manager Jessica Johnson, 23, agreed with the assessment and provides her own experience in seeking employment in bakeries around Chicago to give more real-life credence to the purposes of Blue Sky Inn.

"Bakeries often look for experience and this gives them a great starting point," Johnson said.

Despite working only part-time at the café and having another job at a Rogers Park restaurant, Johnson said she likes Blue Sky Inn Bakery & Café better and would like to be there more often.

"There is more meaning here for me," she said. "There's nothing like it. It offers a new model on how to treat homelessness and the homeless community."

Thompson said the bulk of Blue Sky Inn's $20,000 revenue this year is due primarily to catering events, followed by weekend farmers markets, with in-store retail bringing in a smaller percentage of money. She said the organization expected
to exceed initial projections of $25,000 by another $5,000. This money will be used to fund eXpressions, Blue Sky Inn’s art program as well as provide salaries for the youths working at the café.

Timothy Reliford, 24, had been working at the café for two months “on-and-off,” after leaving a penitentiary and rehab program and moving into his own apartment near Albany Park. Reliford said he had other, higher-paying job offers but turned them down to come to Blue Sky Inn with his own grand vision.

“I would love for this to rise up to be as popular and great as Starbucks,” he said. “I want to bring more people in, and do more for the people that come here to keep them happy.”

Reliford is enrolled at Harold Washington College and is currently majoring in acting. He also hopes to learn more about criminal law.

Blue Sky Inn hopes to place its charges in long-term job positions, and reach out to other companies to encourage them to consider the program participants. Yet Thompson admitted that homeless youths are the hardest population to employ. Many contacts that have expressed interest backed off after learning about the youths’ criminal records.

“We have to give them more opportunities to succeed so that they can feel like they’re not a total lost cause,” Thompson said. “These youths deserve another chance.”

Frothy mochas are just one of the espresso drinks Jessica Johnson and her co-workers make at Blue Sky Inn Bakery and Cafe.

Blue Sky Inn sells its pastries in-house and provides catering services in addition to showcasing customer favorites at fundraising events.
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6525 N. Sheridan Rd. Chicago
Community Kitchen Serves Up Nutrition

by Stephanie Jelenic

In a vibrant and vivid cafeteria on North Paulina Street in Chicago, homeless and less fortunate people sit and eat their daily dinner. The sound of laughter and loud conversation gives substance to the happiness and friendships within the cafeteria. The aroma of freshly prepared meals fills the air, and the originally designed artwork on the walls brings a home-like feeling into the crowded room.

Good News Community Kitchen was founded by The Good News Community Church in 1983. This year celebrates its 25th anniversary. The church also rents out the space to the kitchen. "In the year 2000, Good News became a non-profit community-based organization," said the Rev. Marilyn Pagan-Banks, executive director of Good News Community Kitchen and ordained minister.

Located in Rogers Park, many come to the kitchen from other Chicago neighborhoods and suburbs. The Kitchen will feed anyone in need of a hot and nutritious meal. "It goes without saying that the food is both delicious and nutritious. Eating at the Kitchen is easy on the pocketbook. Moreover, I enjoy the friendly, free and easy atmosphere," said Gerald E. Edison, who eats at the kitchen. Aside from the homeless, Pagan-Banks said "we have senior citizens who are on disability, employed folks, unemployed folks, and we have families who come and eat at the kitchen. The perception that a soup kitchen is only for the homeless is inaccurate."

Along with dinner, Good News provides nutritious after school snacks for children and free hot lunches for children during winter and spring school breaks. Good News also hosts the City of Chicago's summer lunch program, which provides daily hot and nourishing lunch to children during their summer break from school. In addition, Good News provides training programs for adults, creative group activities such as yoga and discussions on moral issues, and a television in the cafeteria to watch during dinner to keep the homeless updated on current events and news.

Good News is more than just a soup kitchen. "This is not just a kitchen, this is a community place. It is a place where folks can come and feel like they belong," Pagan-Banks said. Good News is a familiar place for many people: "My daughter Maya and I come to eat in the Kitchen five days a week. It helps make ends meet and we like the people and the food," said Marcia Valdovinos, who also eats at the kitchen.

Good News receives its food and funding from foundations, community and individual donations, congregations and fundraisers. The kitchen is open every day, including holidays. The doors open at 4:30 p.m., and dinner is served from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. In the past six years, it has only been closed one day due to a gas leak.

As dinner comes to an end, the rack of pots and pans echo throughout the building. Several families and individuals often stay after they are finished eating to help clean up the cafeteria as a “thank you” for their meals. The smiling faces of the kitchen staff and volunteers as they clean bring a sense of comfort and joy to the kitchen.

Everyone at Good News works as a team and enjoys it. "The Kitchen is a great place to work. I enjoy being a part of such a wonderful organization," said Good News' head cook Rosario Valdovinos.

The ultimate goal and motto of Good News is, "Until all have plenty and no one is left in need."
Feeding The Hungry
Philoptochos Society Chicago District & Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral In Chicago Serve The Needy
by Anthe Mitrakos

Volunteers serve coffee and soft drinks to the needy during a Feed the Hungry event at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Chicago.

Waiting patiently in line outside Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral Chicago, the needy anticipate a much appreciated warm lunch. For the past 20 years, the Ladies of Philoptochos Society Chicago District have served the homeless through their "Feed the Hungry" program.

Established in 1902 at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox in New York as a philanthropic agency by a handful of ambitious women, Ladies of Philoptochos Society's national membership has grown to more than 30,000. Established in 1909, the Chicago District Philoptochos Society was head-quartered at the famous Hull House run by Jane Addams, who has been described as a fervent philhellene, a friend to the Greek people. Comprised of 73 chapters representing Greek Orthodox churches in the Midwest, the Ladies of Philoptochos Society Chicago District conducts various charitable events to aid the poor, destitute, homeless, sick, and grief stricken.

On a typical first and last Tuesday of each month, 160 people form a line outside Annunciation Cathedral to receive a ticket number. Once inside, they are called up by groups to receive a full hot meal including drinks, fruit, and dessert. The ticket system allows for more organization and ensures everyone is served, after which, seconds are offered. The event attracts homeless and individuals living in low-income or subsidized housing across from 1017 N. LaSalle St., where Annunciation is located.

