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CABHN FEVER

Volunteers Needed for 2011 CT Homeless "Point-in-time" Count



On Wednesday evening, January 26, tens of thousands of volunteers across the state and country will engage in community-wide efforts to collect information on homeless people in their communities. This "point in time" count is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which funds programs providing services to homeless individuals.

Volunteers will help conduct the "unsheltered" count of individuals who do not currently utilize homeless shelters or transitional housing programs. The level of HUD funding for each community is contingent on the results of the homeless count, so getting an accurate count is critical. The 2011 Statewide count is being coordinated by the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness.

To volunteer for the homeless count in Bridgeport, please contact Helen Lavin, hlavin@theconnectioninc.org; to volunteer in New Haven, please contact Mark Vanacore, mvanacore@theconnectioninc.org; And to volunteer in Middletown, please contact MacKenzie Tyson, mtyson@theconnectioninc.org. Training will be provided the night of the Count.

If you would like more information, or to volunteer for the 2011 Homeless Count in communities other than Bridgeport, Middletown or New Haven, please contact Edward Lazus at elazu@cceh.org or (860) 721-7876 x106.

For more information about the homeless count and issues of homelessness, please visit the CCEH website, <http://www.cceh.org/count/home.htm>.

Virgin Mobile Offering Free Wireless Service to Needy CT Residents

Virgin Mobile USA is offering free wireless phone service to more than 107,000 needy Connecticut residents.

Under the universal access program, recipients get a cell phone and 250 free minutes of wireless voice service a month. Virgin Mobile USA is one of the prepaid wireless units of Sprint Nextel.

Customers eligible for Assurance Wireless include those who participate in Medicaid (Title 19), Food Stamps/ SNAP, State Administered General Assistance Program, Section 8 Housing, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Child Care Certification, State Supplement to the Aged, Blind or Disabled, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Connecticut Energy Assistance Program, Energy Assistance Program, State Appropriated Fuel Assistance Program, Refugee Program, Personal Care Assistance Program, Rental Assistance Program, Eligible Individual living on Native American Tribal Lands, Transition Child Care or ConnPACE.

Eligible residents can apply for Assurance Wireless by calling (toll-free) 800-395-2171, or visiting www.assurancewireless.com.



Dial 2-1-1 for Heating Assistance

Many families in Connecticut struggle to keep their homes heated in winter and often do not know where to turn for help. United Way 2-1-1, Connecticut's toll-free information and referral service, can help residents understand their options and get connected to the resources they need.

In 2010, 2-1-1 received over 50,000 requests for information on energy assistance from those needing help with heat and utility bills.

To learn more about the energy assistance programs available in Connecticut, dial 2-1-1 or visit our online e-library at <http://www.211ct.org/InformationLibrary/energy.asp>.

United Way 2-1-1 operates 24 hours a day, every day of the year. To get help or give help dial 2-1-1 or visit www.211ct.org.

ABC: Screening for Benefits, Educating the Community.

The Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA) is proud to share its new computer-based screening tool that determines potential eligibility for many of the state and federal human service programs offered here in Connecticut: CAFCA's all new **Automated Benefits Calculator, or ABC.**

The ABC tool is user friendly and available to the public through CAFCA's website at www.cafca.org. Wherever internet access is available, people in the communities can access ABC to check for potential eligibility to receive assistance through programs in the areas of nutrition, cash, education, medical, and energy. ABC is also made available in Spanish, and has a feature that allows a user to translate the current screen at any point during the process.

After all of the information is obtained by the questionnaire or case management system, a printable report is then generated that outlines the programs that a user is potentially eligible for as well as what they may not be eligible for and why. ABC isn't just a screening tool, it's also a community resource that offers a wealth of information and knowledge through its detailed descriptions and

(See ABC p. 2)

ABC (Continued from p. 1)

informative 'help' sections.

