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NOP Gets \$1.5 Million in Proposed State Budget

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STREET SIGHTS

Shedding light on homelessness in Rhode Island

www.streetsights.org

Issue# 33 – June 2010

Kennedy Plaza

COALITION RESPONDS TO HARASSMENT COMPLAINTS BY HOMELESS

By JM CORRENTE

In response to complaints of police harassment by several homeless people, the RI Coalition for the Homeless has issued Street Rights Cards, so every homeless person or pedestrian can have a clear understanding of what their legal rights are while accessing public areas.



Homeless sleeping in the park - Where else can they go?

COURTESY STREET SIGHTS ARCHIVES

Over a dozen homeless people have claimed to have been physically and/or verbally accosted by Providence Police and/or Park Police in the Kennedy Plaza bus terminal and Burnside Park during the past several weeks. Street Sights at this time is not aware of any formal complaints that have been made against the police in connection with these alleged incidents. Verbal allegations of police harassment are being circulated at constituent meetings, legal clinics and homeless outreach meetings held by RI Coalition for the Homeless and other homeless support groups.

The Street Rights Cards outline the rights of every citizen that shares public space. The specific rules of law regarding vagrancy or loitering, sleeping in public, panhandling, public alcohol and beverage consumption, carrying identification and other issues are outlined as well as pedestrians rights and appropriate behavior

while being questioned by the police. Contact information of organizations that may help pedestrians if they believe their rights are being violated is also listed.

Several people, both men and women have complained of incidents of police harassment. They claim their bags or backpacks have been searched for no reason, they have been slapped to the ground, pushed or shoved, and that the police have threatened to confiscate their disability bus passes.

One young woman (who wished not to be identified), says her husband is one of many who are "targeted." She claims he gets harassed whenever he walks through Kennedy Plaza, regardless of how long he's been in the area. "The police grabbed him by his arm, pushed and shoved him around and searched his bags for no reason," she said. In addition she says police will make false statements against her husband; that he has been hanging around in the plaza area for "four hours," when she could testify that he had arrived within a few minutes.

The names of a few Providence Police officers

See RIGHTS, Page 3

HOUSE APPROVES HOMELESS HATE CRIME BILL

Sixty-one to five is not about Kobe Bryant at the Garden, or one of the Manning brothers having a field day. It was the unexpectedly overwhelming vote in the House of Representatives on May 19 to require the police to add homeless victims to the list of hate crimes.

The bill, the culmination of an extended campaign by homeless advocates, will require the state police to collect data from local enforcement agencies to determine if crimes against the homeless will require additional protective legislation. The bill, sponsored by Rep. David A. Se-

gal, D-Providence, will still need approval of the Senate, which is expected to take up the issue early in June.

If the bill is passed, Rhode Island will join several other states in a growing national movement to extend protection to the homeless who have been featured re-

cently in You Tube videos showing assaults by youths against homeless men and women throughout the country, especially in Florida. More than 170 homeless people were killed in the nation last year, according to federal agencies.

See HATE CRIMES, Page 3

Our Mission

Street Sights serves as a forum for advocates, homeless and formerly homeless people, students, state officials, and the general public to share accurate and honest information about issues relating to homelessness. Our goal is to shed light on a subject not often addressed and, to some degree, ignored. We aim to provoke discussion and give a voice to voiceless people in our community. We provide a space free of judgment in which we recognize the dignity and worth of each person and in doing so empower the group as a whole.

The Doctor is In...

BY IRWIN BECKER

One of the unheralded doctors working on health reform in Rhode Island is the diminutive Nick Tsiongas, or Doctor Nick, as he was known to the advocates who worked with him when the battles started to adopt lead poisoning prevention laws in Rhode Island. He happened onto that issue in the late 1980's because he was then the only doctor in the Legislature.

So naturally, he was the one I called to decode the historic federal health reform bill's impact on the homeless. Nick is still accessible even though he is chairman of Health Right, an amalgam of unions, small business, consumers, medical professionals and other health care reformers who work to make health available and affordable for everyone in the state. And he still pinches pennies—he even answers his own office phone.

So, in a nutshell, how does the historic health law help those obviously most in need? Here are some of Nick's conclusions.

* For the first time, childless adults can join Medicaid with incomes up to 133% of the poverty level, which for single adults exceeds the low \$20,000 range. States will be funded 100 % by the federal government for this expanded coverage. This goes into effect in 2014. What this does accomplish is that all eligible applicants under 65 will be part of Medicaid.

* During the next five years, an additional \$1 billion will go to community health clinics and the National Health Services Corps, which provides the medical workforce for the centers that will increase service to the low-income and currently uninsured populations.

* Children up to the age of 26 can be covered by their families' plans. Dr. Nick said this would help the young homeless who might be estranged from their families to seek assistance.

* With a growing number of children becoming homeless—323 in this state at the end of March—insurers can no longer deny coverage to children with preexisting conditions, or exclude those conditions from coverage.

