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



The Direct Energy/Direct Housing Youth (Front row: Kim, Ebony and Sharayna; Robert was unable to attend) gather with Direct Energy employees to take donated backpacks filled with essentials to a homeless youth drop-in center. See page 8 for more.

For the second consecutive year, Direct Energy filled over 50 Christmas gift backpacks to be handed out Christmas morning to homeless youth at the YEP Drop-in Center near Ohio State campus. Thanks to the Dublin and Akron Direct Energy employees who donated, shopped, and filled the bags; and to the Houston and Toronto employees who reached out with cash and needed items this year. Thanks also to the generous folks at the John Deere office in Dublin, who helped again this year by giving cash and filling bags with essential items. Direct Energy employee donations for the Direct Housing Initiative for December were strong as well, so thanks to all who gave so generously!



New Report: Schools Show Increase in Child and Youth Homelessness

A recent report released by the National Association for the Education of Homeless Youth (NAEHY) shows that school districts nationwide are experiencing increases in their numbers of homeless students due largely to the economic and housing crises.

According to the report, 50 percent of the 1,716 school districts surveyed indicated that within the first few months of the 2008 school year they had already seen the same number or more homeless students than in the entire previous academic year. Among these districts, 28 percent reported an increase in homeless students of at least 25 percent.

While the NAEHY report didn't provide any Ohio specific data, the Ohio Department of Education indicated that statewide numbers of homeless students increased 17 percent from the 2006 to

2007 school year – 9,396 students were known to be homeless in 2007, the highest number on record. Students are considered homeless if they report residing

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COHHIO's Housing Ohio 2009

April 20th – 22nd, 2009

**REGISTRATION
BEGINS IN JANUARY**

First confirmed plenary speaker:

Mark Johnston
Deputy Assistant Secretary, HUD



www.ohvotes.org

Thanks For The Memories...

As we reflect on 2008 and recognize our awesome team effort, remember that 2009 brings new challenges that we must be ready to address. Throughout Ohio, many municipalities are preparing for local races for city council, mayor, judges, school boards, and much more. The 2010 U. S. Census process has also begun and it is imperative that we encourage community representatives to apply for the many jobs available to ensure that our total community will be counted effectively.

Please call upon OhioVOTES and visit our website, www.ohvotes.org to continue the education and training needed to keep us moving in a positive and productive direction.

Thank you for caring,

Jocelyn

Jocelyn L. Travis
OhioVOTES Director

Elections Bill Passes House & Senate, Veto Urged

A hastily prepared elections bill, Senate Bill 380, was rushed through the Ohio General Assembly with little debate and with seemingly little consideration of the vast majority of witnesses who testified against the bill. Many low-income, homeless and formerly homeless individuals, due to extenuating circumstances, struggle both to register and exercise their right to vote.

The bill would impose a 65-day registration requirement for absentee voters, which would eliminate the 5-day overlap between the first date absentee ballots are available and the deadline for voter registration 30 days before the election. During this period (also known as "Golden Week") in 2008, thousands of unregistered voters used this opportunity to register to vote and cast an absentee ballot at the same time.

This 5-day period is particularly helpful to low-income persons, homeless persons and service providers seeking to help their clients exercise their right to

vote. The overlap period gives homeless shelters, nursing homes, individuals with disabilities, and persons without methods of transportation, both the opportunity to build community, but also to engage their clients in the electoral process. The oft-mentioned concerns raised about potential voter fraud are largely unfounded. To date, boards of elections and Ohio county prosecutors have reported few incidences of potential voter fraud.

The elimination of the 5-day overlap period in response to speculation and innuendo is a mistake and an overreaction that could potentially deny certain Ohioans their ability to cast a ballot. SB 380 also eliminates up to three early voting locations per county, leading to longer lines at existing early voting locations. Voting rights advocates are urging a veto from Governor Ted Strickland in hopes of preserving these safe, convenient and much needed ways for eligible Ohioans to register to vote and cast their ballots.

