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CABHN FEVER

CT EITC Day Kicks off VITA Season and State EITC Campaign



Connecticut EITC Day will kick off the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance season and the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) campaign on Thursday, January 31, at 11 a.m. at the Legislative Office Building. This day was chosen to coincide with the National EITC Kick-Off Day being promoted by the Internal Revenue Service. The press conference will be used to highlight:

- *The Federal EITC as a powerful tool to reduce poverty*
- *The critical role of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Sites in providing free tax preparation services to low-wage earners*
- *The need for Connecticut to pass a State EITC in the 2008 session.*

Speakers at the press conference will include Senate and House legislators, VITA sites, the Internal Revenue Services, tax filers, and State EITC advocates.

If you would like to co-sponsor the press conference, please contact Maggie Adair, Policy Director at the Connecticut Association for Human Services, madair@cahs.org or (860) 951-2212, ext. 239.

If you or your organization would like to receive CABHN Fever by email or would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact dbrown@larcc.org or call 860-278-5688.

Upcoming Immigrant Workers's Rights Conference

The Immigrant Workers' Rights Conference will be held on February 2nd, 2008 at 9AM at Souther Connecticut State University. Your support is needed!

The conference will have two goals:

- 1) *To provide an overview of immigrant workers' legal rights across a broad range of employment-related issues, including: wage and hour laws, employment discrimination, worker's compensation, health and safety, interactions with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the workplace.*
- 2) *Promoting leadership development and movement-building among immigrant communities and affiliated organizations in Connecticut.*

If you or your organization would like to:

- 1) *offer financial support as a co-sponsor;*
- 2) *help, plan or participate in this conference; or*
- 3) *submit possible topics of discussion;*

please contact Cecil J. Thomas, Esq. of Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Inc., 999 Asylum Avenue, 3rd Floor, Hartford, CT06105, cthomas@ghla.org, Tel: 860-541-5017 Fax: 860-541-5050. **Please see this month's CABHN Fever Insert for more details.**

CTMOM To Provide Free Dental Services April 12th & 13th



The Connecticut Foundation for Dental Outreach is proud to introduce the Connecticut Mission of Mercy (CTMOM). CTMOM will be a large scale, multi-chair dental clinic that travels around the state annually to underserved areas. The concept is to create a multi-day dental clinic in a large facility and then open the clinic door to the community. Dental services will be provided to anyone (children, adults, and the elderly) who is without dental insurance and in a low income situation. Patients will be screened and treated based on their most urgent dental needs.

The best part about CTMOM is that this treatment is absolutely FREE!

Spread the word to anyone you know who needs dental treatment but cannot access or afford it! This event has been held in other states and has served an amazing number of people. CTMOM will be staffed by volunteer dentists, UConn dental students, dental hygienists and dental assistants. They will provide cleanings, fillings and extractions at no cost!

This years event will be held at the former Tolland High School, 1 Eagle Hill Drive, Tolland on Saturday April 12, 2008 from 5am to 5pm and Sunday, April 13 from 5am to Noon. Get there early - people travel from all over and spend the night waiting in line to be seen!

Did you know that 94,908 children in Connecticut are living in poverty? That's 11.6% of all children. Find out what you can do! See page 2 for info on the Connecticut Campaign to End Childhood Hunger.

SCHIP Update

Despite broad public and Congressional support, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was not reauthorized this year. Instead, Congress passed a bill, the Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP Extension Act of 2007 (S. 2499) that will, among other things, extend SCHIP until March 31, 2009. S. 2499 provides sufficient funding so states can continue covering the current 6 million children enrolled in the program. President Bush is expected to sign S. 2499.

The limits on the SCHIP program adopted in an August 17 directive issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) were not addressed in the reauthorization. The directive effectively caps eligibility for SCHIP at 250% of the federal poverty line, which is \$42,925 a year for a family of three in 2007. Connecticut covers children up to 300% of the federal poverty level in its SCHIP program, HUSKY B. There is support in Congress to revoke the CMS directive before it becomes fully effective in August of 2008. Further activity is expected on this issue in 2008.

