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The Monthly Newsletter of COHHIO, the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio



COHHIO's YEP members pitch in on MLK Day for the United Methodist Church for All People on Columbus' south side. See story on page 4.

COHHIO Assists in Point-in-Time Count

By Erica Mulryan

At 3:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 31, after little more than three hours sleep, it was difficult to recognize the importance of counting homeless people in Columbus at this particular time on this particular day and in this particular temperature (10 degrees).

However, during the almost 2 hours I spent walking along train tracks on Columbus' west side, I had to time to reflect on the purpose of the point-in-time counts and the opportunities and benefits they can provide to local communities.

Point-in-time counts are required on a biennial basis by the U.S. Department on Housing and Urban Development (HUD). While many service providers and continua of care participate in this count specifically because it is mandated, many providers also recognize the opportunities point-in-time counts can offer. Not only are they a mechanism for gathering data about the size and scope of local homelessness at a particular moment in time, these counts can also be used to help raise community awareness, inform and improve programs and services, and conduct outreach to those in

immediate need.

Three COHHIO staff members participated in the 2007 Point-in-Time count organized by the Continuum of Care Steering Committee in Columbus. For more on the Columbus Point-in-Time, see the Jan. 31 *Columbus Dispatch* article, which includes a video. Or visit the Community Shelter Board website at www.csb.org.

Housing Ohio 2007

Conference Registration Now Open Online!

Go to www.cohhio.org today to register!

Detailed brochure with complete workshop descriptions also available online.

April 23-25, 2007

(Lobby Day April 25)

Hyatt on Capitol Square
Downtown Columbus

See Back Page For More



Lead Conference Sponsor



U.S. Rep Marcy Kaptur

Kaptur Helps Salvage Housing Funding

COHHIO and NLIHC salutes Congresswomen Marcy Kaptur (D-Toledo), one of eight House Democratic members on the Transportation and Housing subcommittee that produced the extremely beneficial FY07 joint funding resolution, which passed the House 286-140 on January 31. “Her voice was extremely important in fixing voucher funding problems, at no cost to the U.S. Treasury,” noted Linda Couch, deputy director of the NLIHC. “She was instrumental in increasing public housing funding and ensuring that all project-based Section 8 contracts can be

renewed in 2007.” Couch said that it was the subcommittee’s job to raise these issues with House leadership. “Rep. Kaptur spoke on the House floor in support of this resolution and believes firmly in the programs the bill seeks to protect and expand,” said Couch.

Congresswoman Kaptur, who is currently serving her 13th term from Ohio’s Ninth Congressional District, was one of 21 Democrats who Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) named to the panel. She is among those Ohio lawmakers invited by Ohio advocates to the February 27 federal budget briefing on Capitol Hill (see article below).

Federal Budget Briefing to be held in Washington D.C.

Ohio advocates will host a federal budget briefing for the Ohio Congressional Delegation in Washington on Tuesday, February 27th. The briefing will take place as part of the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s Annual Conference. Speakers from several Ohio human service and labor organizations will share thoughts and ideas concerning the

federal budget with members of Congress. The briefing will kick off an important dialogue between advocates for housing, affordable energy, health care and hunger prevention and the 110th Congress. Please join us and be part of this important discussion in our nation’s capital. Please RSVP by calling Cathy Johnston at (614) 280-1984.

Seize the Moment! Attend NLIHC’s Conference & Lobby Day

The National Low Income Housing Coalition’s annual conference and lobby day is scheduled for February 26-27 in Washington D.C. The conference, entitled *Seizing the Moment – Opening Doors*, offers a wide array of workshops. Keynote speakers include incoming Chair of the House Financial Services Committee, Representative Barney Frank (D-MA) and Senator Barack Obama (D-IL).

On Lobby Day, participate with your peers by asking Congress



members to support our housing agenda! Get more details and fill out the registration form at: <http://www.nlihc.org/conference/>

Notes of Faith

from COHHIO's Executive Director

In 2006, the 109th Congress passed the budget buck to the newly elected 110th Congress with a doomsday continuing resolution that kept funding at dangerously low levels. HUD's programs were facing some of the largest shortfalls of any federal agency. Disaster seems to have been temporarily averted, thanks to the agile and bipartisan negotiations of members of the House and Senate Appropriations committees (see page 2).