* By 2011, Medicare will provide free preventive services, as will group and individual health plans.

When asked about the more than 20 states that filed law suits challenging the constitutionality of the new law, Tsiongas noted the legislation's increased funding and expanded programs, adding: "The states should not be crying, although that doesn't prevent some people from crying anyway."

Free Clinic Finds New Home



Dr. Annie DeGroot, Medical Director and cofounder of Clinica Esperanza, shows off the foundations of the clinic's new permanent home on Valley Street in Providence. The free clinic will provide primary care and treatment for chronic medical conditions and a women's clinic will operate part time. It is hoped the clinic's new site will open full time before the end of 2010.

PHOTO BY JMC

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Contact us:

Street Sights
c/o Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless
1070 Main Street
Pawtucket, R.I. 02860
Website: www.streetsights.org
Email – streetsights@gmail.com

Videos, photos and blogs – www.myspace.com/streetsights

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Submissions:

You can drop off articles, poetry, or comments at any of our drop-boxes located at:

The 7-11 at Chalkstone and Smith St.
Crossroads - 160 Broad Street (at the desk)
McAuley House – (at the desk) Or come to a meeting

STREET RIGHTS

From page 1

have surfaced in the investigation of pedestrian harassment, with one name in particular commonly linked to a majority of the complaints of unnecessary aggressiveness towards the homeless. There have also been allegations that Park Police have joined with Providence Police to engage and harass people on the sidewalks and in the parks. Homeless people have questioned the Park Police's rights to search a pedestrian's bags.

Loitering and intoxication are frequent issues of conflict between the police and the homeless. Loitering in Kennedy Plaza is illegal. Announcements over the plaza loud speaker systems relay the message in English and in Spanish.

The police maintain that Kennedy Plaza loitering laws are necessary for public safety. On a daily basis, hundreds of people, some intoxicated, congregate to the area. When people become intoxicated they have a greater capacity to cause public disturbances. "If you look at our arrest book, it's always the same names, over and over. Nobody gets trespassed from the building unless they have been issued multiple summonses or unless they have committed a crime on the plaza," said Sergeant Gregory Smith of the Providence Police.

Sergeant Smith has worked at the Kennedy Plaza substation for the last three years. "I don't see it as a problem between the police and the homeless," he said. "I see it as a problem between the police and people addicted to drugs or alcohol." He also maintains that the Providence Police do not target

the homeless. "We don't know if they're homeless or not. The only way we would know if someone is homeless is if we ask them."

"They always give warnings," says Brydie Bernardo of the Providence Center, who works with the Police at Kennedy Plaza. "I think what happens is that when people get a warning, like when they (the police) say that they are going to take your bus pass, they mean if you cause another disturbance, or become intoxicated and come back to Kennedy Plaza. "People hear the warnings and take them as threats." Bernardo, a licensed social worker, works from 4 p.m.-7 p.m., weekdays, to assist people that may require immediate help due to mental illness or severe intoxication.

There are more homeless people in Rhode Island than at any time in history. The homeless shelters are closed during the day, Providence has no Day Shelter facility— a circumstance which offers the homeless few options for places where they can peaceably walk, sit or just be, during the coming summer months. Unfortunately, this limited and restrictive environment makes conflicts between the police and the homeless virtually inevitable.

The RI Coalition for the Homeless is hoping the Street Rights Cards that are currently being distributed will assist both the police, charged with the protection of the public streets, and the many homeless pedestrians, who will spending a great amount of time on those same streets, in fostering reasonable resolutions to the very serious circumstances of this conflict.

rhode island coalition for the homeless



Providence Street Rights

Your Rights on the Street

May 2010

www.rihomeless.org 401-721-5685

<p>Vagrancy or loitering is not a crime. You cannot be stopped or arrested simply for being in a public space.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BUT</p> <p>Loitering at Kennedy Plaza or any RIPTA bus stop is prohibited. You must leave the property if requested by a police officer or RIPTA agent.</p>	<p>You do not have to move from an area unless you are violating the law. You have the right to be in any public area.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BUT</p> <p>You cannot block the sidewalk or otherwise impede the flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic.</p>
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Without a city or state permit, you cannot set up tents for temporary or permanent shelter on city or state-owned land, or on unoccupied private property.

<p>You have the right to keep or carry your belongings in any type of bags or containers.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BUT</p> <p>You cannot block the sidewalk or right of way with your belongings, or leave them unattended. Unattended belongings can be removed if an obstruction exists.</p>	<p>You have the right to lie down or sleep in public as long as you are not blocking the sidewalk or impeding pedestrians entering or exiting buildings.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BUT</p> <p>You cannot lie or sleep on the grass or on seating (benches) located in public parks or squares.</p>
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<p>You are not required by law to carry any form of identification, unless you are driving. The police can temporarily detain you for failing to disclose identification to them, only if they have a reasonable suspicion to believe you have committed a crime.</p> <p>You cannot be detained for more than two hours and the detention cannot be recorded as an arrest in any official record.</p>	<p>Urinating, defecating or spitting is prohibited on or from any public street, alley, sidewalk or building.</p> <p>Consumption of alcohol on public property is prohibited. You cannot possess, consume or transport an open container of alcohol on any public street, sidewalk or park; or on any licensed parking lot or land within the city except during an event or festival licensed by the city.</p>
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You have the right to sleep in your vehicle.