2008 H.S. Seniors Apply Now!

The Hartford Foundation College Scholarship Program is open to graduating high school seniors in the Greater Hartford region (includes Hartford and 29 surrounding towns).

If you meet the following criteria, you are encouraged to apply for one of the \$3,000 "renewable" scholarships. That means you may receive up to \$12,000 over four years to help pay for college tuition, fees, and room and board.

Send in your application for a Hartford Foundation College Scholarship if:

- You are graduating in 2008 from a high school Greater Hartford area.
- You will be enrolled full-time in a

(See Apply Now! p. 4)

Connecticut Campaign to End Childhood Hunger



End Hunger Connecticut! has launched a three-year campaign to end childhood hunger in Connecticut. At the organization's annual meeting on December 19, Executive Director Lucy Nolan outlined the plan, which will assess the current use of federal food programs and create an effective roadmap to increase the reach of those programs, not only putting food on the table for Connecticut's children but also putting additional federal money in the bank for Connecticut.

Among the 10 strategies to reach the goal of ending childhood hunger:

- 1** make nutritious school breakfasts available to Connecticut children. Currently 55.5% of schools participate in the school breakfast program.
- 2** offer better nutrition education programs so families will have the knowledge and skills to make healthy food choices
- 3** increase Food Stamp participation to 75% of eligible residents (from the current 66%)
- 4** increase access to fresh, nutritious, affordable food in neighborhoods
- 5** increase the participation of providers of child and elderly care programs which serve families in need in federal food programs for after-school snacks and meals (up to 50% participation)
- 6** double the percent of eligible children participating in Summer Nutrition programs (from 26% to 52%)
- 7** increase participation in the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program to 80% of eligible pregnant women and children
- 8** support and educate the public about food pantries and other charitable programs so that low-income families have access to nutritious food provided in dignified ways
- 9** create innovative tactics to ensure that all eligible families receive information about food and nutrition programs available to them
- 10** Help low-income families achieve greater economic security through passage of a state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and increased access to Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) programs and the federal EITC.

Become a partner in ending childhood hunger in Connecticut. For information, call Ellen Graham, Policy Coordinator at EndHunger Connecticut! at (860) 560-2100 (ext. 10) or go to www.endhungerct.org.

Need Help filling out the on-line FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)? Onsite one-on-one FAFSA assistance is offered at the Hartford Public Library beginning on January 23 through February 27 (6 weeks): Wednesday 5:00–8:00pm. No appointment necessary—first come, first served. For more upcoming workshops in the area, go to www.hplct.org

2008 Legislative Issues

The 2008 legislative session starts on February 6 and because it is a “short” session this year, will last only until May 7. With such a tight timeline, advocates will be working hard to quickly focus legislators on their issues. Proposals that are of particular interest to CABHN readers include:

Increasing income eligibility for elderly or disabled Medicaid recipients

The current income eligibility level is about 60-65% of the FPL and has not been increased since 1990. Those who are over the income limit can “spend down” to become eligible if they have high medical costs but this is a complicated process. This proposal would apply an income disregard to raise the income limit to comparable eligibility levels as adults on HUSKY.

TFA Reforms: Adopting a new exemption from TFA time limits for working disabled

This would be targeted to individuals who are working a limited number of hours because of their disability. Because they work at all, they are not eligible for an incapacity exemption. This proposal would allow them to continue to work but not be subject to TFA time limit cut-offs.

Exploring options for easing the income cliffs for families moving from welfare to work.

This may include providing an income supplement to working families who have recently left welfare.

Adding homelessness or risk of homelessness as one of the specific barriers to employment that DSS considers when granting TFA time limit extensions.