"Every Sunday we have free coffee and cake and there is always bread left over after church, so when the homeless are hungry they know to come here," said Katerina Salapatas, a teacher at New Trier High School, in Wilmette, and a member of Annunciation Cathedral.
About 22 Philoptochos chapters belonging to various Greek Orthodox churches take turns donating food and volunteering at Annunciation Cathedral which hosts the “Feed the Hungry” program. Irene Panagopoulos, president of the Philoptochos Society Annunciation chapter said the hungry are served by about 40 volunteers, including prominent members of Greek-American society.

“It used to be only senior citizens and people on food stamps who would come to ‘Feed the Hungry’, but last year, we had families, mothers, fathers, and children for the first time,” said Tammy Metropoulos, a pediatrician and president of the Philoptochos Society St. George Chicago chapter. “It feels like someone is there for them.”

Recounting her daughters’ Tia, 23, and Irene, 25, reactions after they first served during a Thanksgiving event last year, Metropoulos said, “They came home, started crying, and said they didn’t know how bad things were out there. It’s sad to see how many people are needy. It makes you appreciate what you have.”

With just 35 members, Philoptochos St. George Chicago chapter is one of the smallest existing chapters in the city, yet it plays a vital role in the “Feed the Hungry” program as it co-hosts the big Thanksgiving dinner with Annunciation and hosts the Christmas dinner during which volunteers pass out goody bags including scarves, hats, and gloves to guests.

The magnitude of Philoptochos Society’s aid reaches far beyond that of just serving Chicago homeless and needy through food distribution. In 2007, the National Philoptochos raised and donated almost $1.4 million to various institutions. Its philanthropic outreach in the past has extended to donations of $150,000 worth of children’s wheel chairs for a hospital in Zimbabwe and $100,000 to the Hurricane Katrina Fund. A recent gift of $50,000 was made to the University of Illinois Chicago in support of its oncology department. The grant covers the cost of the year’s salary for a social worker.

“The society is renowned for its support of the institutions of the Archdiocese and its commitment to the needy,” said Georgia Skiadas, president of the National Philoptochos New York district.

Working independently and together as a whole, charitable agencies in Chicago alone raise millions of dollars in hope of providing relief to the needy. Promoting charitable, benevolent, and philanthropic outreach for over a century, the Greek Ladies Philoptochos Society Chicago district does just that. The word “philoptochos” actually means “friend of the poor” in the Greek language.

“Jesus said help your brothers, if you feed them it’s like you are feeding me, if you clothe them it’s like clothing me. That’s what we are doing,” Metropoulos said, “It’s a fulfilling and addicting thing.”

Panera Bread and Starbucks coffee do not sound like the fare of a homeless person’s meal. But Jim Eder, coordinator of St. Thomas of Canterbury soup kitchen, jokes that such food donations allow the homeless of Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood to eat the very best.

With loyal donors and more than 40 community volunteers, the soup kitchen has operated for 30 years. Almost 320 people are served each night the parish basement is open.

Eder has been the coordinator for 28 years and prides himself in the church’s outreach and compassion.

“We are not here to slop food in front of homeless people so we feel better, but to offer hospitality,” Eder said. “We sit down with them, we talk to them.”

St. Thomas of Canterbury soup kitchen at 4827 N. Kenmore Ave. is open every Tuesday and Friday evening.
From Resumes to Retainers
Goldie's Place Offers An Array of Free Services

by Mariam Pera

Two women apprehensively enter a classroom, looking around at the empty chairs, unsure of where to sit. They whisper nervously to each other and sit in the very back of the room. Despite being in their mid-40s, Cynthia and Jackie are here to learn things that they hope will change their lives: how to write a resume and cover letter.

Itineraries in hand, Cynthia and Jackie look over the session's goals, which include staying sober and independent living. Then Malvin, the session instructor, walks in carrying take-out cartons of egg-fu-yung. Cynthia and Jackie, who are homeless and living in a recovery shelter, excitedly open their cartons, eat and chat. They seem more at ease now. As they finish their food, Malvin walks to the front of the room at the chalkboard and says, "This time is not for me, it's for you."

Here at Goldie's Place in Chicago, where the motto is to help the homeless help themselves, program director Johanna Dalton seeks to provide what she calls, "this intangible thing called hope."

Goldie's Place sponsors job workshops to help build resumes, research job opportunities, and conduct mock interviews with its participants. At the end of the workshop, each participant is awarded a certificate and encouraged to remain in contact for further assistance.

Roberta Friend, the founder of Goldie's Place who passed away last year, started the organization in 1996. Friend was working in a homeless shelter in Evanston when she met Dalton, who was also a volunteer. In the shelter, they tutored and provided life skills assistance. They found that creating a support system was the only way to prevent homeless adults from falling through the cracks.

Jackie, a homeless woman, is one of those who have been helped.

"We were recommended to Goldie's by our counselor at the recovery shelter," Jackie said. "They've been so helpful because their job workshops are very informative."

As part of its focus on employability, Goldie's Place has partnered with the University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC) to create a student-run dental clinic. Dalton sees dentistry as a natural adjunct to their participants' success.

"If you can't look beyond today's needs, you won't get beyond that," she

Goldie's Place, in partnership with the University of Illinois, Chicago, provides free dental care to visitors.
said.
In its first year, Goldie’s Place served 130 people. Within 10 years, the total number of participants was 1,000, including Cynthia, another homeless woman.

“They take the time to sit with us and help us find a good job,” Cynthia said. “I’ve never written a cover letter before, and I think now that I know how to, it’ll be better.”

Originally, Goldie’s Place was stationed in Chicago’s Edgewater neighborhood, in a 700 square foot space. In 2001, it moved to another neighborhood location double the size. Dalton described the single-room office as “MASH-like,” with dentistry work being done in the same place as mock interviews.

“There was always a welcoming atmosphere and everyone treated everyone with dignity and respect, but the surroundings did not cry out dignity and respect,” she said.

Goldie’s Place’s funding comes from three general sources: government grants, private foundations and individual donors. Thanks to one of these individuals, whom Dalton called an “angel donor,” the organization moved to the corner of Lincoln and California Avenues in December 2007. This donation allowed for Goldie’s Place to use a building rent-free for 20 years.

“It’s a whole different world, really, and everybody can feel it,” Dalton said.

Dalton believes this professional atmosphere allows for the organization to run more efficiently and maximizes its ability to help its participants. She stressed the reality of homelessness as something everyone needs to understand. Her niece, Morgan Martinaitis, 23, a graduate of Syracuse University and a volunteer at Goldie’s Place, echoed this sentiment.