Land Bank Bill Passes House and Senate

Senate Bill 353, a bill that allows Cuyahoga County to create a land bank to help it deal with vacant, foreclosed and abandoned properties, overwhelmingly passed the Ohio House and the Senate during the lame duck session. Pushed by Cuyahoga County Treasurer Jim Rokakis, the bill is modeled after a successful land bank program in Genesee, Michigan that assists the county in acquiring, rehabilitating and selling foreclosed or vacant properties.

Cleveland is one of the hardest hit communities in the nation; entire neighborhoods have seen severe

increases in the number of foreclosures and properties values have plummeted. The land bank legislation will allow the county to use local delinquent tax fees and interest collected to purchase properties and bring them back to productive use. It is expected that Cuyahoga County will have between \$8 million and \$9 million to counter the foreclosure crisis and the blight seen throughout Cleveland neighborhoods. While the legislation currently only applies to Cuyahoga County, several other large Ohio counties facing similar problems will be looking to see if this model works.

Ohio Renter's Protection Act Waits for Next Session

House Bill 626, the Ohio Renter's Protection Act, didn't make the cut in the lame duck session of the 127th Ohio General Assembly. The bill, sponsored by State Representatives Ted Celeste and Mike Foley would prevent renters who live in homes that are foreclosed from being

immediately evicted without notice. The ongoing foreclosure crisis has impacted thousands of unknowing tenants who continue to pay their rent, only to find an eviction notice on their door and an absentee landlord ignoring phone calls.

The bill would require landlords to

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Notes of Faith

from COHHIO's Executive Director

Ohioans are a sturdy bunch, but the foreclosure and economic crises present challenge even to the most steadfast among us.

Our unemployment rate of 7.3 percent is outpacing the national average. More than 10 percent of our citizens are utilizing the food stamp program to meet their daily nutrition needs. Our state's foreclosure filings in 2008 are expected to be in the neighborhood of 100,000 – far exceeding last year's record-setting 83,000. And the governor recently announced a second set of budget cuts taking the fiscal year total to a staggering \$1.9 billion.

As we head into 2009, Ohio families are struggling to make ends meet and for those who are getting by, the future is fragile as glass. Fears about further job losses, foreclosures, bankruptcies and declining property values are being exacerbated by the current economic recession.

Over the past few months, Wall Street and some of our nation's largest financial firms have received assistance from the federal government to stay afloat. It's now time to ensure that our families and communities stay afloat by passing a comprehensive economic recovery package that addresses the needs of Main Street. The recovery package must include an infusion of capital to stabilize the housing market, halt declining property values and ensure families have a roof over their head.

COHHIO and the NLIHC are urging the Ohio delegation to include the following line items in the pending economic recovery package:

- Capitalize the new National Housing Trust Fund at \$10 billion for two years to rehabilitate or build 100,000 rental homes for the lowest income households using green standards.
- Fund 400,000 new Housing Vouchers at \$3.6 billion for two years to provide the

lowest income households with rent assistance.

- Fund the homelessness prevention component of the Emergency Shelter Grant program at \$2 billion for two years to prevent low-income households from becoming homeless and to rapidly re-house those that do lose their homes; 400,000 households will be assisted.
- Fund the Public Housing Capital Fund at \$5 billion for two years to upgrade public housing using green standards.
- Provide \$3 billion for two years to upgrade federally assisted multi-family housing using green standards.

These initiatives will not only assist those most in need by preventing homelessness and increasing access to affordable housing, but also will create over 200,000 jobs and make homes more energy efficient. Taken together, these five items will assist more than 800,000 households hardest hit by the recession.

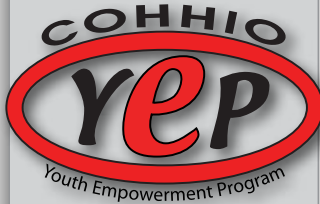
Your opinions matter to the Ohio delegation. Please contact your appropriate members (www.house.gov; www.senate.gov) as early as possible in the new year.

