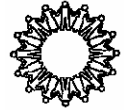


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THE ADVOCATE



The Newsletter of the Greater Taunton Health & Human Service Coalition (GTHHSC) and the Greater Attleboro Taunton Health & Education Response (GATHER) – www.geocities.com/gathercoalition

Volume XVI, No.1

January 2006

A “Perfect Storm” for Homelessness This Winter

(By Richard McMahon, Chairperson, Greater Attleboro, Taunton Homelessness Coalition)

The book and subsequent movie, *The Perfect Storm*, tell a gripping tale of the tragic consequences that result when three different storms come together at sea in the same area at approximately the same time. Lives are lost, ships and property damaged and the course of the lives of many individuals are changed forever. *The Perfect Storm* was not fiction and presented an enthralling account of how men and women confronted the effects of the storms in their lives and worked together at many levels to address and solve (and sometimes fail to solve) the aspects of how the damaging weather affected them personally and professionally.

Bristol County is seeing a new and different storm developing and it presents equally catastrophic consequences if we do not now take steps to attempt to ameliorate the multiple forces coming together to create a perfect storm for homelessness. The Greater Attleboro and Taunton Coalition on Homelessness (GATCH) has been reviewing various trends pointing to increased homelessness and we seek to communicate to the general public the concerns we see in our

communities. Can we avert a storm of homelessness this winter or will we be looking back on the winter of 2005/2006 with regret that we did not accurately read the forecasts that were there for all to see?

Foreclosures in Bristol County are up approximately 36% in the past 6 months (numbers of foreclosures in the GATCH area were Taunton: 52, Attleboro: 44, Raynham: 15, North Attleborough: 14, Seekonk: 14 and Mansfield: 13).

Rental housing remains expensive and out of reach for many. Rents for the Attleboro/Taunton area (for the coming year) are: Attleboro: 1-bedroom: \$827/month, 2-bedroom: \$965/month and 3-bedroom: \$1155/month; Taunton: 1-bedroom: \$812/month, 2-bedroom: \$992/month and 3-bedroom: \$1217/month. (HUD)

A household of 3 is living in poverty if its gross income is at or below \$16,090 for the year (or \$1341/month). For poor persons there is virtually no way to afford rental housing without government assistance of one kind or another. “Living wage” estimates require an annual income in the range from

\$24,000/year up to more than \$30,000/year for 2-bedrooms.

A common housing resource for low-income families is public housing or related assistance through area housing authorities. Kim Lavigne, Taunton Housing Authority, indicates that the available number of rental vouchers is likely to decline due to the high rental market and that there will be a reduction in Public Housing subsidy each year (beginning 2007) with discontinuance by 2011.

Many families last year could not pay-off all of their 2004 utility bills and had their service terminated and cannot get their utilities turned on. Those who have utility service confront an immediate problem in how to pay bills that are predicted to be the highest ever. According to Charlie Harak, Esq., of the National Consumer Law Center in Boston, “Rising energy bills are becoming an increasing source of homelessness because people often move out of their homes or are evicted once utility service is terminated.”

Dot Embree, who operates six food kitchens in her *Food and Friends Program* in Attleboro and other area communities, reports that the numbers of diners at all of her sites has

increased this fall and the volume shows no signs of letting up as the winter months are typically her season of highest demand.

The Samaritan House in Taunton (the area's only homeless shelter), is already full (at a capacity of 18) and has no rooms or other space for additional homeless persons.

And homelessness is indeed a family issue. Homelessness is not merely confined to individuals who fit certain stereotypes nor a result of bad behavior (except, unfortunately, for victims of domestic violence for whom homelessness is the insult added to the injury of abuse). Families are one crisis

away from homelessness. Loss of employment, medical problems, eviction or foreclosure all linger around the fringes of many lives waiting for the "house of cards" to collapse. And once lost, it becomes progressively more complicated and costly to regain housing.

What can we do as a community to help? Our area leaders, Attleboro Mayor Kevin Dumas and Taunton Mayor Robert Nunes, already recognize the great need of the most vulnerable in their communities and have signed on to help end homelessness. The federally directed effort to end homelessness in ten years is being embraced locally by both

mayors, and their concerted efforts are underway across Northern Bristol County to draft long range plans that will bring funding to fight this battle.