“I think everybody has a tendency to react to homeless people in a way that shuts a homeless person out, because it helps us to relate to it,” she said. “We don’t want to see someone as human as we are in a position we’d never want to be in ourselves.”

by Joe Kurowski

The children are banging anxiously on the door and they’re 10 minutes early to do their coursework with a tutor from Chicago HOPES, an organization that works with students living in homeless shelters in the city.

The idea of the program is to give students living in Chicago homeless shelters extra help on their homework so they don’t fall behind in school.

“I like the tutoring because it’s fun,” said Mary, a first grader and one of 10,600 homeless students this year in the Chicago Public School system.

Chicago HOPES, Heightening Opportunity and Potential for Educational Success, began in October 2006 when Chicago Public Schools’ Homeless Education Program saw an opportunity to help the city’s homeless students.

“There was a clear need for a program directly in the shelters,” said Amber Darmor, shelter coordinator at the cornerstone Community Outreach Center in Uptown.

The staff of Chicago HOPES consists of 12 volunteers from AmeriCorps, a national version of the Peace Corps, who run day to day operations under senior coordinator, Samantha Holley.

The program currently operates all over the city at six of the 40 homeless shelters that allow children. Their future goal is to eventually operate in all 40.

“It’s easy to downplay just how significant a few hours a week can be with a tutor, but the development of friendships and fantastic working relationships with the students is so clear and rewarding,” said Ann Marie Meiers, a volunteer tutor for Chicago HOPES.

Tutors provide individual attention to the students twice a week for 90 minutes. Sessions include students working on homework and having a snack.

Chicago HOPES’ main goal is building a better community through educating the youth, and operating year round. With the recent addition of summer programs at three of their locations, HOPES is extending its outreach.

“They get so bored in the summertime,” said Holley. “It’s nice to take the kids on field trips to places like the Shedd Aquarium, where they would never go otherwise.”

According to Dan Forehand, Brighton Park coordinator for Chicago HOPES, the tutoring program gives children the attention they need while helping them take their minds off their homelessness.

“In some ways, it’s like a mentorship program,” Forehand said. “It’s like a three hour break a week from life at the shelter.”
Kevin King, 40, didn’t always have a job and a home. A high school dropout, King began selling cocaine, heroine, marijuana, PCP and other drugs in the Chicago area at age 20. At 24, he was convicted of his first felony, possession of a controlled substance. That’s when his shuffle between prison-life and homelessness began.

“It’s just a whole hodge podge of stuff. Kind of just all runs together,” said King, reflecting on the crimes he committed that caused him to bounce in and out of Cook County Jail and Dixon Prison for 15 years of his life.

King represents a part of the repeat offender population cycling between incarceration and homelessness. Cook County Jail, the largest single site jail facility in the United States, discharged 98,000 people in 2007. Of that population, 13,000 to 15,000 who were repeat offenders were detained and released more than once during the year.

People who suffer from chronic mental illness and homelessness make up a large percentage of the repeat offenders’ population, according to the Report of the Cook County Sheriff’s Reentry Council.

Nationally, 10 percent of all prison inmates and 14 percent of jail inmates reported they were homeless in the year prior to their incarceration, according to data collected by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice. They also found that 13.2 percent of prison inmates and 17.2 percent of jail inmates who were identified as having a mental health issue also reported homelessness.

The mental health aspect, usually teamed with substance abuse, is one of the main reasons why there is a tie between homelessness and incarceration. Andy McMahon, assistant director for policy and research for the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), said this population usually commits ‘quality of life’ crimes, such as urinating in public or sleeping in parks.

“They often do things to help them come to the attention of the police, or come to the attention of the public,” McMahon said. “Their lives are so chaotic, they’re not intentionally doing x to get y.”

Organizations like CSH create services to provide housing and rehabilitative services for those who need it; especially repeat offenders.

“CSH is designed to serve people who would benefit from support… we need programs that will accept and take a chance,” said John Fallon, senior program coordinator of the returning home initiative at CSH. “Given the environment, people will flourish. This transforms lives.”

Eligibility for such programs is based on the elusive model of peo-
Many argue the support for former prisoners is breaking down. People are wary to welcome such people into their community, and find it difficult to understand why ex-prisoners should receive housing and health services before law-abiding citizens who are struggling because of foreclosures and rising unemployment rates.

Even though it is impossible to eliminate the problem of incarceration and homelessness, it is equally impossible to ignore the success stories of supportive housing programs.

The Cook County Jail helps the Thresholds program to find people who are repeatedly being cycled through the jail. Afterward, Thresholds connects these people with services upon their release in hopes of reducing recidivism rates.

Thresholds also connects people with housing and psychiatrists. They help their clients with managing funds and grocery shopping. There is no time limit placed on the services. Some people are in supportive housing for months, others for years.

With the help of organizations like Thresholds, King has been out of jail for a year, has a place to live, mental health support and a part-time job at a grocery store on Cicero Avenue and Adams Street.

"Thresholds pretty much helped me with everything going on," King said. "I was blessed enough to qualify for Thresholds."

By next fall, King plans to return to school for his GED. The help he's received from Thresholds has motivated him to help others stuck in similar situations. He believes in supportive housing; especially the mental health services that helped change his thinking. He is careful not to judge those who repeatedly commit crimes and those who shuffle between homelessness and incarceration like he did.

"They're not bad, just trying to survive," he said. "That's all."
The Center For Urban Research & Learning Center (CURL)

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MOSAIC MAGAZINE
From Riches To Rags
StreetWise Vendor Trades Wealth For Life On The Streets

by Jenny Sikora

John Corcoran loves jazz. He would never call it his hobby, much less make eye contact while saying it, but he used to collect antique radios, phonographs, and jazz and blues records. He collected these things before he became homeless, and sold his treasures to make a few bucks.

The only thing Corcoran collects now is people, which is perhaps why he became a vendor selling StreetWise in downtown Chicago last October.

"To look back on your personality," Corcoran reflected, is to find that "your personality is your memories...and various people that you meet. Meeting and trying to understand people. I collect people."

Corcoran, 57, lived the American dream in a two-story, four-bedroom white house in Wilmette, Ill. His father, Glenn, worked with an insurance company, while his mother, Loraine, was a housewife who raised Corcoran and his two older sisters, Nancy and Mary Jo.