During ABC's development process, we made sure to create as user-friendly an experience as possible for the public. We offer a glossary of terms, a glossary of programs, built-in calculators to determine monthly income and expenses, a FAQ section, and even 'Help' question marks that open dialog boxes with a variety of explanations throughout the process.

We look forward to feedback from the community as we continue training, outreach, and development with this incredible new tool. Please send any questions or comments to Derek@cafa.org.

Submitted by Derek Haviland

UC Now Available Through Debit Card or Direct Deposit

The CT Department of Labor has "gone green" with a completely paperless system of Unemployment Benefit payments.

Enrollment for Direct Deposit or Debit Card starts 1/10/ 2011. Electronic payments will begin on or after 02/01/2011, and will be made to your bank or credit union account for Direct Deposit, or loaded onto your Debit Card.

Questions may be directed to dol.directbenefits@ct.gov and info at <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/DirectBenefits/Index.htm>.

STRIDE Coat Drive

December 1–February 1

Donate your gently worn men's winter coats to recently released inmates.

- ✓ All sizes welcome
 - ✓ Coats to be distributed to men released from CT correctional facilities
 - ✓ Coats may be dropped off to Quinebaug Valley Community College Career Center or STRIDE offices at QVCC, Danielson, CT
- Contact Jim Grimord for more information at jgrimord@qvcc.com or (860) 412-7215

Branford Brown New Executive Director of Greater Hartford Legal Aid

Branford D. Brown will serve as GHLA's new executive director. Mr. Brown replaces Elam Lantz, Jr. who is retiring after leading GHLA for 11 years. Upon accepting the position, Branford remarked, "GHLA is an impressive law firm, whose staff make a real difference for those living in poverty."

A member of the Ohio Bar, Branford has worked in public interest law throughout his career. In addition to his many years with civil legal aid agencies, Branford worked as a Public Defender and Assistant Prosecutor. He has practiced in the area of family law and has consulted on prisoner reentry issues and responsible fatherhood initiatives.

Branford brings a wealth of legal aid management experience to GHLA from his positions as Managing Attorney at Legal Aid of Western Ohio (LAWO) and as Deputy Director of the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund of Kentucky. A strong supporter of collaboration, he also worked hard to establish and strengthen connections with the communities served by LAWO. During his tenure, the Dayton office launched a number of innovative projects, including the Legal Education for Youth Project, Legal Intervention for Families in Trouble, the Senior Law Project, and the Homeless Intake Project – through which advocates meet with clients at local shelters to provide advice and counsel.

Branford received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Cincinnati in Ohio and graduated from the Ohio State University Honors College with a BA in Sociology. He is a licensed and ordained minister. Branford also serves as a regular planning team member of the Management Information Exchange, which is the primary national provider of management skills training for legal aid organizations.

New Report Shows 1 in 7 CT Residents Report Inability to Afford Enough Food

New data show that 14.57% percent of respondents in Connecticut reported in the first half of 2010 that there were times during the prior twelve months that they did not have enough money to buy food that they needed for themselves or their family, according to the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) analysis of data from the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index.

The data were gathered as part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index project, which has been interviewing 1,000 households daily since January 2008. People were asked, "Have there been times in the past twelve months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?"

For the months of January through June 2010, sixteen states had food hardship rates of 20 percent or higher - at least one in five persons contacted in those states answered that there

had been times in the past twelve months when they did not have enough money to buy food that they or their family needed. Forty-seven states, including Connecticut and the District of Columbia had rates of 14.15 percent or higher - in other words, one in seven or more of those surveyed experienced food hardship.

The report also compares the rates for the twelve months from July 2008 through June 2009 to the twelve months from July 2009 through June 2010, and finds that food hardship in Connecticut decreased over that time period. FRAC chose these twelve month periods in order to ascertain which states saw a statistically significant change from the heart of the recession to the first year of the recovery, albeit a recovery that all agree has been very weak.

