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# CABHN FEVER



## **Extra Money for Working People: The Earned Income Tax Credit**

If you work, but don't earn enough, or if you worked during 2003 and are currently unemployed, you may be eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC is a special tax credit for low or middle income working individuals that reduces the amount of Federal taxes owed and in many cases, can result in a refund check. Based on your earned income and family size, you may be able to get over \$4,000 back just for filing your income tax return!

### **Who Can Get The EITC?**

Single or married people working either full or part time in 2003 can qualify for the EITC, depending on their income and family size. To claim this credit,

You must have earned income in 2003.

Your earned income and modified adjusted gross income must be less than:

- \$11,230 if single;
- \$12,230 if married filing jointly;
- \$29,666 if single with one qualifying child
- \$30,666 if married filing jointly with one qualifying child;
- \$33,692 if single with two or more qualifying children; or
- \$34,692 if married filing jointly with two or more qualifying children

There are several more important rules. For more details, please go to the IRS website [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and check out Publication 596.

### **How do you get the EITC?**

You can figure out the EITC yourself when you do your taxes, have the IRS figure it out for you, or use a free service such as VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Site. To find the VITA Site nearest you, please call 1-800-829-1040 or go to the IRS website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

To find out more about the EITC, VITA Sites, other tax credits, and ways to help your budget, go to this great website: [www.beehive.org/money/money-in-pocket.asp](http://www.beehive.org/money/money-in-pocket.asp) or contact Deborah Noble at 860-278-5688 x12. ❖



### **Help Starts Here: Dial 2-1-1**

Whether you want to give or get help, Infoline at 2-1-1 is the confidential, free, number to call. An Infoline caseworker can help you find information, learn about your options, or deal with a crisis. As we get ready for winter, Infoline can help by telling you about:

- ✓ Over 200 places that offer Thanksgiving Baskets
- ✓ Over 150 places that offer children's toys & holiday baskets in December.
- ✓ Where you can get winter coats or energy assistance. ❖

## **Shirts Off Our Backs**



October 27th, the Shirts Off Our Backs Event, organized by the Welfare Made A Difference Campaign and the National Welfare Engine Committee, took place in the Upper Senate Park in Washington, DC. Despite torrential rains, the urgency of the day's message of this powerful event was not dampened.

That message was that the TANF Reauthorization bills before the House and Senate will take the shirts off the backs of poor people. WMAD, in conjunction with many national groups, are asking that Congress "Do No Harm" and extend TANF as is for two years rather than compromising the bills before the House and Senate. There were over 200 shirts sent to Washington, DC from 23 states (and solidarity shirts and a petition from an organization in India). The variety of messages from across the country brought home to DC the impact of current welfare policy.

Seventy of the shirts were displayed and included a number from two Connecticut groups: Mothers For Justice (New Haven) and In-The-Making (Waterbury). Mothers For Justice had their own "Shirts Off Our Backs" display on the New Haven Green on October 15<sup>th</sup> and then donated 15-20 shirts for the Washington, DC event. In Washington, there were shirts of all shapes and sizes, each with its own story. The display was set up under a tent from 8:30 AM - 1:30 PM in the Upper Senate Park located right beside the Senate buildings and the Capitol.

The press conference began at 9:30 am and included eight amazing speakers from Nevada, Montana, Oregon, Florida, Connecticut,

**See Shirts page 2**

## Connecticut Scores Low In Providing School Breakfast To Low-Income Children

Connecticut ranks third to the last among states in the nation in providing a free or reduced price breakfast for those who are eligible, according to a report released by the Food Research Action Center (FRAC) in Washington DC. Along with its status in the lowest ten among schools that participate in both the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program, it is also among the lowest performing states in the nation for student participation, reaching only 33.4 percent of low-income students with school breakfast per 1000 reached with school lunch.

End Hunger Connecticut! will call on the Connecticut General Assembly to propose legislation requiring that all schools in which 40 percent or more of the students attending the school are eligible for a free or reduced price lunch also offer a school breakfast program. Current Connecticut regulations require all elementary schools in which 80 percent of students are eligible to participate. New Haven, Hartford and Bridgeport are some of the school districts that are currently using the program

Permanently authorized by Congress in 1975 and reauthorized with strong bipartisan support in 1988, the School Breakfast Program assists schools in providing a nutritious morning meal to children. School breakfast funding is available on an entitlement basis to eligible institutions (including public and non-profit private schools and residential child care institutions). The federal government reimburses schools for all or part of the cost of every meal, depending on the family income of the participating child.

