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CABHN FEVER

Keep your Utilities On! Statewide Legal Services Sponsors Utility Days

Are you worried about a utility shut off this Spring? Are you facing utility payments that you can't afford? Statewide Legal Services (SLS) may be able to help you. Once again, SLS is offering Utility Days where legal advocates will try to come up with a workable payment plan for both you and the utility company. There are several Utility Days being held around Connecticut. See the schedule below to find the one nearest you.

If you have any questions, please call Bonnie Roswig at SLS, (860) 344-8096 ext. 3002.

- ✓ **April 2**
Team, Inc.
30 Elizabeth Street
Derby, CT
10 a.m to 2 p.m.
- ✓ **April 9**
South Congregational Church
Hartford, CT
9 a.m to 1 p.m.
- ✓ **April 23**
ITB Building
185 Main Street
New Britain, CT
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- ✓ **April 30**
Hall of Records
200 Orange Street
New Haven, CT

Did you know?

In 1979, the top 1 per cent of the U.S. population earned, on average, 33.1 times as much as the lowest 20 percent. In 2000, this multiplier grew to 88.5.

2005 Poverty Guidelines from Health and Human Services

Size of family	* Poverty Guideline
1.....	\$9,570
2.....	12,830
3.....	16,090
4.....	19,350
5.....	22,610
6.....	25,870
7.....	29,130
8.....	32,390

*Guidelines for Alaska and Hawaii differ from above.

For family units with more than 8 members, add \$3,260 for each additional member. (The same increment applies to smaller family sizes also, as can be seen in the figures above.)

These guidelines went into effect on February 18, 2005. For more information, go to <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/05poverty.shtml> ♦



Women in the Trades

Each year, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) sponsors the annual Women in the Trades and Nontraditional Occupations Networking Exchange, providing women with the opportunity to meet with employers and trade unions to obtain information about apprenticeship and career opportunities.

This conference attracts women who work in the trades, protective services, and technology-related

(See WIT on p.2)

Summer Food and Summer Fun

The summer is a time when many family's food budgets are stretched to the limit. The Summer Food Service Program is meant to fill in the nutrition gap that is left when kids are home for the summer and not receiving meals at school. The CT State Department of Education is seeking new partners in feeding kids in the summer. Please call Maureen Staggenborg, Director, Child Nutrition Programs, 860-807-2070 today about operating a program in your community.

If you want outreach materials or have an interest in promoting the program please call Sally Mancini at End Hunger CT!, 860-560-2100 ext.17. ♦

April 15th is approaching fast!

EITC Information

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a federal income tax credit for low-income workers who are eligible. The credit reduces the amount of tax an individual owes, and may be returned in the form of a refund.

Last year, 21 million families with two or more children qualified for the Earned Income Tax Credit providing tax refunds of up to \$4,300. IRS studies indicate millions more families are eligible for this tax credit but fail to claim it. To locate a VITA site near you, call 1-800-829-1040 or call Infoline 211.

You can also go to www.thebeehive.org/money/eic/faq.asp for answers to frequently asked questions about the EITC. ♦

Husky Update!

On March 10th, Governor Rell signed Public Act 05-1, which extends HUSKY A benefits until June 30th for the 13,000 working parents who were scheduled to have their medical benefits cut off on April 1. Connecticut's legislature had given overwhelming bipartisan approval for this measure over the last few weeks. The state will use \$7.5 million from this year's projected budget surplus to pay for the additional three months of insurance for these parents.

This action sets the stage for further efforts to permanently raise the HUSKY A income guidelines to 185% of the FPL for parents with children receiving HUSKY. In signing the bill, Gov. Rell made it clear that she has reservations about permanently extending these benefits past June 30th. Advocates estimate that it will annually cost between \$40-50million to restore these benefits on an ongoing basis. It is important to note however, that because of reimbursements through federal Medicaid matching funds, the actual cost to the state would be between \$20-25m. This cost represents a wise investment in health care for our uninsured residents.❖

WIT (cont. from p.1)

careers - or would like to. Many are interested in changing careers and appreciate the opportunity to learn about job openings and training opportunities that the Career Fair portion of the conference offers. In addition, the women who attend enjoy the networking along with the "ask the expert" consultations.