Establishing a state earned income tax credit (EITC). The concept of a state EITC has received broad bipartisan support because of its proven ability to increase financial stability for low-wage workers.

Mandate paid sick leave in the workplace.

Increase the state minimum wage.

Restoring the low-income housing PILOT and tax abatement programs

The public housing Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program pays the municipal property tax obligation for housing authorities with state-assisted family public housing (known as “State Moderate Rental Housing”). The low- and moderate-income housing Tax Abatement Program pays part of the property tax for about 6,000 units of privately owned subsidized housing. Both programs, which together cost about \$3.9 million per year, were defunded in the 2007 state budget.

Protecting low-income homeowners from predatory lending and foreclosure

The making of unaffordable and inappropriate loans to low-income homeowners has created a nationwide default and foreclosure crisis that impacts not only individual households but entire urban neighborhoods.

Preserving the weakening of protections for renters in the eviction process. Legislation may again be introduced that would jeopardize due process protections for renters or undercut their ability to defend an eviction.

Retaining a strong Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure. One of Connecticut’s key laws for combatting exclusionary zoning in suburbs and outlying towns is the Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure (also known as “8-30g”). Legislation has been proposed every year to repeal or undermine it. Housing advocates will strongly oppose all such efforts.

2007-08 Federal Appropriations

The final days of the first session of Congress came to a close with passage of a \$555 billion omnibus appropriations bill, H.R. 2764, which provides funding for 11 of the 12 spending bills Congress must pass each year. (The bill funding the Pentagon’s regular budget, not including the wars, had passed earlier.) In order to avoid a presidential veto of the omnibus bill, Congress trimmed over-all spending in bills it had passed and added \$70 billion in unrestricted funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The President is expected to sign the bill.

Congressional leaders reduced the total amount of funds appropriated to President Bush’s original proposal but distributed the money to different programs. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) program was funded at \$2.57 billion, exceeding the President’s proposed level by \$788 million. The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program that serves nutritious foods to pregnant women, babies, and young children will receive enough funding to support the anticipated WIC caseload. The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program which funds community action programs and other agencies that provide home energy aid, weatherization, job training, transportation, and/or administer Head Start programs and other services received additional funding above FY ’07 levels when adjusted for inflation. President Bush had proposed elimination of the CSBG.

The omnibus bill maintains the current funding level for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) which funds child care, foster care and other child welfare services, meals on wheels, adult day services for the elderly, and other services. The President proposed cutting SSBG funding by \$500 million. Education for disadvantaged students, special education, job training, Section 8 housing, community health centers, Pell Grants, and Head Start all did better

(See Approps p. 4)

Approps (Cont. from p. 3)

in the final bill than in the President's budget. Funding for many other human needs programs continue the erosion begun by cuts in 2002.

(adapted from an article by the Coalition for Human Needs, www.chn.org)

Apply Now!

(Cont. from p. 2)

four-year college or university in September 2008.

- You need financial aid in order to attend college.
- You are in the top third of your class and have a good academic record.
- You have been involved as a volunteer in school, community, or other extracurricular activities.

The Hartford Foundation Scholarship

Application can be downloaded and filled out on your computer or printed out and filled out by hand or on a typewriter. For more information, go to www.hfpg.org and click on College Scholarships Directory. **Hurry! The deadline for applications is February 6th!**

Correction!

December's CABHN Fever contained the wrong website for the Connecticut Point-in-Time Count 2008.

The correct info: Sign up to volunteer and learn more about the count at the Reaching Home website, www.ctreachinghome.org. You may also contact Gretchen Upholt at gupholt@cceh.org - CT Coalition to End Homelessness Project Assistant, CT Counts 2008, or Kate Kelly at kate@ctpartnershiphousing.com, Reaching Home Campaign Manager.

CABHN Meetings

Upcoming Meeting

CABHN/FESN Meeting

Friday, February 8

9:30-11:30 am

CRT

555 Windsor Ave.

Hartford, CT

Topic:

**Review of Governor's
Budget Proposal**

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.