To view the Food Action Resource Center's report School Breakfast Report Card: 2003 please visit [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org) or call End Hunger Connecticut! for a copy (860) 560-2100. ❖

## Help For Home Health Care Shoppers



On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, the federal government launched a new home health care rating system. The program, called Home Health Compare, allows anybody with a computer to review the track records of home health agencies in their states as long as the agency is certified to treat patients covered by Medicare. More than 90 percent of the 90 home health agencies operating in Connecticut are certified by Medicare.

The website, [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov), is arranged by state. Within each state home care agencies are named and the services they offer are listed. Each agency's track record in improving patients' health is compared with state and national averages.

The system is designed to help patients or families choose a home health provider by offering comparative information on how well each agency achieves 11 different goals, considered benchmarks for improving health.

The tasks include helping patients get dressed, bathe, use the toilet, walk or move and get out of bed more independently. Agencies are also scored on their ability to teach patients to take medicines properly, reduce pain when the patient moves and avoid unplanned medical care or hospital admissions.

Currently, there is a similar comparison shopping guide for nursing homes at this website: [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). ❖

*Excerpted from 11/4/03 article by Hartford Courant staff writer Hilary Waldman*

## 2004 Social Security and SSI Figures

The Social Security Administration has announced that monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits will increase 2.1% in 2004. As a result, the monthly individual SSI benefit amount will increase from \$552 to \$564. The Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) will begin in January 2004 for people who receive Social Security benefits and on December 31, 2003, for people who receive SSI benefits.

*For a printer-friendly fact sheet of the new Soc. Sec. figures in English and Spanish: [www.socialsecurity.gov/pressoffice/factsheets/colafacts2004-alt.htm](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pressoffice/factsheets/colafacts2004-alt.htm) For more about the new Cost-of-Living Adjustment, see the SSA news release:*

*<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pressoffice/pr/2004cola-pr-alt.htm> . ❖*

## Shirts (continued from page 1)

Minnesota, Washington and New York. This was followed by a reading of the shirts from 12:30-1:30PM after which many of the DC based co-sponsors joined the event to read stories of hardship and triumph. Represented that day were: Americans for Democratic Action, Coalition on Human Needs, NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Organization for Women, and the Women's Committee of 100.

Pulling this event together was an amazing group effort and congratulations go out to all who

contributed to its success in any way. The shirts were delivered to over 23 legislators and staff and were very well received by the Senate and House Offices. Since the idea proved to be so popular, WMAD is now drafting a plan to create a traveling display of the shirts from DC event.

Event photos will be posted soon to [www.wmadcampaign.org](http://www.wmadcampaign.org). For more information about this and other TANF related events please contact Deborah Noble at [dnoble@larcc.org](mailto:dnoble@larcc.org) or call 860-278-5688 (x12). ❖



## Rebuilding A Healthy Connecticut

This summer, the General Assembly and the Governor outlined radical changes in the health care programs which serve people with disabilities, very low-income children and their families and people who are elderly or very poor in the budget implementer bills. The proposed changes would weaken the foundation of health care delivery to people who rely on HUSKY, SAGA and Medicaid in the state. Implementing the proposed changes has been more difficult than was expected.

### HUSKY/Medicaid

Many of the changes to HUSKY and Medicaid require approval of a waiver by the federal government. Putting together that waiver is taking longer than expected. Here's the Department of Social Services' new timetable for changes (November changes have been implemented):

#### Nov. 1, 2003

■ HUSKY A and Medicaid \$2.00 co-pay for outpatient services (visits to doctor's office, for instance)

Co-pay for prescription drugs for HUSKY A, Medicaid and SAGA recipients increased from \$1.00 to \$1.50.