The full analysis by FRAC of the Gallup data is available at www.frac.org. (excerpted article from End Hunger CT!)

2011 Legislative Committee Changes and Commissioner Appointments

Human Services Committee:
Sen. Anthony Musto (Co-Chair)
Rep. Peter Tercyak (Co-Chair)

Housing:
Sen. Ed Gomes (Co-Chair)
Rep. Larry Butler (Co-Chair)

Higher Education And Employment Advancement:
Sen. Beth Bye (Co-Chair)
Rep. Roberta Willis (Co-Chair)

Labor and Public Employees:
Sen. Edith Prague (Co-Chair)
Rep. Zeke Zalaski (Co-Chair)

Appropriations:
Sen. Toni Harp (Co-Chair)
Sen. Toni Walker (Co-Chair)

Judiciary:
Sen. Eric Coleman (Co-Chair)
Rep. Gerald Fox (Co-Chair)

Finance:
Sen. Eileen Daily (Co-Chair)
Rep. Patricia Widlitz (Co-Chair)

Public Health:
Sen. Andrea Stillman (Co-Chair)
Rep. Betsy Ritter (Co-Chair)

Commissioner Appointments of Note:

Department of Public Health:

Gov. Dannel Malloy appointed Dr. Jewel Mullen as Commissioner of Public Health. She has an extensive background in working in public health. In addition to her medical degree from Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Mullen has a Masters in Public Health from Yale University and a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard University. Mullen currently directs the Bureau of Community Health and Prevention for the Massachusetts DPH.

Department of Children and Families:

Gov. Malloy appointed State Supreme Court Justice Joette Katz as Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families. Ms. Katz is stepping down from her lifetime appointment to the State Supreme Court to fill the role of DCF Commissioner.

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services:

Gov. Malloy announced he will reappoint current DMHAS Commissioner Patricia Rehmer, praising her for working cooperatively with other state agencies, families and advocacy groups to help people in need and maximize federal resources. Ms. Rehmer has served as DMHAS Commissioner since Nov. 2009.

Appointments have yet to be made for the Department of Labor and the Department of Social Services. All appointments are subject to legislative approval.

Connecticut Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Service Initiative: Testimony Needed

Metro Taxi and Yellow Cab Seek to Provide Equal Access to Taxi Transportation



Metro Taxi and The Yellow Cab Company seek to provide on-demand wheelchair accessible taxi service for persons with a disability who are living and working in the respective company's geographical territory.

Both companies are planning to expand their territories to include portions of Greater Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport and both are applying for an additional 140 permits. Department of Transportation (DOT) hearings have been scheduled and the companies must demonstrate why the proposed expanded territories are essential to public need. **(See Accessible Taxi p. 4)**

VITA Brings Free Tax Preparation Services to Connecticut



The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program will kick off

another season of free tax preparation during the week of January 24th, 2011. Households that earned less than \$49,000 in 2010 are eligible for VITA's free tax preparation service, provided by IRS-certified volunteers at community centers, nonprofit organizations, and other convenient locations across Connecticut.

VITA, a nationwide initiative sponsored by the IRS in partnership with local community coalitions, saves clients an average of \$150 each and ensures that all taxpayers are carefully screened for valuable tax credits, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which can provide over \$5,000 to some low-income working families. VITA tax sites offer online E-file and Direct Deposit, enabling clients to receive refunds as quickly as possible, often in less than a week. Many locations also link clients to other free services such as matched savings accounts, financial coaching, and financial education classes, tools that can help families to leverage their tax refunds into lasting economic stability.

The Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) is one of the organizations coordinating the VITA campaign in the state.

CAHS works with local VITA sites in Bridgeport, Danbury, New Haven, Norwalk, Stamford, Waterbury, Meriden and Torrington. Co-Opportunity, Inc., another nonprofit organization, coordinates VITA in the Greater Hartford area, and several additional groups coordinate local campaigns in other areas of the state. Support for the program is provided by the IRS, local and regional United Ways and foundations, banks, and dedicated volunteers.