BUT

Vehicles on public ways must be registered, inspected and insured, and you can be required to provide an operator's license when in your vehicle. Vehicles cannot be parked on Providence streets from 2am to 5 am; they are subject to removal or impoundment during these hours. Impoundment can also occur by a judge's order, if you have 5 or more overdue tickets.

These are your rights

You have the right to panhandle in a public place.

BUT

Aggressive panhandling is prohibited: you cannot follow, touch or block a person's path in the course of soliciting; or solicit a person waiting in line; or continue to solicit a person after a negative response; or solicit a person in a manner that is intended or is likely to cause that person to fear bodily harm or loss of property.

Panhandling is illegal / prohibited in the federal parkland at Roger Williams National Memorial Park. Panhandling, and public exercises of any kind, are also NOT allowed at the War Memorial Monument located behind the Licht Judicial Complex.

You must have a city issued permit to sell goods or services in public areas.

Dealing with the police:

If you are questioned by a police officer and are not told you are suspected of a crime, you do not have to answer any questions or give any information – you are free to leave. Stay cool and be kind! If you are not under arrest, the police may frisk you or search your belongings if they reasonably suspect that you are carrying a concealed weapon and are a threat to their safety. If you are stopped by the police, always ask for the officer's name and badge numbers and write down the information immediately - noting the date, time and location of the incident. Save all documents, such as tickets and warnings.

<p>If you feel you have been a victim of police harassment or mistreatment attend a legal clinic or call:</p> <p>RI Coalition for the Homeless (401) 721 - 5685</p> <p>Providence Police Internal Investigations (401) 243 - 6151</p>	<p>If you feel you have been a victim of police discrimination based on race, national origin, gender, age, mental disability, sexual orientation, and wealth or lack thereof, call:</p> <p>Providence Human Relations Commission (401) 351 - 0475</p> <p>RI Commission for Human Rights (401) 222 - 2661</p> <p>American Civil Liberties Union (401) 831 - 7171</p> <p>RI Disability Law Center (401) 831-3150</p>
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FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT WWW.RIHOMELESS.ORG

HATE CRIMES

From page 1

Prior to the House session, Rep. Peter F. Martin, D-Newport, who was profiled in last month's *Street Sights* for his work on behalf of the homeless, sent copies of the videos to the entire House membership. Martin, who nearly four years ago saved a homeless man from being stoned to death by several youth in his neighborhood, noted that "a homeless guy couldn't take it anymore and hung himself from a tree" and another man "died in a cemetery in the cold because he had no place to go." Both deaths also occurred in his neighborhood. He concluded:

"Crimes against the homeless is a special category and they need protection."

Opponents to the bill, during a 40-minute debate, took issue about whether there was a need to give another group special protection. Police are now required to track hate crimes by race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and disability. No data from the current police information was cited in the debate.

Robert A. Watson, the Republican minority leader, asserted that "a crime is a crime. To attack somebody,

it's against the law." To enforce his argument, Watson introduced an amendment for the police to collect data on crimes aimed at people using political speech or written or verbal political expressions. His amendment was shot down, 48 to 20.

When the bill finally passed, there were applause and hugs in the gallery, which was filled with the homeless and their supporters. One man broke into tears.

- Irwin Becker

Court Ruling Favors Banks Over Providence Foreclosure Law

BY KRISTEN SHERMAN ESQ.

As the tide of foreclosures continues to swell in Rhode Island, cities and towns have turned to using local ordinances as a means to mitigate the harsh effects of foreclosures on struggling borrowers.

According to Realty Trac, Inc., a real estate tracking firm, the number of foreclosure notices in April rose 55% over April of last year. Rhode Island's foreclosure rate positioned the State in 19th place out of the 50 states. In the midst of this foreclosure crisis, cities and towns such as Providence, Warwick and Cranston have passed ordinances designed to prevent or slow the foreclosure process and its devastating impacts to borrowers.

Beginning last year, Providence enacted a series of local ordinances that, among other things, require lenders to give both the City and the borrower notice of the impending foreclosure and participate in mediation in the hopes that the parties might renegotiate the loan. The ordinance prohibits the Recorder of Deeds from accepting and recording a foreclosure deed

unless the lender has made a good faith effort to mediate with the borrower. Recording a deed is a necessary step in the foreclosure process and violating the ordinance subjects the bank to a \$2,000 fine if it fails to meet the procedural requirements of the ordinance.