But what about this winter? We need to provide for those who need help here and now. Donations to front-line providers for the homeless are a great way to start. The United Way of Greater Attleboro/Taunton can accept donations for homelessness assistance (or direct you to any one of a number of appropriate providers – see below). Please call the United Way or any other capable programs in our area and let's prevent any kind of storm of homelessness this winter.♣

Area Providers of services for homelessness assistance (All area code 508):

Attleboro Area Council of Churches, Inc. 222-2933
Associates for Human Services 880-0202
Catholic Social Services/Samaritan House, 824-5372
Community Care Services, 226-5722
Community Counseling of Bristol County, 823-5400
Community Partnerships, 823-9579
First Parish Church, 822-2107

Our Daily Bread, 824-1788
Taunton Emergency Management, 821-1026
Taunton Emergency Task Force 821-1420
New Hope, Inc., 226-4015
Pro-Home, Inc., 821-1092
Tri-City Mental Health, 824-5372
United Way of GA/GT, 822-3180 or 223-4636



New Year's Resolutions for a Fresh Start Toward Better Health in 2006

(American Cancer Society)



The American Cancer Society suggests the following for better health in 2006:

Maintain a healthful weight throughout life.

- Eat five or more servings of a variety of vegetables and fruits in your diet each day
- Choose whole grains rather than processed (refined) grains and sugars
- Limit your consumption of red and processed meat.
- Adopt a more physically active lifestyle. For adults, engage in at least moderate

activity 30 minutes or more, 5 days per week, for children and adolescents, 60 minutes daily of moderate-to vigorous physical activity, 5 days a week.

If you drink alcoholic beverages, limit consumption.

Alcohol increases the risk of several cancers. Men who drink alcohol should limit their intake to no more than 2 drinks per day, and women to 1 drink per day. Regular consumption of even a few drinks per week is associated with an increased

risk of breast cancer in women, so women at high risk of the disease may want to consider not drinking any alcohol.

If you are a smoker, quit. There's no one right way to quit, but key factors in quitting smoking successfully follow:

- Decide to quit, set a quit date and choose a quit plan
- Learn how to deal with withdrawal symptoms and create a maintenance program.
- No one has to quit alone. Call **1-877-YES-QUIT**

(1-877-937-7848) to obtain information on a program run by the American Cancer Society or be referred to a state-run program.

You are invited to join the ACS Action NetworkSM and work as a grassroots advocate to enact public policies to help smokers quit, such as insurance coverage for tobacco cessation programs and smoke-free workplaces laws. Research

shows that smoke-free workplaces laws encourage smokers to quit as well as protect nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke - a known health hazard. To learn more about becoming an advocate, call **1-800-ACS-2345** or visit www.cancer.org.

Talk with your doctor about a regular schedule for cancer screening tests based on your age and personal risk factors.

These tests include mammograms and clinical breast exams for breast cancer; fecal occult blood test (FOBT), sigmoidoscopy, and colonoscopy for colon cancer; PSA test for prostate cancer; and the Pap test for cervical cancer. Great resources for information on cancer prevention may be found at www.cancer.org ♥



“Pathways to Hope” Weekly Radio Show Returns

(A Letter From Dan LeBrun)

“Despite a major career change, I am pleased to announce that I am re-starting my weekly radio show, Pathways To Hope "A RADIO SHOW LINKING PEOPLE WHO WANT HELP, WITH THOSE WHO GIVE HELP." My aim is the same as it always has been: to get the word out to Taunton area folks about the wonderful services available to them from human/ social/ community agencies.

In order to do the show, I will of course need guests from agencies to talk about their programs and services. If you are interested in taking advantage of this opportunity to inform greater Taunton radio listeners, then please contact me at your earliest convenience. My preference for now is via e-mail, but if for some reason you want to discuss something, you are certainly also welcome to give me a call. Concretely, being on the show will mean providing me with a bit of information in advance, and showing up about 12:45 PM at the WPEP studio at 41 Taunton Green on an agreed upon Tuesday. I am happy to have either one or two guests represent an agency or program for the 1 hour, live show (with really about 50 minutes of available chat time.) As of now, it is likely that each show will also be taped and will air at least once over the following weekend. (A nice extra occasion of free publicity/visibility!)