Information is available on a variety of topics, including Financial Security, Sexual Harassment, Technology Careers, Protective Service Careers, Career Career Guidance, Entrepreneur Resources and Apprenticeship Opportunities.

For more information or to request a registration form, please contact PCSW at (860) 240-8300.❖

TFA Extension Review

Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) is available to qualifying families for a limited amount of time and the rules for getting extensions to the time limits or exemptions can be confusing. Generally, families who have followed the rules and have low enough income should be eligible for two six-months extensions after the first 21 months of cash assistance. After that, to receive more TFA benefits, most families need to show that they have two barriers to employment or are eligible for an exemption from the TFA work and time requirements.

Illiteracy, domestic violence, problems with transportation or child care, or the mental or physical health problems of a family member are all considered to be barriers. Families can be exempted from time limits when the care needs of a disabled child of any age or other household member prevents work; or when the adult is disabled and prevented from working on a "predictable basis with reasonable regularity." Medical proof is needed. There are also other circumstances that qualify for exempt status.

If you are assisting someone who has lost TFA or whose application has been denied, ask about possible barriers or exemptions, particularly illiteracy. Extensions and exemptions can be requested at any time.

Attorneys in the Raymond v. Rowland case (see 5/04 CF) are interested in hearing about improperly denied extensions and exemptions. Please contact the attorneys listed below with any problems persons with disabilities are having in getting and keeping benefits, especially persons whose disabilities keep them from working. The attorneys include: Lucy Potter and Greg Bass at Greater Hartford Legal Aid (860) 541-5000; Joanne Gibau at New Haven Legal Assistance (203-946-4811); and Shirley Bergert, Willimantic (860) 456-1761 and Priya Cloutier, New London (860) 447-0323, both with Connecticut Legal Services.❖

Housing Trust Fund for Economic Growth & Opportunity



State Treasurer, Denise Nappier has called for the establishment of a \$100 million Housing Trust Fund for Economic Growth and Opportunity, to be capitalized by issuing bonds against abandoned property proceeds (such as unclaimed bank accounts) that are annually transferred to the state. Housing advocates are optimistic about the proposal, a result of a major grass roots effort that began gaining momentum in the late 1990's.

The Housing Trust fund would establish a new program of loans and grants to finance affordable home ownership and rental housing. Housing advocates project that the fund will generate \$1.4 billion, including interest, in economic activity over the next ten years. Yearly benefits would include 750 new units of affordable housing, 1,290 new jobs, and \$42 million in wages.

On March 30, advocates will gather at the State Capitol for a Housing Lobby Day in support of housing programs and efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut. For more information, contact Jeff Freiser at jeff@ct-housing.org or call 860-563-2943.❖

Choices Initiative

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) announced a partnership with Community Health Network of Connecticut, Inc. (CHNCT) to improve the health of Connecticut families through improved nutrition and increased physical activity.

CHNCT is a not-for-profit managed care organization that is sponsored by seven Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC). It provides statewide health care services to approximately 92,000 members through the State's (See Choices on p.4)



Federal Budget Update

(from Coalition on Human Needs 3/10/05)

Programs and services for moderate and low income families will face very deep cuts in the next five years under the budget resolution passed by the House Budget Committee. The Senate Budget Committee was working on its budget resolution when this update was written.

Deep cuts to low-income discretionary programs.

Domestic discretionary programs (those appropriated each year) would be cut by \$216 billion over five years under the House resolution. The cuts would hit education, housing, Head Start, veterans' benefits, community services and many other programs. In 2010 alone, those cuts amount to 14 percent below the level of current services, adjusted for inflation.

The Senate resolution would put statutory limits on all discretionary programs for the next three years. If homeland security and defense spending rise, as they are expected to, domestic programs would suffer deep cuts in the next three years.

Deep cuts to low-income mandatory programs.

Under the House resolution, mandatory programs (which include Medicaid, the Earned Income Tax Credit, TANF and Food Stamps) would be slashed by \$68.6 billion over the next five years. (The Medicaid cut could be as much as \$20 billion.) The Senate resolution would cut mandatory programs by \$32 billion over five years. (The Medicaid cut could be as much as \$15 billion.) Budget resolutions do not specify exactly which programs would suffer cuts - instead they give instructions to the authorizing committees to find the savings in programs under their jurisdiction. (These are called *reconciliation instructions*. See page 4 for more explanation.)