In recent months, Wells Fargo & Co., Bank of New York Mellon Corp. and Deutsche Bank, filed multiple lawsuits against Providence seeking to prevent the City from enforcing the mediation aspects of the foreclosure ordinance. The lawsuits arose when the Providence Recorder of Deeds refused to record a foreclosure deed based on non-compliance with the local ordinance.

At least one of the lawsuits alleges that the City's refusal to accept the deeds for recording violates state foreclosure laws and has slandered the title to the properties at issue. One or more of the banks also complained that the City's conduct was negligent and created a nuisance. In addition to seeking an injunction to prevent enforcement of the ordinance, at least one of the banks sought money damages.

At the crux of the dispute is the question of whether state law preempts more restrictive local law such as the Providence foreclosure ordinance. Under Rhode Island law, a local ordinance may be preempted if it contradicts a state statute or if it is clear that the Legislature intended state law to "occupy the field" on a particular subject matter such that there is no room for local regulation.

In the pending cases, the banks argue that state law applies and controls. State foreclosure laws do not require mediation and, in fact, purport to require the town clerk or recorder of deeds to record deeds that are presented. According to the banks, local clerks and recorders of deeds do not have any discretion to reject an instrument for recording.

In a 16-page decision issued in the Deutsche Bank case on May 17th, Judge Lanphear of the Superior Court adopted the preemption argument and invalidated the portions of the ordinance that allow the Recorder of Deeds to reject a foreclosure deed. The Court relied, in part, on the fact that state law sets forth

specific requirements and limitations on the recording system as evidence that the Legislature intended to be supreme. It found uniformity in the recording laws throughout the State to be an important goal. Therefore, the City of Providence's attempt to regulate this "statewide matter" by empowering the Recorder of Deeds to reject a foreclosure deed was held to be impermissible.

Notably, the Court made clear that its decision did not invalidate the remainder of the ordinance such as the provision requiring mediation and allowing the City to impose fines for non-compliance. It remains to be seen whether Deutsche Bank will appeal the decision or consider trying to amend state foreclosure laws to eliminate such local provisions.

While the Court's decision is limited to the Deutsche Bank case and the Providence ordinance, it will likely lead to similar decisions in the cases filed by the other banks. It is also reasonable to assume that the decision could be used as precedent for challenges to the other local ordinances with similar provisions.

FLOOD CLOSES CENTRAL FALLS SOUP KITCHEN

BY WILLIAM HARTER

In George Bernard Shaw's play *My Fair Lady*, Prof. Henry Higgins said, "The rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain." But here in RI the rain flooded basements and first floors of thousands of buildings.

One such place was St. George's Episcopal Church, Clinton St., Central Falls, where the soup kitchen was closed for a week.

Flooding was not caused by river water in low areas. Because of so much water in the city's drainage system, the water backed up in the basement toilets, flooding the church with 8 inches of sewage. Some food was destroyed. The clothing in the closet had to be destroyed. Games and toys in the game room used by youth groups on Fridays and during Vacation Bible School were damaged or destroyed.

The church records that were stored in the basement were left as soggy papers. The furnace area, air conditioning and organ compressors were also flooded. Fabrics used for table coverings were destroyed. A total of 3,430 square feet of public space and storage areas were flooded.

St. George's started a meal site about 20 years ago when a group called San Jorge Community Service decided there was a need in the area. This group is the Hispanic membership within the church.

Now eight churches from various parts and denominations in RI alternate volunteering a week at a time. The menu is made a few months at a time and given to the churches. They can do the cooking in Central Falls or at their local facilities.

Rev. Deacon Buck Close is overseer of the soup kitchen. Carolina Roberts coordinates the kitchen facilities. Modesta Pellet is the senior warden and outreach person of the soup kitchen, food pantry and clothing closet. She has been a volunteer since 1993. Rev. Jose Roberts is the priest. Sunday services in English are 9 a.m. and in Spanish at 11 a.m. The church was started as an Anglican Church, and now has many Hispanic parishioners. It is also known as St. Jorge's Episcopal Church.

The soup kitchen is on Sunday 2-3 p.m. weekly except in July and August when facilities are used for children's programs and repairs. They serve 40-45 people the first Sunday of the month and about 65 the last.

(Postscript: The rain in Spain does NOT stay mainly on the plains, but in the northern mountains. Audrey Hepburn played the part of the young lady, Elisa, learning to pronounce words as we do, using this phrase. Another phrase used to teach correct pronunciation was "The life of the wife was ended by a knife.")

Shipping Containers in Style



It seems that living and working out of boxes is now trendy; Stack Design Build, a small company co-owned by Joshua Brandt, is hoping it catches on. While the present project, a cluster of modular offices in the Federal Hill section of Providence is not considered living space, Brandt is envisioning a bright future for projects like his.

His Site Superintendent, Saul Estrada, agrees, "This was an unusual project so we took our time explaining it to them (city officials) that everything (here) would be in full compliance with the city and fire department."

"This is about green space," continued Brandt, "it has a lot of new technologies that will keep heating and energy costs down." Estrada added, "this project was born in the midst of a recession, there was no precedent for it. It is the only project of its kind in the East Coast."