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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

SAVE THE DATE

Immigrant Workers Rights Conference

February 2, 2008

9 am to 5pm

Southern Connecticut State University
New Haven, CT

For more information Contact

Rafael Rodriquez Cruz (860)541-5052 or RRodriquezCruz@ghla.org

Cecil Thomas (860)541-5017 or CThomas@ghla.org



Why You Should Come?

All of us, no matter where we are from, work for a living. Getting fair treatment and respect for one's rights on the job should not be harder for immigrant workers than for everyone else. Please join us at an important conference that will talk about the unique problems faced by immigrants at work in Connecticut.

What Will You Learn About?

Morning Session: Training and discussion on the rights of immigrants on the job, including the right to be paid according to the law, the right to fair treatment, and the right to a safe workplace.

Afternoon session: Presentations and discussions on workers centers, wage clinics, and other ways of organizing to protect immigrants rights at work. Building a network of support to respond to federal ICE raids.

Sponsored by: ACLU-CT, Alianca Brasileira, American Friends Service Committee, CBA/YLS Public Interest Law Committee, CILU/CIPU. Citizens for Economic Opportunity, Collaborative Center for Justice, CT Center for New Economy, CT Legal Services, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Inc., Hartford Areas Rally Together, CT Jobs With Justice, Livingston, Adler, Pulda, Meiklejohn & Kelly, PC, National Lawyers Guild CT Chapter, New Haven Legal Assistance, SEIU Local 32-BJ, The South Asian Bar Association of CT, UE Local 222, UE Northeast Region, UNITE/HERE Local 217, Worker and Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic of Yale Law School (**Endorsements as of 12/4/07**)

RESERVE LA FECHA

Conferencia sobre los Derechos de los Trabajadores Indocumentados

2 de febrero de 2008

9am - 5pm

Southern Connecticut State University
New Haven, CT

Para más información, favor de contactar al Lcdo.

Rafael Rodríguez Cruz, 999 Asylum Avenue Third Floor, Hartford, CT,
(860) 541-5052, rrodriguezacruz@ghla.org.



¿Por qué debe usted asistir a la conferencia del 2 de febrero de 2008?

Todas las personas, no importa quiénes sean, tienen que trabajar para vivir. Obtener respeto por los derechos en el lugar de empleo, así como un trato justo, no debería ser más difícil para los trabajadores inmigrantes que para las demás personas. Por favor únase a nosotros y nosotras en esta importante conferencia donde se hablará de los problemas específicos que confrontan los inmigrantes en los lugares de trabajo en Connecticut.

¿Sobre qué puede usted aprender en esta conferencia?

Sesión de la Mañana: Entrenamiento y discusión acerca de los derechos de los inmigrantes en el trabajo, incluyendo el derecho a ser pagados de acuerdo con la ley, el derecho a un trato justo y el derecho a un lugar de trabajo libre de accidentes.

Sesión de la tarde: Presentaciones y discusiones acerca de centros de ayuda a los trabajadores, clínicas salariales y otras formas de organizar para proteger los derechos de los inmigrantes en el lugar de empleo. Se tratará el tema de construir una red de apoyo para responder efectivamente a las redadas federales de ICE.

Auspiciada por: ACLU-CT, Alianza Brasileira, American Friends Service Committee, CBA/YLS Public Interest Law Committee, Citizens for Economic Opportunity, Collaborative Center for Justice, CT Center for a New Economy, Connecticut Legal Services, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Inc., Hartford Areas Rally Together, Jobs with Justice, Livingston, Adler, Pulda, Meiklejohn & Kelly, P.C., National Lawyers Guild-CT Chapter, New Haven Legal Assistance, Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ, South Asian Bar Association of Connecticut, UE Local 222, CILU/CIPU, UE Northeast Region, Unite Here Local 217, Worker and Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic of Yale Law School. (12/4/07)