In case you wonder, I will be doing the show as a community service program (neither getting paid, nor paying for the air time.) I will, however, give out my business phone number and identify myself as now in the mortgage field at least a couple times per show. I doubt anyone will have an issue with this, but wanted to be upfront about it just in case.

I hope to hear from many of you! When, responding, please indicate the topic or program upon which you want to focus, any specific availability preferences/restrictions, and whether a particular timeframe would be helpful (e.g., due to an awareness week/month campaign, agency upcoming event, new program start, etc.) I will do my best to accommodate requests, in order to be as supportive as possible - with the aim of helping you get your message out to the public.

In case I don't hear from or run into you anytime soon, I wish for you & yours the most refreshing and energizing of holidays in the weeks ahead!

Take care.

Daniel LeBrun

1-800-333-8000 or 508-997-9353

GTHHSC Networking Meeting:

**1/17/06, 9:00, Associates for Human Services, 68 Allison Rd.
CHNA/GATHER connections to the GTHHSC**

? Did You Know That...?



Donate a Phone Campaign funds raised through the recycling program supports the work of Jane Doe Inc. to

end sexual assault and domestic violence. Start your new year by helping others by bringing your old cell phone to the Department of Social Service (DSS) office at 67 Mechanic Street, 2nd floor, in Attleboro. Collection goes through the month of January 2006. For more information, visit www.janedoe.org.



5 A Day Coalition Meeting will be held at the Department of Public Health 250 Washington St. Conference Room on **1/12/06** from 9:00-11:00 AM.

Understanding “Faith-Based Volunteering”: **New Life for an Age-Old Concept**, a free breakfast roundtable for non-profits, will be held **1/19/06**, 8:30-10:00am, at 95 Berkeley St., Boston. Register at www.mass-service.org and follow the links to the training and technical assistance page.



Morton Hospital and Medical Center is offering “Healthy Ways to Manage Menopause”, **1/24/06**, 6:30pm, Free, at the Margaret Stone Conference Room. Pre-registration required. Please call **508-828-7777**

The Massachusetts Community Health Worker Network (MACHW) invites community health workers, supervisors, program managers and policy makers to attend a special forum to discuss credentialing for community health workers (CHWs). Friday, **2/3/06**, 10:00 – 2:30, at the Worcester Public Library, 3 Salem Square, Worcester, MA. Lunch will be provided. RSVP by 1/25/06 to Lisa, **508-856-4852** or lrsciliano@aol.com.

Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention 7th Annual State House Event, Suicide Prevention Awareness “Action for Life, Voices of Hope”, will be held on **2/6/06**, 10:00-11:30am, at the Great Hall, State House, Boston. For information, contact greg.miller@MassPreventsSuicide.org

Road to Recovery Volunteers are needed in the Attleboro area, to drive local cancer patients to and from treatments. The schedule for volunteers is flexible and treatment appointments take place weekdays during business hours. For information call the American Cancer Society at **508-584-9600**, press 3 for receptionist.



MADD Holiday Campaign Raises Awareness About Minimum Drinking Age -

Youth teams from ten communities across Massachusetts raised awareness of the minimum drinking age law by participating in the Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Massachusetts Holiday Sticker Shock Campaign from December 6 through 16. The young activists visited area liquor retailers and placed stickers on cases of beer, wine coolers, and other alcoholic beverages that may appeal to underage drinkers and discourage those over the legal drinking age from providing alcohol to minors.

Legal Hotline Quarterly - The AARP Technical Support for Legal Hotlines Project publishes a quarterly newsletter available to all. The newsletter features in-depth articles about senior hotlines, hotline news, statistics, and other matters of interest to hotline managers. To receive the Quarterly in hard copy please email your address to shoshanna1@comcast.net

Settlement Money Seemingly Spent on Everything But Prevention - Proceeds from the 1998 nationwide tobacco settlement

have been spent on improvements on a race track in Virginia and a golf-court sprinkler system in New York, but only 3 percent of the \$250-billion fund has been spent on antismoking campaigns, ABC News reported Nov. 4. See www.jointogether.org/sa/news/funding/reader/0%2C1854%2C578596%2C00.html

Q&A on Medicare Part D and Dual Transition explains what the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid are doing to address the transition of dual eligible individuals who present at a pharmacy without having been auto-enrolled. See http://questions.cms.hhs.gov/cgi-bin/cmshhs.cfg/php/enduser/std_adp.php?p_faqid=6248

A Nightly Addiction-Related Talk Show, “Recovery: Coast to Coast,” is now available nationally, It runs from 10 p.m. to midnight, and is available via streaming audio at www.recoverycoasttocoast.org.