The company has no official plans to build affordable housing using the modules, but the general enthusiasm during our conversation indicated a world of possibilities. Brandt spoke proudly of two modular units his company was involved in through an association with, Containers 2 Clinics, a Boston nonprofit. "We shipped a set of fully functioning modular clinics to Haiti."

For more information visit the company website: www.stackdb.com

- Story and photo by Francisco Gonzalez

NOP GETS \$1.5 MILLION IN PROPOSED STATE BUDGET.

In a potential victory for the homeless and housing advocates, the RI House Finance Committee included \$1.5 million for the Neighborhood Opportunities Program in the proposed 2011 state budget. That vote was on May 27.

But there are several important steps that must be taken before that money becomes available, including passage by the House and Senate and approval of the governor. The governor does not have line-item veto so he either approves or vetoes the entire budget. The \$1.5 million is a line in the budget and is not a separate bill.

However, hanging over the budget process is whether Rhode Island will get an anticipated \$95 million from Medicaid from the federal government. If that amount is not approved by Congress sometime this summer, the state budget will have a shortfall of \$95 million on top

“The fiscal 2011 budget may still be a work in progress”

- Rep. Steven Costantino, Chair House Finance Committee

of current deficits. That, in turn, would mean the General Assembly would have to rewrite its tentative budget with more extensive program cuts, of which NOP and many other programs would be at risk.

Should the political and financial roadblocks disappear, here is how the NOP funds would be directed:

Most of the money will be spent on supporting current affordable housing programs, including rental subsidies and support services.

Although NOP can be used for capital expenditures to increase housing units, the non-profit housing corporations are encouraged instead to apply for the remaining \$12.5 million in the Building Home RI Bond, in its fourth and last year of existence.

This is NOP's 10th anniversary, which was celebrated in May at the State House marking the completion of more than 1,100 affordable housing throughout the state.

The initial approval of the NOP funds represents a major victory, in these hard times, for an in-depth and widespread campaign by a variety of non-profits, homeless and shelter leaders, major public and private funders, college students, neighborhood organizations, and clergy. Overseeing the lengthy campaign was the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless and its various member organizations and allies who made a major impact by presenting emotional testimony from the homeless.

- Street Sights Staff

On May 12th, a Hearing was held before the House Finance Committee of the RI General Assembly regarding a bill to re-instate the funding for the Neighborhood Opportunities Program in the 2011 budget (H 7730). Here are some of the statements by housing advocates:

Nicole Patterson: Homeless person seeking affordable housing

...last night, my husband and I, we slept in a tent, because there are no couples's shelters in Rhode Island. Because we have no home, it is very difficult for us to get a job, and because we have no job, it is very difficult for us to get a home. If you take away the NOP funding, you take away our opportunity to get affordable housing.

Ed Wojcik: Architect, Pawtucket

...because of the opportunity, of the program, and my first client-the Pawtucket Citizens Development Corporation, I have expanded too, I have seven full-time employees, I have a much larger office, I work with about eight CDCs throughout the state, working on programs funded by the NOP program. It clearly has put me in business, and I have all Rhode Islanders working for me, we pay taxes, I buy stuff in Rhode Island, I love what I do, that program created jobs and continues to create jobs....



RI's General Assembly attempts to insure the state getting a \$100 million dollar chunk of federal money that they already allowed for in this year's budget.

COMIC BY CHARLIE HALL

Ann Nolan: Executive Director, Crossroads, Rhode Island, Providence

I know this is a terrible year for us to be coming here and saying "we need money", because that's what everyone in the state is doing. I run Crossroads and at Crossroads we are the largest provider of services to the homeless throughout the state, we are statewide, and unfortunately our business is absolutely booming. We are seeing the effects of the economy in double digit growth; last year alone, in our women's shelter, we saw almost 400 different women throughout the year. The numbers I can give you are staggering actually, in every area; they are the largest numbers we have ever had.

The Neighborhood Opportunities program allows us to, number one, build housing for people that cannot afford the rents and housing prices and number two, it allows us, and this is critical with the Neighborhood Opportunities Program, to provide services to people who are in these houses.

Carlton Freeze: Tenant-NOP funded housing- House of Hope, Warwick

...the reason I would like to speak with you today, is because I'm someone who can say, quite literally, that the neighborhood opportunities program has saved my life. ...once I moved into the NOP supported Hope of Hope facility, I was able to begin to recuperate from the cancer treatment to get strong enough that I would be able to again be considered for the heart transplant...

Jean Johnson: Executive Director- House of Hope, Warwick

We would not be able to place our homeless folks, or our lower income folks into housing without NOP because the NOP program brings rents down low enough, to a low level that the lowest people can afford rent; and the lowest people are the disabled and those on fixed incomes...

...we now also manage Harrington Hall, which I'm sure you all heard of. We have seen over 600 different men there this year. There is no way we are going to be able to house these men and close that shelter unless we have affordable units for them.