COHHIO is optimistic that the Senate will concur with a "joint funding resolution," H.J. Res. 20, passed by the House on January 31 that includes increased appropriations levels for HUD programs. The Senate is expected to vote the week of February 5, and with what's at stake, we need to keep up the advocacy.

The resolution contains \$487 million for Housing Choice Voucher renewals; and to be safe it offers \$100 million to public housing authorities to guarantee that no vouchers will be cut this year while PHAs adapt to the new funding distribution system.

It also provides an increase of \$939 million for Project Based Rental assistance renewals to assure that all contracts expiring this year can be renewed. There is an increase of \$300 million in operating funds for public housing, which still only provides for an estimated 85% of the operating costs for the nation's 1.2 million public housing units. Finally, it increases funding for homeless assistance grants by \$115 million above FY 06 levels.

If the newly proposed resolution does not pass the Senate, the lowest income Ohioans will bear the burden. The risks include:

- potential loss of 70,000 housing vouchers;
- loss of over 100,000 Section 8 project-based units;

- 25% cutback in public housing operating budgets – resulting in the closure of many of these units;
- 15,000 homeless persons will remain so.

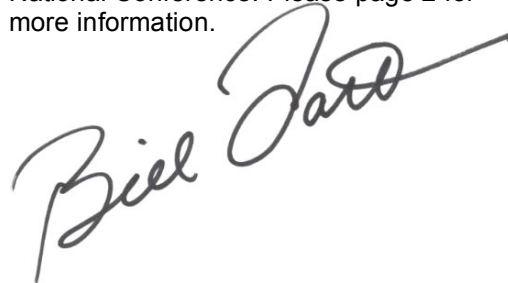
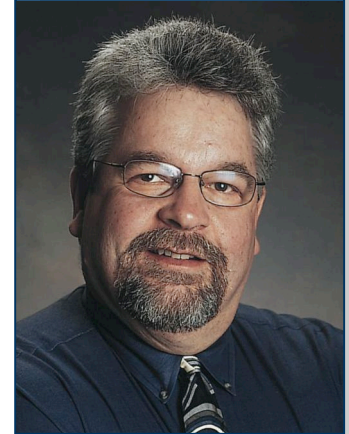
Passage of a resolution without these funding increases seriously threatened to increase homelessness in Ohio and across the nation, and would have been a clear abdication of Congress' responsibility for its citizens.

Public housing authorities in Ohio are operating at roughly 76 percent of their usual operating budgets. Waiting lists for housing vouchers are often years long. Funds typically used by housing authorities for maintenance and development of new units are in jeopardy.

The Senate needs to quickly pass the joint resolution with the funding increases, passed by the House to ensure that housing is not the sacrificial lamb of the 2007 budget.

Please join COHHIO in calling on the Senate to support one of our nation's greatest assets. Call, write or email your Senator today and ask that they increase HUD funding for 2007 by passing H.J. Res. 20. Please take action the week of February 5th by visiting our action center on our website.

Also, join us for a Federal Budget Briefing with the Ohio Congressional Delegation in Washington D.C. on February 27, 2007. The briefing will occur in collaboration with other Ohio advocates attending NLIHC's National Conference. Please page 2 for more information.

*Bill Faith,
Executive Director*

Join our advocacy network by visiting our website in our Advocacy section under Issues We're Tracking!

Youth are not tomorrow's
leaders...WE NEED
THEM TODAY!



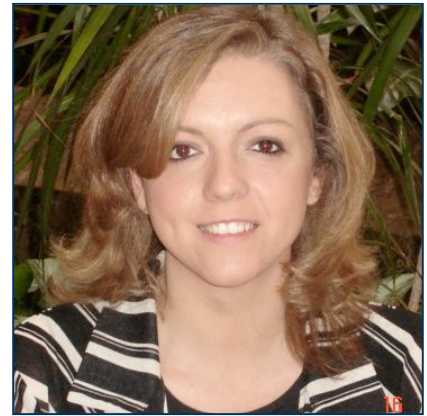
Homeless Youth Leader Wins \$25,000 National Award

YEP's Angela Lariviere was one of 22 recipients from across the country to earn the coveted *Emerging Leader Initiative* today by the National Service-Learning Partnership and the National Youth Leadership Council.

The two-year, \$25,000 per year award will be used to promote service-learning as a teaching method, Angela said. "Service learning engages young people in community problem-solving as part of their education, in both in-school and out-of-school settings," she said. "The result is a stronger education and democracy."