Our state advocacy slate will be filled with foreclosure related items, including protecting renters from the consequences of landlord foreclosures (House Bill 626); and pushing for a sharp increase in the number of quality loan modifications in the state. Loan servicers are the focus of our research attention right now. We'll keep you in the loop with what we learn and how we intend to shape constructive legislation. Thanks to your support and partnership, we'll hit the ground running in the new year.

Cheers!




Bill Faith
Executive Director



YEP Youth Housing Summit: Big Challenges will Take Teamwork

The Youth Empowerment Program hosted its second annual Youth Housing Summit on December 15th in Columbus. More than 80 service providers, government officials and youth convened in Columbus to discuss issues important to transitional youth (16-24 year olds) including systems that can help with stability and support through the often difficult path from youth to adulthood.

The morning session featured presentations from YEP members Andre, Ebony and Marldon, after which the summit divided into four breakout sessions to focus on public policy changes and the important roles non-profits play in. Our foster care workshop was facilitated by Lisa Dickson, with Foster Care Alumni of America; Brandi Scales with PCSAO; Bryan Brown with Starr Commonwealth and Mark Mecum with OACCA.

Raven Bias and Kelan Craig of COHHIO facilitated the housing workshop. Karen Fessler with Cincinnati Public Schools and Dianna Parker with Columbus Legal Aid led the discussion in the education workshop. Angela Lariviere, director of YEP, and Ebony Hollaman and Maggie Jaster, YEP VISTA members, facilitated the workshop on mental health. The breakout sessions generated a long,

broad list of ideas and solutions that the state of Ohio can explore to meet the needs of homeless youth.

After the small group discussions, everyone came back together to hear from state officials who work on these same issues. We would like to thank Tom Dannis of the ODE, Kimberly Alexander of ODO, Gerry Cain of ODJFS, and Shandell Jamal of GOFBCI for coming and speaking on their agency's efforts to assist homeless and transitional youth.

The afternoon featured a panel of national experts, including Terry Modglin from the National Network for Youth; Andrew Johnson from the Colorado Department of Human Services; and Marc Fagan with Thresholds in Chicago, IL. The three provided an important big picture analysis of national issues that are occurring, and different approaches to help homeless and transitional youth to gain stability. Johnson provided updates from last year on the efforts that the state of Colorado is making.

What emerged from the housing summit is the realization that homeless and transitional youth issues do not belong to one state agency or the non-profit sector working independently. Instead, we recognize that each agency at the local, state and federal level, and the non-profit community must work together to understand the needs of the youth so that together we can provide the necessary resources, guidance and assistance to help homeless and transitional youth succeed.



Speakers and participants at YEP's Second Annual Youth Housing Summit on December 15.

COHHIO Goes Green with Electronic-only Newsletter

In an effort to become more environmentally responsible, COHHIO will discontinue the printed version of our *Breaking Ground* newsletter. However, if you are a loyal reader of our print

version, please contact Tom Rogers (tomrogers@cohhio.org). He will be happy to print the edition in-house and send it to you. Thanks for reading!



HUD Chief Announced to the Approval of Affordable Housing Advocates

On December 13th, President-elect Obama announced the selection of Shaun Donovan as nominee for Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

State and national homeless and affordable housing advocates applaud the nomination of Mr. Donovan, who is currently the Commissioner for New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, citing his broad experience and leadership in expanding access to affordable housing.

Prior to his work in NYC, Mr. Donovan worked in both non-profit and for-profit organizations, including a stint as a visiting scholar at New York University where he researched preservation of federally assisted housing, and serving as managing director of Prudential

Mortgage Capital's \$1.5 billion investments in affordable housing. He also worked as a researcher at Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies. Perhaps most notably, Mr. Donovan served at HUD during the Clinton Administration, both as acting commissioner of the Federal Housing Commission and, earlier, as deputy assistant secretary for multifamily housing.