...We have estimated in the eight years we have had a NOP program, and 109 people have come through our program that we have saved the state over \$875K dollars, just with 23 units- If we could build more and we could close Harrington Hall, we would save the state millions and millions of dollars....

Brenda Clement: Executive Director, Housing Action Coalition, Pawtucket

The Neighborhood Opportunities Program (NOP) is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. This is a program that provides the first ever state funding for development of affordable housing. Its primary focus is to provide funding for low income family rental housing and housing for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) as well. It has created over 1100 units throughout the state and has leveraged millions and millions of federal dollars. We have NOP throughout Rhode Island. Twenty-eight cities and towns have received NOP funding and have NOP units throughout their community.

...these are largely construction jobs for Rhode Islanders... but it's not only construction jobs that these projects move us forward on... we spend a lot of supplies and materials... when these buildings are developed, not only do they provide safe and affordable homes for individuals but they are also providing on-going jobs for property management, landscaping, you name it...

ROVING REPORTER

Are you registered to vote? Should Rhode Island fund affordable housing development programs in its budget?



Fillmore:
No, I'm not registered. Yes- Why not? So people can have better places to live. I'm not from Rhode Island-I'm from Boston but I've seen some of the ****-holes people live in down here.



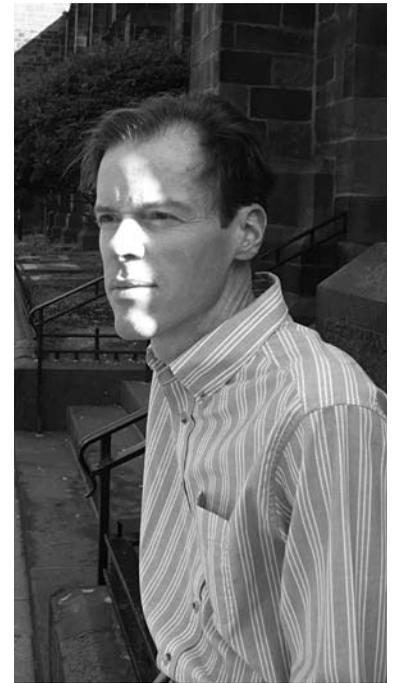
Debbie:
Yes, I am registered. Yes- because there are a lot of homeless people and it's everybody, it's a class thing. They should take some of the empty buildings and make them into affordable housing.



Joely:
Yes, I am registered. Yes- At least we would know our tax dollars are going to help people that are homeless that are right here in our state.



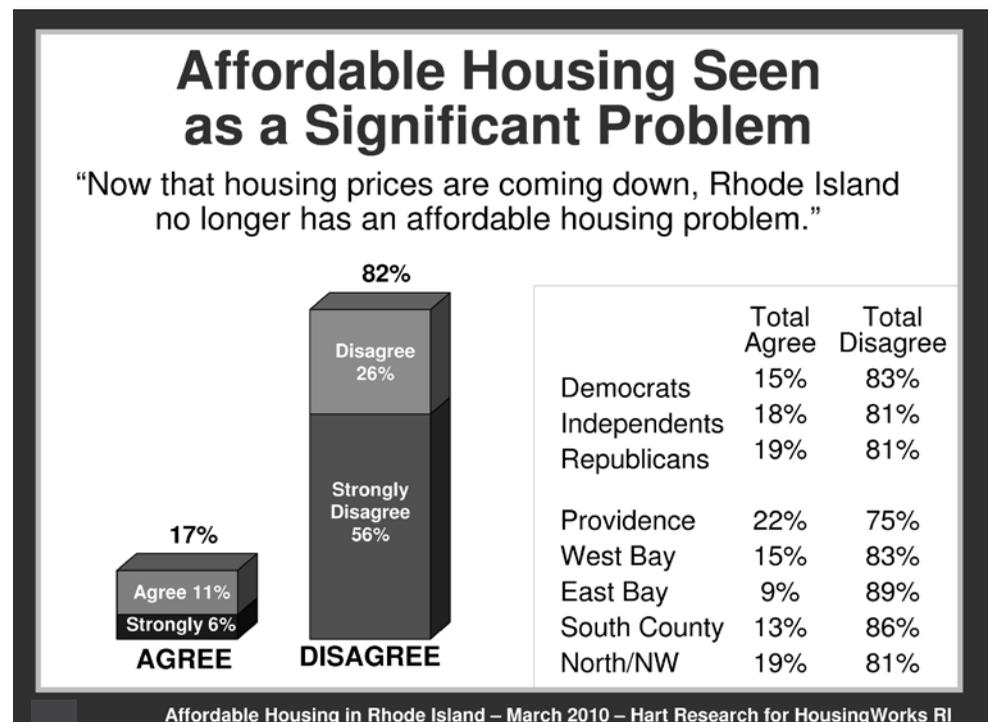
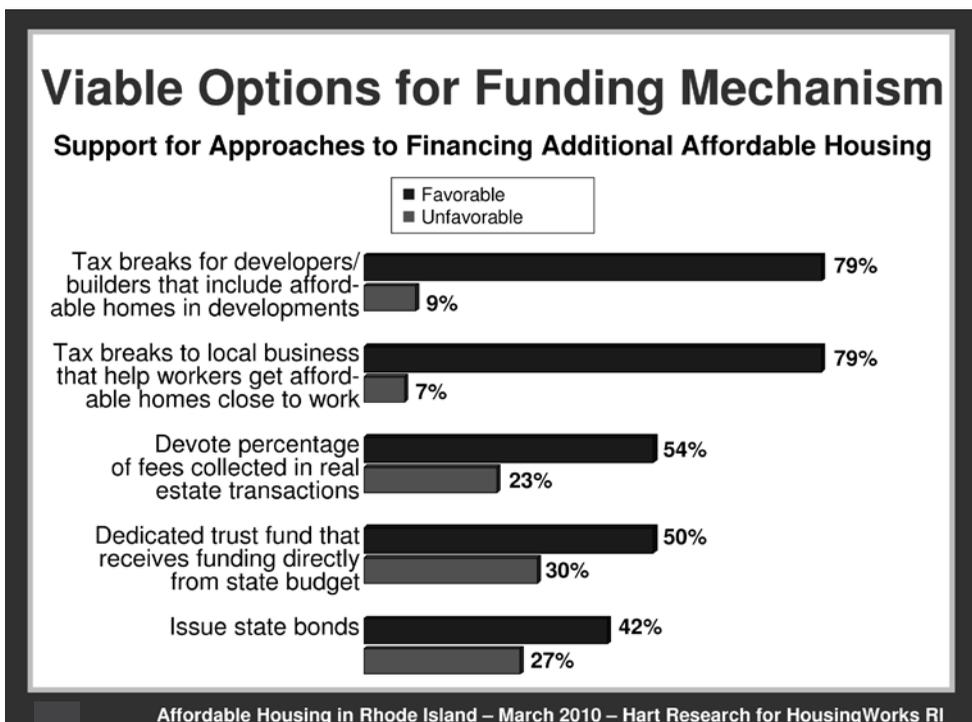
Mike:
No, to be honest, I've never been registered. Affordable housing programs sound like a good idea, if we can come up with the money for it- we fund a lot of things so that can be a tough one.