Corcoran's childhood was traditional; he was "kind of an only child" being much younger than his sisters. He played violin in the school orchestra at New Trier High School. After graduating in 1970, Corcoran went to Oakton Community College for some time, which he described as "a fiasco" and "a waste."

"I wasn't a particularly good student," Corcoran reflected. "Growing up I was a hippie. I never had a lot of ambition...I was more into socializing and being cool."

Corcoran eventually found work at Christ's Church in Winnetka doing various odd jobs. Corcoran left Christ's Church after 10 years, and was still living with his parents. After Christ's Church he began working at Glencoe at a Methodist church. After six years at this position, Corcoran's father had a heart attack. Corcoran believed taking care of his father was priority. His mother had already died at this point.

In 1997 his father died which, in Corcoran's words, marked "the beginning of the end...of the family structure." The will divided the inheritance and property unequally to his three children. Corcoran, the youngest child, received the largest inheritance, including the house in Wilmette. His sisters, upset by the inequality, distanced themselves from the family. Both are now married and living in different states: Nancy in California and Mary Jo in Ohio.

The death of his father put Corcoran in a deep depression. He blew the inheritance money and sold the house for $300,000 in 1998. For awhile, he was addicted to drugs. For the next 10 years Corcoran squatted in friends' houses and stayed at different Chicago hotels for short stints, including the Abbott Hotel, the Diplomat Hotel and the Wacker Hotel.

Today, Corcoran can usually be found at the intersection near Chicago and Wabash avenues selling StreetWise papers. According to Greg Pritchett, director of distribution at StreetWise, Corcoran first came into StreetWise on Oct. 9, 2007. Pritchett described Corcoran as very mild-mannered and honest.

"John liked meeting people and wanted a new experience. He is willing to work and he works it like a job...The goal is to get people to get an honest income," Pritchett said.

Despite the praise he gets from his StreetWise supervisors, or the hard work he puts into selling papers, Corcoran attributes much of his hardship on the life he chose when he was a young adult.

"There's a lesson, too," he said. "If I'd been willing to conform, I would have been welcome."

John Corcoran sells StreetWise in Chicago's Gold Coast.
by Lora Swarts

Don Smith was once a man who called a street corner home.

The former alcoholic and drug addict now calls this street corner a place for work. Smith, 48, now sells StreetWise, a Chicago newspaper that focuses on helping men and women get out of poverty.

Outside the 7-11 at Dearborn and Maple Streets, Smith carries a smile and a stack of newspapers. He waves and converses with everyone from businessmen to construction workers. Some know his story, while others just know him as the man who greets them with a smile.

Given the title "Mayor of Dearborn," Smith is a Gold Coast celebrity.

"He knows everything that goes on here and everyone that lives around Chicago Housing Authority in maintenance.

"It was during this time that I was finally on my own, as an adult," Smith said. "My mother was no longer there to watch me because I was living in the city, making my own money. I fell hard and fell fast for things like drugs and alcohol."

It was during this time that Smith met and married his first wife and started a family.

"I met my wife when I was only 22 and she was also in deep with drugs," Smith said. "We fed off one another; perpetuating each other's addictions."

Smith and his wife separated after 12 years together. His wife stopped drinking while Smith, then 34, would continue to drink the afternoons away, walking around Chicago, sleeping on street corners and begging for money.

"I wasn't a person that had pride in myself at this time," Smith said. "I would beg for money, reeking of booze. People wouldn't give me a dime, because they knew I would use it to just get drunker. I was harassed and called every racial slur under the sun. People would yet at me to get a real job. They didn't understand it was hard to kick a habit."

Humbled and humiliated, Smith later met a Streetwise vendor who befriended him and advised him to clean up his act. With a fresh start and new outlook on life, Smith began selling StreetWise in August 1995 and soon re-married.

"I wanted to get straight," Smith said. "I wanted to show my family I was helping myself, working, and paying for my own rent, bills and gas."
I wanted to change myself so I could prove everyone [who looked down on me] wrong."

Smith buys 80 to 100 newspapers a week now. He began selling on the corner of Clark and Division Streets, right near his home by the Jewel-Osco. But, in 2002, he moved locations to the corner of Dearborn and Maple Streets.

"I've gotten to know everyone that walks, works and lives on this street," Smith said. "I will say 'hello,' tell them to 'have a great day' and make them laugh, so they became comfortable with me. I'm the reason so many people, like neighbors and locals, are friends."

Smith chooses to work 3-4 days a week in five hour shifts. If he can meet 100 people he can make almost $60 a day.

"I try not to work every day, because I don't want people to get used to seeing me all the time," Smith said. "If I am missing one day, then the next people get excited to see me and they will help me out more and talk to me more. If I was there all the time, then people would soon grow numb to my presence and might even forget."

Sober for eight months and deeply religious, Smith now has started attending a construction work trade school. He wants to work in construction in order to have a more stable income and to help out his family financially. However, he plans to always sell the newspaper a few days a week because he loves the people within the two block radius of him.

"Don is always wishing me well when I am walking home from work," neighbor, John Buroo, 54, said. "I never buy the paper anymore; I just give him five bucks when I see him because I know how hard it is to go through sobriety. He is such a staple here and when he isn't here during rush hour times, it's sad."

As Smith stands up from the Dearborn Street corner, he straddles his prized possession, a bicycle.

"People see the holes in my jeans and assume lots of things," Smith said. "But I just smile back and tell them God wants us all to be holy."
Youth On The Streets

by Maria Randazzo

Each morning, after Loke and Dee visit the methadone clinic to slake Dee’s heroin addiction, they wonder how to spend the rest of their day. They wish for bus passes to look for jobs, but they don’t have money for transportation.

Some days they stay at community recreation centers, and other days they wander the street. At night, after a warm meal at a soup kitchen, Dee returns to the homeless shelter and Loke sleeps on the loading docks in Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood.

With their fair skin and blonde hair Loke and Dee could pass for siblings. She treats him like a younger brother anyway. Dee is helping him draft a letter requesting entrance to a shelter from where he was barred.

“He is bipolar and not on medication. It’s not his fault that he has outbursts, but they kick him out on the cold street,” Dee said.

Andrew “Loke” Green, 18, of California became homeless after he started selling drugs and dropped out of school in the sixth grade. Dee Nicola, 28, of Chicago was living out of her car and before she could raise enough money for rent, her vehicle was impounded. She lost everything.