VITA site hours of operation vary; interested clients or service providers **(See VITA p. 4)**

VITA (cont. from p.3)

can dial 2-1-1 or visit www.211ct.org or www.irs.gov for directions and hours beginning in mid-January 2011.

For more information about VITA and kick-off events, please contact Shannon Houston at the Connecticut Association for Human Services, (860) 951-2212, ext. 225, or shouston@cahs.org or go to www.cahs.org/programs-vita.asp.

Accessible Taxis (cont. from p. 3)**Your testimony is needed for this initiative!**

Compelling testimony is needed for each territory to demonstrate that the proposed service is essential to fulfilling everyday transportation needs.

To attend one of the hearings and/or testify, please contact:

Daria Smith at daria.ctsilc@gmail.com or call (860)-681-7599 or →

Debbie Melaragno at deb.ctsilc@gmail.com or call (860)-523-0126

Call if you need assistance with transportation and to obtain a time slot for testifying.

Hearing location:

The Connecticut Department of Transportation, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT 06131. There will be signs directing attendees to the hearing room.

Hearing Schedule:

The Yellow Cab Company/Green Access Taxi is scheduled from 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 18; Wednesday, January 19; and Thursday, January 20th. Testifying times are: 10 a.m.; 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Metro Taxi/Metro Access is scheduled from 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 22; Wednesday, February 23; and Thursday, February 24th. Testifying times are: 10 a.m.; 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Upcoming CABHN/FESN Meeting

**Friday
February 18th
9:30-11:30 A.M.**

Location:**AARP**

**21 Oak Street
Hartford**



The Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs (CABHN) is a statewide network of individuals, community groups and organizations which supports and promotes advocacy on low-income issues. For more information, please call (860) 278-5688.

Return Service Requested

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**Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT and
CABHN (Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs)**
44 Capitol Ave., Suite 301
Hartford, CT 06106

An Effective Use of the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund

The Community Action Agency of New Haven had the opportunity to serve youth and adults with TANF-ECF funding. The funding was directed to the New Haven Employment and Achievement Collaborative, which served TANF- eligible youth ages 14-19, as well as adults from New Haven and the Lower Naugatuck Valley region. The program had six funded partners and eight site participants. Both New Haven and Naugatuck Valley are characterized by high levels of unemployment and poverty, creating a tremendous demand for programs that seek to address job training and work experience.

The Employment and Achievement Collaborative was designed to hire eligible individuals with high motivation for work. Many of the potential candidates for the program desired and benefited from direct experience in the workplace. A positive attitude, and a willingness to make a positive contribution, helped to create a successful program experience.

The hands on and labor intensive activities provided by the collaborative partner would help new workers to enter the workforce and use critical thinking and interpersonal skills that are critical in service-driven economies. Participants gained experience while they learned on the job. Program partners, Dwight Development Corp, TEAM, Higher Heights, Solar Youth, Youth Rights Media, The New Haven Diaper Bank, New Haven Healthy Start, and the Children's Museum of New Haven, are charged to serve, motivate, and help people succeed regardless of barriers and challenges. The program hired 158 individuals for short-term assignments to work as staff assistants in youth programs, community survey administrators, as customer service workers, data entry specialists, tutorial support service workers, and warehouse assistants.

Many of the participants were fully capable and ready to work, but they had not been able to navigate the complexities of work-readiness programs and the job interview. Many learned on the job, and remained on staff after the TANF program ended. Finding adequate placements and the right skill match proved key to program success.

Submitted by Amos Smith

Save the Date:

CABHN and Family Economic Success
(FES)

Network Legislative Breakfast!

Tuesday, February 22nd

9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

2nd Floor Atrium

Legislative Office Building, Hartford

Join us for a day of outreach to legislators!

*Email Ellen Small Billard for more information at
esmall@larcc.org*

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