#### Feb. 1, 2004

■ Increased premiums and increased co-pay maximum for HUSKY B recipients

#### Apr. 1, 2004

■ Premiums imposed on certain Medicaid recipients (fee-for-service "medically needy" recipients)

#### July 1, 2004

■ Restructured benefit package and increased co-pays for HUSKY B recipients

#### July, 2004

■ waiver application for HUSKY A/ Medicaid submitted to federal government

#### July, 2005

■ waiver implemented; changes in HUSKY A and Medicaid

Advocates and legislators are drafting a bill to repeal the authority for the waiver that was contained in the budget implementer bill. This bill will be presented in the legislative session that begins in February, 2004.

## Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation (TEUC)

Congressmembers may be adjourning for the year as soon as November 21, 2003 and the federal Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation (TEUC) program will begin to phase out at the end of this year. But before they leave, Congress should consider several bills that would continue federal extended unemployment benefits for workers in states with high unemployment. Leadership in the House and Senate, as well as the White House, have been nearly silent about their intentions for this program. The little bit of See TEUC p.4

### What Can You Do?



**Call your Senator and Representative and tell them,**

*"Rebuild a healthy Connecticut. Restore Medical Benefits/ Medicaid. Sign on to the legislation that keeps our kids, the elderly, our families healthy!"*

House Dems 1-800-842-1902

Senate Dems 1-800-842-1420

House Reps 1-800-842-1423

Senate Reps 1-800-842-1421

Governor's Office 1-800-406-1527

## Putting A Human Face On Budget Cuts

### Your Chance To Let Legislators Know What The Cuts Really Mean

One Connecticut will be holding regional meetings, hosted by local legislators, to give people a chance to tell their stories about the human impact of state budget cuts. Nine forums are planned around the state, in the evening, so that people won't have to travel to Hartford to have their voices heard. It's important that people affected by budget cuts come to these meetings and let legislators know that budget decisions are hurting their constituents! **Here's details about the meetings planned for December.**

Date	Town	Place	Host
Dec. 1; 6pm	New Britain	City Hall	Rep. Tercyak and O'Brian
Dec. 2; 6 pm	New Haven	Career High School	CCA
Dec. 3; 6:30 pm	West Hartford	City Hall	Mayor Jonathan Harris
Dec. 3; 6:00 pm	Willimantic	West Ave. Comm. Ctr	Rep. Merrill
Dec. 10; 6 pm	Hartford	City Hall Function Room	Sen. Coleman

*In January, meetings are being planned in Manchester (details to be determined); in Waterbury on January 8; in Meriden on Jan. 15; and in Danbury on Jan. 19. For more information please contact Cheri Quickmire at 203-498-4240 or onect@ctkidslink.org*

**TEUC** (continued from page 3)

information that has come out of Congress indicates that Congressional leaders are in no hurry to act and are considering scaling the program back.

Each month, hundreds of thousands of new individuals still require assistance from the TEUC program. Without Congressional action, starting January 1, 2004, workers who exhaust their regular, state benefits will not be eligible for additional federal TEUC benefits. Even after accounting for the recent growth in employment, the overall labor market is weaker now than it was when the TEUC program was established in March of 2002.

Waiting until January would be a damaging approach for many of the unemployed. Starting in January, about 80,000 unemployed workers across the country are likely to exhaust their regular benefits *each* week. Sadly, the

large majority of unemployment insurance recipients do not have substantial enough savings to sustain their families through a lengthy bout of unemployment. A widely-cited study found that more than 80 percent of workers who become unemployed have savings equal to less than two months of income when they lose their jobs.

What can you do? Send a message about the urgent need for jobless benefits to President Bush with a copy to YOUR Senators and Representative, by going to: <http://www.unionvoice.org/campaign/nov7ui/x3d88d227dkxj>

For more information like this and other employment issues please visit Job Watch at [www.jobwatch.org](http://www.jobwatch.org) ❖



**Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT and CABHN** (Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs)  
80 Jefferson Street  
Hartford, CT 06106


**CABHN Meetings**  
*held 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of the month*
**9:30 - 11:30 am**
**Upcoming Meetings:**
**December 5<sup>h</sup>**
**January 9<sup>h</sup>**

 Community Renewal Team  
(CRT)

555 Windsor St., Hartford

*Topics:*

Strategies for the upcoming session.

*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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