More than 80 youth leaders applied for the award. "We are honored to have been chosen from among such a large field of qualified applicants," she said.

Angela will develop and distribute resources and information about service-learning through YEP's established networks. In addition, she will coordinate trainings and workshops on homeless education and housing; and provide



trainings for staff at local agencies in targeted areas across the state.

She has worked for more than a decade helping youth become active community members and productive citizens through participation in community service, leadership training and advocacy activities. Angela has been director of COHHIO's YEP since 2000.

Youth Leadership Awards are now Available!

Do you know someone with leadership qualities who is between the ages of 11-22, and who has been homeless, transitional, or in a housing crisis? Then you know someone who qualifies for the YEP Youth Leadership Award sponsored by Direct Energy. Applications are available on our website

www.cohhioyep.org or by calling Nick Bates at COHHIO. The four \$500 awards will be presented during COHHIO's conference, April 23-25. **Applications are due to the COHHIO office no later than March 15th.** Thank you once again to Direct Energy for sponsoring this initiative!

YEP Annual Meeting: Hard Work, Good Fun

YEP held its annual statewide meeting in Columbus on January 13 – 15. Topping our To-do list for 2007 was continuing to increase voter turnout in Ohio; developing more options for youth exiting foster care; continuing improvements to schools; and increasing housing options for older youth. Many in attendance had innovative ideas on how to prevent evictions, improve schools and help older youth transition to adulthood. Also at the meeting, local councils prioritized their activities for the year, including increasing voter engagement, mentoring younger youth

and addressing difficult issues in our local school districts.

On January 15, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, YEP youth helped pound loose nails, demolish walls, sort through clothes, and haul out large amounts of dirt and rock for the United Methodist Church for All People. The church is renovating a building that they recently purchased to help expand their services. YEP youth helped to defray the cost of the project by volunteering their time. If your agency would like to become involved with YEP call Angela or Nick at the COHHIO office!

YEP: *Uniting Youth for Change*



Billboards Point to Ways to Avoid Foreclosures

The Franklin County Commissioners recently funded an innovative project designed to appeal to local Ohioans at risk of losing their homes to foreclosure.

The project, administered by the Columbus Housing Partnership, involves advertising a national phone hotline on 36 billboards, announcing to struggling homeowners that advice is available through the CHP.

The hotline, 1-888-995-HOPE, provides round-the-clock assistance from the Home Ownership Preservation Foundation (HOPF), a Minneapolis-based organization that partners with

local governments, nonprofits, borrowers and mortgage lenders/servicers to help homeowners recover from financial difficulties. HOPF refers central Ohio callers to the Columbus Housing Partnership where they're offered guidance and homeownership counseling.

For more information about the hot line, please visit:

<http://www.995hope.org/>

For more information about the Columbus Housing Partnership, please visit: <http://www.chpcolumbus.org/>

Central Ohio Playmakers

The January issue of *Columbus Monthly* held something for readers interested in gains made both on and off the field. While OSU quarterback Troy Smith was named Person of the Year by the magazine, COHHIO's Bill Faith was one of two contenders for the title for his advocacy work on SB 185, the Homebuyers' Protection Act.

The article included an interview with Republican State Senator Jeff Jacobson, who offered impressions of Faith the lobbyist.

A portion of the article reads: "It's been hailed by consumer advocates as one of the toughest anti-predatory lending measures in the country and one of the most impressive bipartisan efforts at the Statehouse in recent memory. 'This bill was probably the highlight of my entire time in the legislature,' says Jacobson, 'and it just would not have happened without Bill.'"



Ohio's Payday Lending: The Debt Trap

A report released late last year by the Center for Responsible Lending shows that Ohio ranks among the top 10 of states most negatively impacted by payday lending. Payday loans -- cash advances in return for post-dated checks or future paychecks -- can entice consumers into a cycle of unending debt. According to the report, predatory payday lending drains \$4.2 billion per year from American families. More than \$209 million is snatched from Ohioans annually, making the state the seventh most abused by the practice.

Today in Ohio there are over 1,500 payday lending storefronts; only three states have more outlets. Advertised

as a quick fix in a short-term financial emergency, payday lending traps indebted borrowers through excessive fees and interest rates, sometimes in excess of **1000%**!

To curb payday lending, state legislators should consider limiting the usurious interest rates and fees; and educating borrowers about the risks of using payday lenders-- whether they are check cashing lenders within Ohio or unregulated internet lenders. COHHIO will be monitoring this issue.