Although Mr. Donovan will face significant challenges in his new position, not the least of which is the fallout from the mortgage and foreclosure crises, advocates are optimistic that he has the skills and experience necessary to focus the agency on new solutions to our nation's housing problems.



Shaun Donovan

FDIC IndyMac Loan Modification Program Seeing Some Success

While the FDIC's IndyMac loan modification program is part of an effort to improve the portfolio of the now government-owned bank, its effort to modify troubled mortgages is seeing more success than other federal efforts. The goal of the program is to keep borrowers in their homes by modifying loan terms that will be sustainable over time, while also mitigating losses to lenders and investors. The FDIC attempts to accomplish this by ensuring that the product of a modification results in a positive net

present value outcome, i.e., the cost (loss) of a modification must be less than that of a foreclosure. By turning troubled mortgages into performing loans, IndyMac will hopefully become a viable entity. According to the Washington Post, this program has resulted in the modification of approximately 7,200 loans in only two months of its existence.

To learn more about the FDIC program, please visit: <http://www.fdic.gov/consumers/loans/modification/indymac.html>

Ohio Renter's Protection Act Continued from page 2

notify their tenants if the property they are renting is in foreclosure or is heading for foreclosure, requires landlords to notify tenants of a pending sheriff sale and requires that all rental agreements convert to a month-to-month rental agreement

upon sale, allowing renters to remain in the home for a period of time and find alternative housing. Representatives Celeste and Foley intend to re-introduce House Bill 626 in the next session. Stay tuned!

 *Happy Holidays from* **COHHIO!** 

During the season of giving, we ask that you remember COHHIO with a year-end tax-deductible donation. Please visit our website (www.cohhio.org) and click on the donation tab under Membership and Donations. Our very best wishes for a safe and meaningful holiday season and a new year filled with contentment.



National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) Seeks Assistance with Local Media Outreach for Homelessness Counts Report

On January 13, the Alliance's Homelessness Research Institute will release *Homelessness Counts: Changes in Homelessness from 2005 to 2007*, reporting for the first time on changes in national homelessness over time. The report measures nationwide changes in homelessness with data collected in January 2005 and January 2007. This report also provides a closer examination of state and local data. Recognizing that the data was collected before the onset of the current economic crisis, this report reveals progress made toward ending homelessness generally and among subpopulations over the two year period. These data will help policymakers at all levels of government understand

the scope of the problem and promote successful interventions.

The Alliance would like to coordinate media efforts with our state and local partners in order to increase public awareness and, ultimately, expand affordable housing and homelessness prevention efforts.

Service providers, state and local governments, and state and local advocacy coalitions are among those encouraged to participate. Participants will act as a point-of-contact for reporters and/or work with the Alliance on local media outreach. Please contact Sarah Kahn (skahn@naeh.org) for additional information.

Increase in Child and Youth Homelessness Continued from page 1

in shelters, living with friends or relatives, living in hotels/motels, or if they are unsheltered or have been abandoned.

Youth advocates support the inclusion of \$72 million for the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program in the economic stimulus bill that will be voted on in January. The funding is in addition to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act reauthorization and would offer 450,000 homeless students the support needed to help them stay in school.

"Our schools play that critical role in connecting youth to services," said Angela Lariviere, COHHIO's Youth Empowerment Program director. "Schools are going to see every homeless child, whether or not they meet the HUD definition of homelessness [living on the streets or in shelters only]."

"We're becoming increasingly dependent on schools to ensure that homeless kids get the services they need," she continued. "If we're going to put additional stresses on schools, then we need to provide them with additional resources."