TANF UPDATE:

The U.S. Senate Finance Committee has approved a TANF reauthorization bill, known as the "PRIDE Act." The bill was the result of a bipartisan compromise crafted by Chairman Grassley (R-IA) and Ranking Member Baucus (D-MT), and was approved on a voice vote, with only Senator Lott (R-MS) asking that his "no" vote be recorded.

It is unclear when this bill will be considered on the Senate floor, but it is not expected until April at the earliest. Meanwhile, the House is expected to begin its TANF reauthorization process shortly. A "clean" TANF extension lasting either 3 or 6 months is expected to pass both houses by the end of the month.

The Senate Finance Committee bill contains several important new items:

(1) The bill provides a total of **\$6 billion in additional child care funding** over the next five years. Most of this increase was paid for through a set of reforms to the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit. (More detail on that below.)

(2) The bill provides **\$1 billion in additional funding for the Social Services Block Grant** over the next five years.

(3) The bill provides some **additional mandatory funds for fatherhood programs**

(4) The bill incorporates the **Smith-Jeffords proposal to allow people with disabilities**, including substance abuse problems, **to continue in rehabilitative services** and have those activities count toward the work requirements beyond six months, provided that they spend half their time in regular work activities.

(5) The bill includes some **changes in the proposed marriage promotion programs**, to recognize a role for domestic violence prevention and clarify that participation is voluntary.

(6) The bill would **make refugees and other humanitarian immigrants eligible for SSI for 9 years** after they enter the U.S., instead of the current 7-year limit.

There were a few smaller changes made to the bill as well. More amendments — on issues ranging from education as a work activity to Medicaid eligibility for legal immigrants — are expected when the bill reaches the floor.❖

(from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities)

More tax cuts!

Even while slashing programs that help the neediest Americans, both the House and Senate resolutions make room for still more tax cuts. The House resolution assumes \$106 billion in tax cuts over the next five years; the Senate resolution makes room for \$70 billion in tax cuts in the same period. Included in both resolutions is an extension of tax breaks for capital gains and dividends - which would otherwise expire in 2008. The Senate

resolution relies on the same fast-track approval procedure (reconciliation) for its \$70 billion in tax cuts that is used for cutting Medicaid and other mandatory programs.

Deficit reduction?

According to the budget committee chairs, such deep cuts are necessary to put the budget on a path to shrinking deficits. But the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities finds the House budget resolution actually increases the deficit because of the tax cuts included.

(See Federal Budget on p.4)



Remember the Date!

Energy Assistance It may not be too late!

The Department of Social Services has updated the deadline for utility heated households (electricity and natural gas) and households with heat included in the rent. **The application deadline has been extended from 3/15/05 to 3/31/05. Call Infoline 211.** ♦

Choices Initiative (cont.)

HUSKY A, HUSKY B, and SAGA programs. Through special nutrition workshops, and school sponsored events with healthy lifestyle themes, the Choices Initiative's goal is to combine strengths to help families in making lifestyle choices that can improve overall health and reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes and coronary heart disease. ♦

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

Federal Budget (cont.)

What are Reconciliation Instructions?

Under reconciliation instructions, by a target date set by the budget committee, an authorizing committee must pass a bill that changes a program or programs under their jurisdiction to generate the "savings." This special bill, called a reconciliation bill, is debated under special rules in the Senate - with limited time for debate and only 51 votes required for passage (as opposed to the typical 60 vote margin for much legislation.)

The House Reconciliation Instructions direct authorizing committees to cut \$68.6 billion from mandatory programs in their jurisdiction over the next five years. The Senate resolution was still being debated by the committee when this update was written. (The President recommended mandatory cuts of \$26 billion over the same period.) ♦

CABHN Meetings held 1st Friday of the month

9:30 - 11:30 am

**Upcoming Meetings:
April 1st & May 6th**
Community Renewal Team
(CRT)
555 Windsor St., Hartford

April 1st Topics:

*Medicare/Medicaid Prescription
Drug Benefits Part D,
State Legislative Issues*

See you there!

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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