New Breast Cancer Brochure was designed for women diagnosed early stage breast cancer. It explains surgery and treatment options. Women featured in the brochure are breast cancer survivors who serve as an example of hope in the fight against cancer in the Latino community. Brochure in Spanish: www.cancer.gov/images/Document/s/ded01a2c-b764-462d-8396-1796e9bd5b12/SpBrCancer.pdf Brochure in English: www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/SurgeryChoicesESBCPDF



A Meaty, Salty, Starchy Diet May Impact Chronic Lung Disease - A new study finds that eating mostly meat, refined starches, and sodium may increase the likelihood of developing chronic respiratory symptoms. For more information on environmental health topics, see <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/home.htm>

COALITION/COMMITTEE MINUTES & REPORTS



GATHER Domestic Violence, Violence Prevention. 12/15/05, 3:30, Mass Info Tech

Announcements:

Jen distributed New Hope's "Save the Date" cards for their gala event, "Dancing for Our Stars," Friday, March 31, 2006, Holiday Inn, Mansfield. Tickets are \$75.00 each. On April 2nd, Big Brothers/Big Sisters is hosting a fundraiser, "Bowling for Kids' Sake." New Hope's new Taunton transitional living director is Frances Houston. (Rosalie) DSS Roundtable is a learning opportunity for other agencies; recently lost the Regional Chair.

Old Business:

(1) Contact New Hope regarding returned emails. Jen stated that she's not aware of any technical issues at NH but is aware that some have bounced back.

(2) Contact DPH regarding new Liaison for GATHER. Ongoing.

(3) Contact Rich McMahon regarding pros/cons of attaining 501c3 status for GATHER.

Annemarie & Rich made email contact & will try to get together in early Jan. before the next meeting. As requested by her committee (SEMA-VAV), Annemarie did consult with an attorney & accountant about SEMA-VAV filing incorporation & 501c3 status & will move forward. The process is slow. The primary reason to make this change to allow SEMA-VAV to apply for more grants to support community outreach as well as provide clarity for tax returns. SEMA-VAV remains a volunteer, grass roots committee, not a direct service provider.

The goal is to continue to support & partner with existing GATHER/GTHHS members.

(4) Theme for 2006. "Early Intervention" was tossed around with the concern that it may be too restrictive. Everyone was encouraged to continue to discuss the theme via email/phone before the Jan. mtg. One suggestion was to hold a training session for GATHER/GTHHS members regarding the prenatal effects of DV. Members stressed that we're discussing community resources not direct services.

New Business:

(1) Increase in the GLBT violence, discrimination & lack of sensitivity. School-based perspective is that, in fact, there is an increased participation & support at GSA, PFLAG. Need to identify places within the community where staff sensitivity training is needed, including municipal employees. Suggestions are welcome.

(2) The Stand & Serve Dating, Sexual and Family Violence Resource & Referral packet. This is the resource handout from last month (Rosalie) that was available at the recent Jane Doe, Inc. training in Boston. Helpful information & stats.

(3) 2006 Taunton Health/Wellness Fair - After 11 years, the THS Access Center will not host a wellness fair in March. This has been an excellent opportunity to distribute information related to sexual assault awareness,

domestic violence, bullying, etc. The suggestion was made that GATHER DV step up & host a smaller version during that same time frame (last week in March), possibly at the high school. The theme (for example, "Intervention & Prevention: A Gift of Hope") could preview & focus on April's events: National Sexual Assault Awareness Month & National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Participation from other GATHER/GTHHS members is welcome & encouraged. There are funds available from the DON grant money.