Andrew:
Yes, I am registered. Yes- RI should fund affordable housing programs. My art studio is at Grace Church. I've seen an enormous increase in the need for services at Grace Church.

PHOTOS AND INTERVIEWS BY JM CORRENTE

Poll says: Trust fund not highest priority but housing still unaffordable



Many Displaced as Three Shelters Close

By CATHERINE RHODES

Around January, three winter emergency shelters were opened at the Saint Martin de Porres Center, at Mathewson Street Church in Providence and Harvest Community Church Shelter in Woonsocket. The shelters were opened through the Emergency Shelter Task Force, a division of the Housing Resources Commission. The shelter located at Saint Martin de Porres Center served thirty to forty single woman and couples. The Mathewson Street Church provided winter shelter for twenty-three single men.

The shelters served the hard-to-reach homeless during the winter months, those living on the streets, and others who could not use traditional shelters. In order to reside at the shelter, residents needed to obtain a ticket from Crossroads or a shelter outreach worker. The ticket could then be given to the worker from Amos House at one of the two shelters for an overnight stay. For many people this was the shelter of last resort; when every other shelter was full, there were the winter emergency shelters.

Couples were allowed to stay at St. Martin de Porres, the first time couples were allowed to stay together at a winter shelter. Many of the couples were then to obtain

more permanent type of housing through Advent House. One couple expressed their gratitude regarding the placement: "it's not perfect, but far better than living on the streets." The couple felt that the partnership between the emergency winter shelter system and Advent House worked well to assist couples into permanent supportive housing

On April 15th the shelter at St. Martin de Porres closed. This left no available shelter for married couples. In order to gain access to a shelter bed, couples would need to separate-to the women's shelter at Crossroads and the men's shelter at Harrington Hall. Couples not wishing to separate slept outside in tents or with friends.

Homeless shelters can be dangerous, especially for women who can fall prey to abuse, sexual exploitation, rape and robbery. A woman naturally would feel safer with her spouse or life-partner. "I am not going to live alone in a shelter next to a group of men, I have been almost raped before. Why can I not stay with my husband? It makes no sense." said one woman who wished not to be identified.

The Harvest Community Church Shelter, the only shelter for men in the Woonsocket area, also closed on April 15th.

These men are now forced out on the streets to bide their time until they can secure permanent housing. A man said, "I do not want my name used OK! It sucks to be me. I been waiting about 3 months for housing. I am a disabled veteran." Another gentleman explained, "I got a tent to use. No way am I going all the way to Cranston. How would I get there?"