These are but two of the 1.6 million homeless youth in the United States, according to the National Coalition for the Homeless. Over the past two years, there has been a steady increase in the number of unaccompanied youth, ages 12 through 24, the study says.

A rise in American homelessness is attributed to various factors, but the current economic and foreclosure crises are most heavily blamed. Companies continue to reduce staff and jobs are becoming more difficult to maintain. Unfortunately, people most affected by the economic downturn are those teetering between a low socioeconomic class and homelessness.

Nicole Sauler, director of public policy for the Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness, explained that the majority of homeless youth become disconnected for myriad reasons. In many cases, they leave home because of unwanted pregnancy, domestic violence or they’re shunned because of homosexuality.

“Most of these homeless youth are not running away because of curfew disputes,” Sauler said. “These are not kids who have loving, safe parents to go back to, they are not choosing the street.”

According to the Chicago Department of Human Services, an estimated 5,922 people are homeless in Chicago. However, records from Chicago Public Schools counted more than 10,000 homeless youth for the past two academic years. This is a 17 percent increase from the 8,970 homeless youth classified by CPS in 2005.

“Calculating the number of homeless people is always an estimate because of their transitory residence patterns,” said Dennis Watson, spokesman for the Center for Urban Research and Learning at Loyola University Chicago. “A more accurate number is derived from school
systems because they have specific information about each child's housing status."

Further evidence of the rise in homeless youth is observed in emergency food services. The U.S. Conference of Mayors reported that between 2006 and 2007, 23 major cities had an 80 percent increase in soup kitchen patrons and 43 percent experienced an increase of homeless youth.

These statistics are only increasing, and many researchers believe the federal government is responsible. The Federal Emergency Management's food and shelter program is the only federal structure that provides money to homeless services - it has not been increased in six years. Consequently, community organizations that rely on this program are financially stretched and many have been forced to close.

"We in the homeless service community fear that the economic condition and foreclosures will continue to impact the most vulnerable among us, the homeless," Sauer said. "We are all concerned that our funding is decreasing and more people are living on the street."

Due to minimal financial support and a lack of capacity, homeless shelters across the nation are forced to deny people. Both Dee and Loke have endured many desperate nights sleeping in parks and on sidewalks.

"I wouldn't mind being homeless if it was warmer out, it wouldn't be so bad," Dee said.

According to the National Network for Youth, homeless teens who do not utilize service programs are more prone to detrimental lifestyles. The network reports that between 40 and 50 percent of homeless youth use drugs and over one-third offer sex for food, shelter or drugs. Additionally, 50 percent experience pregnancy and they are seven times more likely to contract HIV.

Furthermore, the network reports that half of all homeless teens have mental problems. Suicide is the leading cause of death among them.

"Sometimes you just feel like giving up and not being alive. I think I would be a lot happier in heaven and not here," Dee said. "It's not like I ever really want to kill myself, but I have thought about it."

In addition to providing programs, service organizations appeal to legislators for more affordable housing and ample education for the homeless.

"The know-how aspect of it is here, we have the knowledge. What we require is the political will and resources to carry out our mission," Sauer said.

When asked what they need from society, Dee and Loke requested more programs to help drug addicts and alcoholics, additional shelters and cheaper housing. As her eyes welled up Dee said, "I'm tired and I want my own home, I'm sick of being homeless." Loke nodded. Dee affectionately kissed his head. And the two returned to the bitter, nighttime streets of Chicago.

**Lending a Helping Hand**

College Students Volunteer to Serve the Needy

*by Stephanie Jelenic*

There are approximately 166,000 homeless people in the Chicago area. National Student Partnerships (NSP), a year-round college student volunteer organization, provides the homeless with resources like healthcare, legal services, transportation and housing searches.

"The college student volunteers are not paid, they are a part of NSP because they care," said Nadia Shami, Web Site coordinator of NSP. "I think the passion in the volunteers is what makes NSP so special and unique."

NSP does not have any eligibility requirements and helps anyone in need. For information call (773) 303-0700 or visit www.nspnet.org/offices/chicago.html.

National Student Partnership volunteers help at an event benefiting the homeless of Chicago.
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Lessons In The Law
Legal Service Protects Rights Of Homeless School Children

by Emily Jurlina

Eyes open with shock, five children stood in the kitchen of their grandmother’s home and watched as the superintendent of their school ransacked through their refrigerator and checked the bedrooms searching for proof that the kids actually lived there.

The children’s mother, a single parent with a low-paying job, was the victim of home foreclosure and was forced to move her kids into their grandmother’s residence.

Suspecting the children did not live with their grandmother as they claimed, the school began following and videotaping them on their way to and from school.

The school was trying to deny the children their right to a public school education because they thought the kids were homeless.

As a result, the family called on the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless’ (CCH) Law Project to help them fight the school and protect their rights.

The CCH Law Project eventually won this case and the children were able to continue their education. However, hundreds of children are still illegally denied access to an education because of their homeless status. When this happens the Law Project steps in and assists them in protecting this right, as well as many others.

Founded in 1997 by its Executive Director, Rene Heybach, the CCH Law Project processes about 200 legal matters every year, mostly concerning the educational needs and rights of homeless children and the universal right to housing.

“Though I wouldn’t describe myself as religious, I think that very deeply embedded within me are notions of social justice and community service,” said Heybach, 57, who has been practicing poverty law for more than 30 years. "Providing legal services to low income people and particularly to people as desperate as those who are homeless is very, very important for the legal community and for me in particular.”

According to Heybach, homeless students have particular rights when it comes to schooling, such as the right to immediate enrollment and transportation to and from school.

While education is a central focus, the Law Project also works on promoting low-income housing and the creation of shelters in suburban Chicago. It plans to print and publish a legal manual geared towards educating homeless youth on their rights, in hopes that it will help to serve them better in the future.

Chicago’s status as a candidate city for the 2016 Olympics also poses concerns for the Law Project.

“In every city in the world where the Olympics has ever come it has caused homelessness, displacement, loss of employment and a lot of other problems for low income people,” Heybach said. “Some of the communities in Chicago are now organizing to make sure that they get a community benefits agreement from the city so that they do not lose services, get chased off the street, lose their housing or lose their medical care.”