MVP trainings could be tied to the event, host the "Yellow Dress" play in the auditorium, have displays along the walls outside. Use HS resources to develop a video? If we vote to do this, we need to move ahead immediately to secure the site, circulate flyers, set an agenda, etc. Annemarie will coordinate but volunteers are welcome & needed.

SEMA-VAV is planning to complete the Hope Garden at Triumph Head Start in the Spring. Volunteers & materials will be needed.



An invitation to participate will go out to businesses & organizations within the communities served by Head Start in late January. SEMA-VAV is waiting to hear from the OVC regarding a grant request. Will submit another Verizon Wireless Hopeline Grant request to refill the Gift of

Hope Action Kits. Still collecting cell phones.



Announcements:

(1) Dan LeBrun has reactivated his Pathways radio show as a public service to get the word out about local human services/community agencies. If your committee/agency is interested in going on the show, contact Dan at 800-333-8000, 508-997-9353, or lebrun@easternbk.com.

(2) Annemarie received a request from Carmen Maldonado to help support an after-school program at the Boys & Girls Club (pencils, paper, books, etc.). SEMA-VAV has put funds aside to help. Annemarie will get

more details & also outreach the B&G Club regarding resource information/display for violence prevention.

(3) Annemarie would like to pursue ways to cooperate & interact more with the Substance Abuse Committee.

Save the date!

April – National Sexual Assault Awareness Month

April 23-29 – National Crime Victims’ Rights Week: “Victims’ Rights: Strength in Unity”

October 2 – National Day of Unity Candle Light Vigil/Clothesline Project Display

October 28 – National Make a Difference Day

Next Steps:

- Letter to THS requesting space for a 2006 Wellness Fair focused on DV/SA, etc.
- Confirm theme for 2006
- April’s events
- Determine location of committee meetings for 2006

Next Meeting:

GATHER DV/VP: **01/19/06** (3rd Thursday of the Month), 3:30 to 5:00 PM, Mass Info Tech, 9 Taunton Green, rear.

Contact Person: Annemarie Matulis, **508-922-7278** cell, amatulis@tmlp.com or matulisannie@msn.com

GATHER/GTHHSC Substance Abuse Committee. 12/14/05, 3:30, CCBC 

Discussion Highlights:

Coalition Building - New members Kelly Mann and Brian Foss were welcomed to the committee. Membership forms were distributed for addition to the GATHER database. Attleboro/Taunton community connections were discussed as well as extending invitations to “The Road Back” and the Attleboro Area Teen Center. The history of CHNA redistricting and how Attleboro and Taunton were brought together as one committee by a combination of the GTHHSC Substance Abuse Committee and the GATHER Addictions Committee were explained. Factors that encourage independent, separate identities include geographical locations. The committee considered what could be improved by acting as a Coalition, since both communities have services/entities of their own.

(DSS not withstanding in Taunton)

Committee Successes:



• **Guiding Good Choices**, formerly “Preparing for the Drug Free Years” is a successful vehicle for training parents of children 4th grade and over. The 2.5 hour, 5 sessions are offered free of charge due to sponsorship. Trainees agreed to become trainers. A list of those already trained will be brought to the next meeting for agencies or groups who may wish to offer the training.

• **Networking** – Trends are identified and expressed at monthly meetings. An example of networking was a case in which a youngster got into treatment. The Committee will “keep at it” with continued networking.

Members will do outreach to widen the network.

Mini-Grant – A \$1,400 mini-grant was submitted using the Taunton SADD chapter as the youth group component. Elements include a social norms approach, poster messages, focus groups for feedback, and a stipend oversight position.

Technical Assistance – The western Massachusetts consultant will be contacted to discuss technical assistance to GATHER.



Pathways to Hope Radio Show

– Information will be gathered to consider how a radio show could be of use.

Drug Policy – There has been a resurfacing of a school drug policy to include a breathalyzer policy, at a local school.

Next Steps:

- Extend invitations to the Director of the Road Back

(Brian) and the Attleboro Area Teen Center (Kelly)

Bring a list of trainees of "Guiding Good Choices" to the next meeting (Deb)

Create a list of names for member outreach. (Deb, TPD and Pam Proulx; Brian, Attleboro Probation)

Thank Attleboro DSS representative Pam for volunteering to help out with the grant. (Deb)

Contact the consultant about technical assistance (Deb)

Next Meeting: 1/11/06, 3:30, CCBC Family Conference

Room, Mill River Professional Center, 1 Washington St.