The CRL report is available in our Fact Sheets and Reports section of the COHHIO website (www.cohhio.org)



Strickland Veto Sparks Legal Challenge

Governor's veto of controversial SB 117 highlights first day

In last month's issue, COHHIO reported that then-Gov. Bob Taft allowed SB117, a controversial bill that weakens consumer protection by limiting damages available to victims of unfair business behavior, to become law without his signature.

The bill was introduced in the lame-duck session and vigorously opposed by COHHIO. Taft's refusal to sign or veto the bill sent a clear message that it lacked his support and should be revisited by the new legislature.

On his first day in office (and the day we published our newsletter), Governor Ted Strickland vetoed SB 117. With only hours to spare until the 10-day signing period was to expire, the new governor maintained that since his predecessor took no action on the bill, he was within his right to veto.

House and Senate Republican leaders scrambled to their legal experts to see how it was possible for a new

governor to take action on a bill from a previous General Assembly. At issue is how the 10-day period given to the governor to take action on legislation is counted.

Strickland argues that the 10-day period starts when the governor's *office* receives a bill, regardless of who the governor is. Secretary of State Brunner return the bill to the governor's office and Strickland contends he was within the law to veto.

Republicans say improper action was taken on a bill passed that had been passed by a previous General Assembly (which expired Dec. 31), and plan to spend up to \$150,000 in taxpayer monies for a legal challenge.

This scenario has never before occurred in Ohio history. It will be a constitutional question most likely posed to the Ohio Supreme Court. Stay Tuned.



YWCA Wins National Recognition

YWCA Columbus recently earned national recognition and an award for its Family Center, highlighting the facility as a model use of federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to benefit families, homes and neighborhoods. The City of Columbus provided \$500,000 in CDBG funds and facilitated a \$254,954 Housing and Urban Development grant for the project.

The YWCA Family Center, Central Ohio's first comprehensive 24-hour facility for temporarily homeless families, was selected for the "Audrey Nelson

Community Development Achievement" award by the National Community Development Association (NCDA).

The Center is a part of the Community Shelter Board (CSB) network, which also merited national attention from the National Alliance to End Homelessness in 2002. The organization credited CSB with spearheading one of the "most solution-oriented, pragmatic and innovative" efforts to end homelessness in the country.

Coalition on
Homelessness and
Housing in Ohio



**COHHIO Presents
Housing Ohio 2007**

**April 23th & 24th, 2007
Lobby Day April 25, 2007**



Online Registration

Now available on our website (www.cohhio.org/registration).

Communications guru Andy Goodman returns for another rousing session on effective messaging. Prominent lawmakers and local personalities have been invited and will be announced shortly. With 24 timely, topical workshops led by speakers across the state and country, you can't afford to miss Housing Ohio 2007! Save on conference fees by becoming a member. Questions? **Call 614-280-1984**

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To update your contact info,
please e-mail
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We're on the Web!

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www.OHvotes.org

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Monday, April 23rd

Workshops Set A

1:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

- Tenants Rights for Neophytes!
- Youth Harm Reduction Workshop
- Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) Structure
- Housing Those Re-entering the Community
- 2007 State Budget Policy Agenda
- Crisis Communications – Prepare or Beware

Workshops Set B

3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

- State and National Legislative Youth Updates
- Rural Homelessness – Best Practices
- Immigrant and Refugee Housing
- Motivational Interviewing
- Don't Wait for '08! Mobilizing the Nonprofit Vote
- The Nuts and Bolts of Media Relations

Tuesday, April 24th

Workshops Set C

10:30 a.m. – 12 noon

- Community-Building in Multi-Family Housing
- Homelessness Prevention Trends in Housing Development
- SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery – SOAR
- Consumer Finance: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly
- The Language of Proposal Writing

Workshops Set D

3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

- Making 504 Work in your Building, Program or Community
- Sexual Risk Behaviors among Vulnerable, Transitional and Homeless Youth
- Funding Opportunities/Strategies for Rural Housing and Homeless Providers
- Supportive Housing – Best Practices
- Mental Health Housing and Tax Credits
- Returning Homeless Veterans to Employment

Housing Ohio 2007 is made possible with generous support from

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About Our Organization...

COHHIO is a statewide advocacy group and service providers network dedicated to ending homelessness while ensuring that Ohioans have decent, safe, fair, affordable housing, especially those with low-income and special needs.