Since there are only three to four lawyers on staff at any given time, the Law Project relies heavily on volunteers, foundation grants and donations to maintain its budget, which Heybach estimates exceeds $200,000 each year.

The Law Project also relies on pro bono legal assistance from larger corporations such as J.P. Morgan Chase and McDonald’s.

Once such volunteer is Sharlita Davis, 35, a negotiator for Chase, spent two years as a paralegal for the project.

During the course of her work there, Davis found herself continually shocked by how homeless children were regarded by local school districts.

“It was just unbelievable that some of these school districts just have no sympathy for these children,” she recalled. “They’re looking at, more so, the economics behind educating a child... as opposed to looking at the child more as a person who needs education and looking at the value of the education that they could possibly provide for that child.”

Davis feels that the project is an important resource in educating the homeless of their rights and fighting to protect them.

“I feel that that’s important just to even give a child a fighting chance so they have a foundation of adequate schooling,” she said.
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Vendor Helps Homeless By Selling Coffee
by Nicole Charky

Jose Vasquez, 64, sits in a gray cubicle surrounded by plastic cups and boxes. Today he is the silver-mustached coordinator for Home Ground Coffee with his own desk. He may be in an office with air conditioning and heat, but this wasn’t always a reality for Vasquez. Five years ago, he did not have a roof or bed.

From 1999 to 2003, Vasquez lived on Lower Wacker Drive at a docking ramp below Swissotel, a luxury hotel along Chicago’s skyline. The Vietnam veteran woke up at 4 a.m. to sell the Chicago Sun-Times at the corner of Madison and Dearborn streets. For each copy, he was paid a dime.

Today, he works to share his experience and offer help to those who want it. He began working with Chicago Coalition for the Homeless in 2004 as a volunteer and in 2005, he began to coordinate the coffee program. Wisconsin-based Just Coffee supplies brewed and bagged cups of coffee and beans to Home Ground Coffee. Home Ground is a fair trade coffee, or coffee sold at fair trade prices from democratically-run cooperatives, with Nicaraguan, Guatemalan, Peruvian-Mexican and Ethiopian blends that raise funds for Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

“Right now we sell coffee at the markets to make a little money for the organization and also to spread the word around about what the organization has done,” Vasquez said.

Home Ground Coffee is sold at After-Words bookstore, Art Effect, Gourmet Foods and True Nature Foods in Chicago. It is also sold at The Celtic Knot in Evanston.

With the funds from the coffee, private institutions and individual donations, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless visits Springfield and City Hall and tries to pass laws pertaining to affordable housing and homeless.

Vasquez has his own story that he tells as a speaker on behalf of Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

“I just started traveling around Chicago,” he said. “I wound up on Skid Row. I spent two years there, wandering around. I worked once and a while, sometimes I didn’t work. I got to know the streets pretty well and the shelters.”

When urban renewal came, street living became more sparse, he said. Michigan Avenue all the way to LaSalle Street were underground homes for homeless but this began to change. At the time he was growing older and realized that he did not want to be homeless anymore. In 2004, he connected with the coalition as a volunteer where he has worked since.

“I was a former homeless so that’s right up my alley to help other homeless people,” he said. “There are people that helped us. So you just keep that going.”

He remembers receiving blankets, and food from passersby.

“There are people there who care, along with other people that don’t care, so it goes both ways,” he said. “They had people down there that wouldn’t even look at you, like you’re not even there. It didn’t bother me but it bothered other people.”

As a Chicago Coalition for the Homeless employee, Vasquez wants to offer help for those who want it.

“We feel that since there’s still people down there we have to help them out,” he said. “We try to tell them there’s help if they want it. Now, they have to want it so they can get out of the situation they’re in. I finally raised my hand because I got tired of staying out. Plus I was getting older and the winters kept getting colder.”

Some homeless people don’t plan on leaving.

“We have what we call the ‘hard-core’ people down there,” he said. “They’ve been there 10, 20 years because they either smoke cocaine or drink and you can’t do that in a shelter. They’d rather stay down there, more free to do their thing, go to bed when they want to, they don’t want to be bothered.”

For Vasquez, this was a hard transition, but one that was worth it. He hopes to help others and recruit more volunteers for the coalition, he said.

“It’s a long way from a sidewalk,” Vasquez said. “To a bed in a room.”

Hannah Willage has worked with Vasquez for a year and a half at Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. In her role as speakers’ bureau organizer, she has seen him grow as an advocate for the organization.

“He’s very responsible and dedicated and feels passionate,” she said. “A lot of times when we go out to speak he has the opportunity to talk to people about the coffee. He’s such a solid person. If you ask him to do something he’s ready to go and there. He’s always the first one at the office.”
StreetWise In Chicago
Free Street Magazine Helps the Homeless

by Courtney Hanson

Among factories and meat markets in Chicago's West Loop sits the sole office for StreetWise, a street newspaper and non-profit organization that works to aid the city's poor and homeless.

Inside the drafty converted warehouse that bursts with the jarring whoosh and rattle of the Green and Pink lines passing overhead every few minutes sits editor-in-chief Suzanne Hanney.

She keeps warm with a gray and baby pink argyle sweater and hot tea that she sips from a white cup adorned with an intricate flower pattern.

The soft spoken editor seems to embody the idea that looks can be deceiving.

When she was a 14-year-old dog walker, a man tried to steal her black poodle, Andre, but she used her cunning to convince him to give up. Her dog, who started growling, she explained to the man, was unruly and unpredictable, not a good sell on the black market. He stood frozen as she and Andre walked away.

When she was fresh out of college, a 23-year-old reporter for the Marquises Press in the southern Illinois city of the same name, she bought the financially struggling paper and ran it herself.

Now, an award winning professional journalist, Hanney still works part time at a Michigan Avenue retail store to gain extra money, health benefits, and access to a diverse group of people that often generate story ideas.

"It's not easy, but it works," she said.

As editor-in-chief at StreetWise, Hanney continues to draw from her inner strength.

"I grew up here and I love the grittiness. I love the can-do spirit and the desire to make the city better. I love the working class spirit of the city I grew up with," she said.

Economically, it is that same working class and below that StreetWise is known for helping.

The newspaper's vendors are homeless and formerly homeless people working to get back on their feet. They buy each paper for 75 cents and sell it for $2. StreetWise also teaches business skills and helps homeless access services and resources to help them work their way out of poverty.