Contact Persons:

Arlene Dickinson, 508-223-4691
Lorraine Rosa, 508-823-4822.

 **GTHHSC Monthly Networking Meeting.** 12/20/05, 9:00, Associates for Human Services

Discussion Highlights:



Project YELL – Sabrina attended a weeklong training at the Northeast Counterdrug Training Center. Attendees participated in a grant-writing exercise. This illustrated some of the challenges in grant-writing, beginning with "Defining the Organization". The coalition will consider sending someone to the 3 week trainings (Sabrina is relocating) and get the word out about the next trainings. Contact her at shstrong@aol.com to receive copies of the forms.

Taunton Emergency Taskforce – Senator Pacheco, Representative Fagan and the co-owners of the Bella Roma Restaurant (Elie De Fabritis and Michelle Diamond) sponsored a fundraiser to benefit the ETF fuel fund. They raised approximately \$9,500.

Presentation: Stroke Awareness and Education Guide: Maria Evora-Rosa, DPH – The acronym FAST (face, arm, speech, time) focuses on symptoms and detection of signs that indicate the need to call 911. The kit includes VHS, DVD, 11x17 posters, 8 1/2 x 11 poster/brochure, educator's guide with slide "talking points", and 30 and 40 minute

presentations to tailor to the audience.

Target areas include senior centers, middle schools, African-American community, Fall River, New Bedford, Worcester, Springfield, Lawrence and Lowell.

The kit will stay with GATHER with a log to track when it is borrowed and used, along with a feedback sheet. It covers the following:

- Definition of stroke
- Symptoms and other warning signs
- The 3 types of strokes
- Controllable risk factors

The DPH has presented to Boards of Health to then take the information to the community. Emphasized was the importance of quick intervention and treatments used when stroke symptoms occur.

Announcements:



Pathways to Hope Radio Show – See letter, page 3.

The show takes place Tuesdays from 1:00-2:00, at WPEP. November's show: Rotary Club Auction to benefit charities. December: Christmas show. January: Taunton Schools to Careers.

New England Regional Head Start Meeting – AHS Early Head Start Program received an award

and recognition. There are still reauthorization concerns. The House passed an \$80 million cut to Head Start funding, as well as cuts to other programs such as Medicaid, Childcare, child support and other programs for low income families. The Senate will discuss it tomorrow. People are encouraged to call Senators at 202-224-3121. Other issues include reducing the responsibility/role of policy councils (parent involvement in program governance), increasing educational requirements for Head Start teachers without additional training or salary money, and allowing grantees connected to faith-based organizations to discriminate in hiring only employees who are of that faith.

Next Steps:

- Look into getting scores from the SAMHSA grant (Sabrina)
- Stroke information kit to GATHER (Millie)
- Designate someone to attend Coalition trainings.
- Discuss a new DPH liaison and the CHNA/GATHER connections to the GTHHSC.

Next Meeting: 1/17/05, 9:00, A.H.S.

Contact Person: Richard McMahan, 508-979-7160, 3010.

UPCOMING AREA MEETINGS

Jan 11, 9:00	Greater Taunton Mayor's AIDS Consortium. Morton Café Annex. CAB follows.
Jan 11, 3:30	GATHER/GTHHSC Substance Abuse Committee. CCBC, Mill River Place
Jan 19, 3:30	GATHER Domestic Violence Committee. Mass Info Tech, 9 Taunton Green
Jan 17, 9:00	GTHHSC Networking Meeting. Associates for Human Services, 68 Allison Rd.
Jan 17, 10:15	GTHHSC Child & Family Focus Committee. A.H.S., 68 Allison Rd.
Jan. 25, 8:00	Safe Neighborhood Initiative. Fairfax Gardens Community Center.
Feb. 7, 9:30	Taunton Emergency Task Force. GATRA Administrative Bldg, Conference Room, 10 Oak St.
Feb 8, 9:00	Greater Taunton Mayor's AIDS Consortium. Morton Café Annex. CAB follows.



GTHHSC/GATHER
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