For the past two decades, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance

Act, which is expected to be reauthorized in 2009, has been a critical resource for helping homeless students attain their educational goals. Generally, this legislation requires that states provide support such as tutoring, school supplies and counseling, among others, for homeless students. Key provisions of the act include:

- homeless students are permitted to maintain attendance at their home school even if they are temporarily residing in another district, and transportation must be provided if needed
- homeless students are allowed to enroll in and attend school, even if they are unable to produce all required documentation such as birth certificates, proof of residency, etc.
- every state must designate a coordinator to ensure that relevant provisions of the McKinney-Vento act are implemented

To read the full report, "The Economic Crisis Hits Home: The Unfolding Increase in Child & Youth Homelessness," visit the Educational Resources section of the NAEHY website. To advocate for additional \$72 million in funding for education for homeless children and youth, please call your US Representatives (www.house.gov) and US Senators (www.senate.gov).



COHHIO

**Housing Ohio
2009
Save The Date
April 20 – 22**

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Obtaining Government Funds in Tough Economic Times

Inside Tips for Your Non-Profit Organization

Access to funding is limited and donors are holding back in the current economic climate. However, government funding is still available. Learn how you can help your non-profit organization grow by accessing funding from Liz Powell, an attorney with over a decade of government relations experience, including serving as Legislative Director on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.



Thursday, January 8th
9:00am - 11:00am
The Stark County
District Library
President McKinley Room
1400 Sherrick Rd. SE, Canton

The seminar is FREE.

To RSVP, please contact:

jkoesky@G2Gconsulting.com

or (216) 658-3995

2009 Lunch and Learn Series: Case Management for Supportive Housing - January 15, 2009 - 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

- To watch the training, please register your seat now at <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/304159706>
- To listen to training, please call 1-866-264-5089 on January 15th by 1:00 p.m. and enter conference code 9794328

The first session in this series is *Role of Case Manager & Who is Homeless*.

An overview of the lunch and learn series, discussing who is homeless per HUD's definition and reviewing the role of a case manager working with individuals and

families that are homeless or previously homeless.

If you or your staff would like to participate in this Lunch and Learn Series on Case Management for Supportive Housing – please contact Jonda at jondaclemings@cohhio.org to be added to the listserv.

Completing the Annual Progress Report January 22, 2009 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

- To watch the training, please register your seat now at <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/475479150>
- To listen to training, please call 1-866-264-5089 on January 22nd by 1:00 p.m. and enter conference code 9794328

HUD is holding programs more accountable for their project's outcomes. It is extremely important that accurate and reliable data is entered into the Annual Progress Reports (APR) to capture those outcomes.

The training will review common errors

in APR reporting and the future of HUD's APR in preparation for APR completion through E-Snaps and walk through question by question:

- Completing the APR,
- Gathering the data, and
- Measuring overall program goals.



This OACCA Friday Forum for February will greatly benefit agency Executive Directors, Managers, and Board Members who desire to create a sustainable funding source, as we face difficult economic challenges. Secure your spot in this valuable training opportunity. Register NOW!!!!!! at www.oacca.org

Sustainable Funding for Non-profit Agencies and Engaging Your Board in Creating Sustainable Funding

February 6, 2009 • Register Online at www.oacca.org
 Quest Conference Center • 8405 Pulsar Place • Columbus, Ohio 43240

For the benefit of Executive Directors, Management, and Board members, this is a two-part training session focusing in the morning on Sustainable Funding and in the afternoon on Engaging Your Board in Creating Sustainable Funding.

PRESENTER:

Terry Axelrod, founder and CEO of Be-nevon, has more than thirty years of experience in the nonprofit field, including founding three nonprofit organizations in healthcare and affordable housing.



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We're on the Web!

See us at:

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**COALITION ON
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Direct Energy employees begin stuffing homeless youth holiday backpacks with essential items including fleece blankets, toiletries, flashlights and school supplies. The Direct Energy backpack program, started last year with help from Jon Deere employees, includes thousands of dollars worth of donated items. See front page for more.