Hanney says she's worked to make the paper a medium for hard news as well as that involving homelessness issues. The community has taken notice.

"[StreetWise] provides a lot of information about issues in Chicago and how they affect homeless folks. It's a source of news and a source of income. It's a gift to Chicago and a gift to the people that sell the paper," said Ed Shurna, Executive Director for the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

Hanney is quick to assert the publication works to aid and spread awareness of demographics other than just the homeless.

She says the organization is interested in any marginalized groups and how the city affects those groups.

"I'm interested in whenever we
change the old Chicago culture because we don't want to lose the city that we've got now, the personality. That probably is something that makes StreetWise more than just a homeless paper. I don't think if it were just about homelessness that it would have as much appeal to wider audiences. I'm also feeling we need to go back to our roots and give people that gritty Chicago," she said.

In a city famous for both back-alley blues and concert hall symphonies, Hanney says she's working to show a Chicago that is relevant to the poor and the rich, a Chicago that all StreetWise's 13,000 weekly readers can identify with.

"A lot of what we see culturally in Chicago I think was developed by poorer people. I'm trying to make sure that culturally we keep all those older art formats but that we also somehow make sure we interpret them so that more affluent people can identify with them. If they're always about poor people, then nobody else is going to care about them as the city becomes more affluent. But yet that's our culture," she said.

Now in her fifth year as editor at StreetWise, Hanney says she has no plans to leave the organization and is looking forward to covering and following the country's failing economy as readers worry what will shake down.

"It would never occur to me not to take the challenge," she said, "because then I'd be left with something empty."

StreetWise Makes Transition

by Courtney Hanson

After years of talks, StreetWise joined the ranks of many of the world's most successful street newspapers when they switched from newspaper to magazine format in November 2008.

With the new format, StreetWise aims at increasing revenue for the publication through more advertising space and for vendors who now have a greater return from each sale.

With the price of StreetWise now $2, vendors buy the paper for $ .75 and make $1.25 profit, a huge step up from the .65 profit vendors made on the newspaper formatted StreetWise that sold for $1.

The switch also means a more aesthetically attractive publication with more room for features.

"It's a better vehicle for ads and it will have more regular features. It also seems to have more respect because its all color and the paper quality is better. Everything looks better on it," StreetWise Editor-in-Chief Suzanne Hanney said.

While the changes promise to bring positive outcomes to StreetWise, the transition, in some cases, has not been seamless.

"We've had a little bit of a dropout from some vendors. Some vendors amortize the cost and give some people a paper if they are regular customers even if they don't pay $2," Hanney said.

Hanney said that while some hit-or-miss vendors have struggled with the change, those that are dedicated to StreetWise and use it as their main source of income have not seen a dropoff in sales. Partially, she credits it's a faithful client base.

"At first I was annoyed that I had to pay $2, but the new StreetWise has better pictures and I enjoy buying it every week. I like the feeling of supporting a homeless person that is actually working hard to better their life," Nikki Smith of Roger's Park said.
CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the editors of Mosaic Magazine and the authors whose works are published in these pages. We are proud of the work and efforts of all our Journalism students.

Christine Wiseman (Provost) and the Staff in the Office of the Provost

Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives
Street Story:
A Tale Of One Man’s Battle With Addiction
by Lily Soto

Mauricio Perez leans his magenta bike against the corner bodega on Augusta Boulevard and Rockwell Avenue in Chicago’s Humboldt Park neighborhood, as he enters the store with some loose change he’s gathered to buy a cigarette.

He has on three shirts, blue jeans that seem they’ve been run over by a car, black hair with a big beard, and torn gym shoes.

He lights his cigarette and leaves to go to his normal routine in knocking at his siblings’ doors for money.

Perez, 55, comes from a middle-class family, and for the most part, he had been well off until his heroin addiction took control of his life.

Every day is a struggle as he tries to figure out where he will sleep. When his brother or his girlfriend does not let him sleep in their homes, he spends the night on park benches.

He has several children from different women. His sister, Blanca Perez, 50, counted six that she is aware of.

Perez once owned a building, four stories high with a six-car garage. It was one of the biggest buildings in the Humboldt Park neighborhood.

“We used to mechanic in his big garage and spend the nights hanging out with our friends there. That was the place to go,” said his brother, Hilario Perez, 63.

In 2004, his brother-in-law decided to buy his building, and Perez, desperate for money, decided to sell it for $400,000 even though the building was worth triple that amount.

“I asked him for one thing, that was that if I was ever homeless he would have still sleep there [at his girlfriend’s house] once in while to see my youngest daughter, but then she throws me out again,” Perez said.

He then started to sleep with his friends, who sometimes slept on the streets. He slept on park benches, and when he could, he slept at his brother’s home. His brother-in-law denied him the room that he asked for when he decided to sell the building because his brother-in-law didn’t want to take responsibilities if the law happened to catch Perez doing illegal activities, his sister Blanca Perez said.

Perez receives a Supplemental Security Income monthly check of $800 and that only lasts him a couple days because he spends it on drugs.

“What’s killing my brother are drugs and I can only pray to God that one day he comes to his senses. That’s all I can do,” his sister said.

“I try to help my brother as much as I can because we’ve both been through the worst, but he has to learn how to help himself,” said his brother, Hilario Perez.

Blanca Perez said she used to give him money when he would come knocking at her house, but now she only offers him food.

Every day is just a normal routine for Perez as he tries to get by through the day with his loose change and his mountain bike.
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Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives
A Safe Haven
Public Action To Deliver Shelter Offers Bed And Warm Meal
by Carla Kariott

Two years ago, Gladys Jackson, 54, found herself out of a job with no way to pay next month's rent. She had been laid off from her job as an administrative assistant and she had nowhere to turn. She was eventually forced to leave her apartment complex.

At the suggestion of a friend, Jackson decided to look into the West Suburban PADS, Public Action to Deliver Shelter.

"It was just hard to believe someone actually wanted to look out for me," Jackson said. "I saw my whole world messing up."

Although she entered the emergency shelter apprehensively, two weeks later Jackson found a job listing through the PADS' Support Center.

This story is only one of many workers at West Suburban PADS have seen come through the doors.

PADS, a community of shelters and service programs, does everything it can to help the disadvantaged. Located throughout the Chicago suburbs, PADS began in DuPage County in 1985 and opened its Maywood location in 1992.

According to Lynda Schueler, executive director, PADS receives one-third of its approximate $1.5 million annual budget from government grants. The other two-thirds come from donations and in-kind support, meaning meals or time volunteered by individuals or groups. In-kind donations accounts for 39 percent of PADS' revenue.

The services PADS provides extend far beyond food and shelter. They help with daytime support, housing apartments and homelessness prevention programs.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of PADS is its Support Center. Here, clients can gain access to showers, toiletries, clothing, the Internet and a part-time nurse who comes in five days a week.

Lindsey LaPointe, Support Center case manager, said the center is where clients can come to "meet basic needs and set goals." The goal setting and life lessons provided by "experiential therapy" of the Support Center seems to pay off, because the average client stay in emergency shelters is less than 22 days.

Schueler explained that people are sometimes hesitant to seek help from an organization like PADS.

"You know, you have to let people know [they] fell into the right hands and we're going to help [them]," she said.

Schueler explains that PADS is advertised through mass mailings to townships and word of mouth. In 2007, approximately 11,000 people stayed in shelters throughout various West Suburban PADS locations, including emergency shelters, and summer season and housing apartments. In one season alone, Schueler estimates that only about 3 percent of people were turned away because the shelter was at capacity.

In addition to these figures, Schueler said that about double the amount of children were seen this year than last.

Between providing shelters and housing, PADS can hold up to 130 people per night. There are some locations in Chicago that can hold up to 1,000 clients.

"I don't even know where I'd be if it weren't for PADS," Jackson said.
Shelter From The Storm
Agency Provides Homes to Needy Women

by Emily Jurlina

Faced with yet another apartment eviction, Viola Carter had nowhere to go.

Carter, 44, fell in and out of work as she struggled to deal with alcohol and drug abuse. Unable to hold a steady job, Carter could not pay rent on her apartment and quickly became homeless.

Carter soon heard about a special program, called Housing Opportunities for Women (HOW), which provides subsidized, supportive housing specifically for women. HOW also offered several other services, such as employment help and health services. After submitting an application to HOW, Carter was eventually accepted into the program and saw her life begin to turn around.

“I have been five months sober now and it’s been a journey. I can keep my apartment because I’m not using, I’m not doing all those bad things that I was doing anymore,” she said, blinking back tears. “HOW has really helped me to become the woman that I’m becoming and I’m happy here. I would recommend this program to any woman that’s struggling with alcoholism or drug addiction or homelessness.”

While addiction afflicts homeless men and women alike, women, like Carter, are especially vulnerable to issues like substance abuse, which often leads to homelessness. Carter represents a growing trend in homeless women seeking supportive services directed specifically to them to help them break the cycle of homelessness.

When we first were founded there were no services focused on unaccompanied women.

-Jen Patterson
Organizations such as HOW, on Chicago's North Side, provide employment services, therapy and, in some cases, temporary housing to address what they see as a growing issue.

The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless reports that nationwide 13 percent of the homeless population is comprised of women. Yet, in Chicago alone, 18 percent of the homeless population is female.

Women and children are one of the fastest growing homeless populations in the country, according to HOW's Director of Development and Communications, Jen Patterson.

"When we first were founded there were no services focused on unaccompanied women. There were shelters for families, there were shelters for women with children, but there were no services being provided for homeless women," said Patterson, 31, who has been working at HOW for the past three years.

Women are also more likely to be victims of violence, another factor more likely to put them on the streets.

LaKesha Davis, who holds two masters degrees in psychology and is a homeless prevention specialist agrees. Davis currently works at Deborah's Place, an organization that also provides supportive services for single, homeless women.

"A lot of our ladies have dealt with trauma and again, that's going back to survival needs. Some women have been raped, some women have been beat up and so those are factors that really contribute to homelessness when you're a woman," Davis said. "I mean, you're very vulnerable, you don't have any place to go. A lot of times women have burnt their bridges with families."

In response to these issues many organizations have cropped up to help these homeless women get the help and services they need.

Located in Uptown off Lawrence Avenue, Sarah's Circle is what its senior case manager, Mandee Russell, refers to as a "drop in" daytime center for homeless women.

Sarah's Circle, like HOW and Deborah's Place, offers several "life sustaining services" like showers, bathrooms, phones, therapy and skills training for clients. These organizations often combine job training with therapy to help women see their potential and go after it.

"The biggest thing is just support because a lot of the ladies are so used to doing illegal activities to just meet their basic needs," Davis said. So we give them that self esteem that you don't have to sell your body in exchange for goods, or be a runner and transport drugs and things like that. You can go out there and make a viable living for yourself.

Sarah's Circle offers several different types of therapy, including art therapy, to help its clients begin their healing process.

"A lot of the time the women who are here kind of isolate themselves from one another," said Beth Enterkin, an art therapist at Sarah's Circle. "[Therapy is] a good way to get them to kind of come together and spark conversations and camaraderie and form relationships with one another that don't really happen on their own sometimes."

Sarah's Circle was an overnight shelter but, in the face of budget constraints, was forced to limit its hours of operation to Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. However, HOW and Deborah's Place still continue to offer temporary and subsidized housing to their clients, some-things they see as crucial.

"When the women come here we try and let them know that yes, trauma has happened, but now you're safe and you're home," Davis said of Deborah's Place's outlook on temporary housing. "That's the biggest thing that we want to push, that this is home. It's not a shelter. It's not a place that you have to leave, it's not a place where you get a cot and you just go about your business. It's a place that's monitored and you can feel safe."

Similarly, at HOW, Patterson feels that overnight shelters are simply not equipped to fully meet the needs of homeless women and get them off the streets permanently.

"I think emergency shelters, transitional shelters, they're extremely important and they need to be a part of the system," she said. "But, I think that for someone to truly address the barriers that they may have or goals that they have, [safe stable housing] really helps them begin to address their barriers."

For women like Carter, who once found themselves homeless, organizations like these have helped them find an apartment, get a job and get access to services that they need. Carter now has her own apartment and has a job as secretary in HOW's main office, something she attributes to the services HOW gave her.

Patterson sees success stories, such as these as proof that organizations like HOW, Deborah's Place and Sarah's Circle need to exist.

"Our support services director always says that the last worst thing that happens to the women we serve is that they became homeless," Patterson said. "There's a lot of things that led them to becoming homeless and the services that we provide help them address the needs that they have in order to get back on their feet and find their way again. Without that it would just be that much more difficult if not impossible."
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