The Mathewson Street Shelter closed on May 15th. Twenty-two men slept there on any given night. When the shelter closed there were no available shelter beds for men, either at Harrington Hall or the Urban League Shelter on Prairie Avenue. Harrington Hall has a capacity of 88 beds and the Urban League around 60 beds, which means there are currently thirty to forty peoples with no shelter and very little prospect of permanent housing.

Neville Bedford, an attorney, pointed out: "Permanent supportive housing is needed. Thanks to People To End Homelessness for agreeing to fund the last month of the shelter." Professor Eric Hirsch pointed out that there were very few options for these individuals under the current shelter system. He suggested that a Housing First Model be adopted. Hirsch explained, "It is a no brainer. Currently, Riverwood (Mental Health a Providence supportive agency)

has based its housing on the Housing First model with great success." The model places homeless individuals into housing first then provides supportive services. The services range from taking clients to the grocery store to applying for SSI or other income supports like food stamps.

Many individuals were upset and angered at the closing of the Mathewson Street Shelter. They thought that the shelter should have stayed open till the end of May. Many have questioned the budget and if it was used properly. The shelter would have closed on April 15th but more funding was procured from an emergency grant through People to End Homelessness which worked with the Emergency Task Force and approved the shelter's budget, a bare bones budget used to pay for the costs of shelter workers and other needed items. Professor Hirsch said, "Amos House ran a good program on a very low budget. I think the money was used appropriately."

There still seems to be a too large a gap between shelters and permanent housing. Many homeless are stuck in the shelter system with very little hope for housing in the near future. This problem can only be solved if funding is allocated for permanent housing with support services for those who need them.

Rhode Island: Numbers of People Homeless or Residing in Shelters				
Month	Total	Adults in families	Children	Single Adults
March 2010	1283	245	323	715
April 2010	1331	270	341	720

Source: Eric Hirsch, Providence College Department of Sociology

My Opinion of the Mathewson Street Closing

By KOOMA VIEIRA

The Mathewson Street Church Shelter closed on May 15th, due to funding issues.

I have taken the initiative to go a little deeper in this article to get the truth.

As an advocate for the formally or currently homeless and a writer for Street Sights, I understand that funding may be an issue. But overall, I see that Amos House and the Mathewson Street Church are not really fighting for the homeless to have a place to sleep at night.

Paul Medici, one of the Mathewson Street Church office workers, says: "The shelter is a safe and quite place to lay their heads down at night." I asked Medici what he would say to the state Reps and the Governor to keep the shelter open. Medici replied: "Save money to keep people off the street and use people's salaries to fund warm shelters."

I asked him: What to do you think the clients at the shelters feel? Medici said "Feel really bad."

I remember when the shelter in the past had a problem with age and closings. We have to remember that was in the past and is done and over with. Mathewson Shelter

has made drastic changes and reinforces strict rules in order to sleep in such shelter.

Michael Megann feels as though the shelter should stay open all year around and so do many others. Megann would like to say to the Governor and State Reps the following: "Come sleep here for one night or week to see what it's like."

I, Kooma Vieira, want to say to the Governor and State Reps: "I hope you lose your homes and become homeless. Then you will fight for what's right!"

Creative Works



Would you like to see your Writing on the Wall?

Put your creative writing and poems in the drop boxes at Crossroads, Amos House, Oasis, and McAuley House or send an e-mail to Stan Kapelewski, creative writing editor, at streetsights@gmail.com. Visit our website at www.streetsights.org. Include your name and contact number so we can get your photo.



Help

By Sean Trott

Operation Supervisor-Harrington Hall

We have to listen to ourselves
Hear what our hearts say
Focus on that inner voice
Bow our heads and pray
Keep faith in the Lord
Or whomever you may choose
Refuse to quit
Refuse to lose
Set a new goal
That's possible to reach
Maybe along the way you will gain
A life lesson to teach
Show yourself you are able
Do it for you
Get up get out
See what you can do
You have to put yourself first
If you want to make it today
This all starts in the belief
You hold in the words you say
So think hard before you speak
Focus on the new road
Think of what you could earn
Instead of what you are owed
As the snow fades away
And the sun starts to appear
Wake up and be strong
Forget what you may fear
Do not stop moving forward
Never give up on yourself
Be aware of who your friends are
And ask someone for help

Mother

By Alicia Wilcox

I apologize for the pain I brought
into your heart
My disease of addiction brought us
apart
When I wasn't using we were so
close
And one thing you should know I love
you the most
I wish I was there with you each and
everyday
To help you out and make sure you're
okay
We been going through this for a
couple of years
And I know you love me because I've
seen you shed tears
Tears because I knew I was killing
myself...
But my disease of addiction I knew
nothing else
I'm real sorry about putting my
children through this
**Why should they suffer for my
sickness?**
They should be home asleep in their
beds...
This could be a reality, but I choose
drugs instead
I want my children in my life which
means custody too
**One day I'll be willing to do what
I have to**
So please be there for me
I won't let myself or you down again
I love you my mother and I need you
to be my friend

Namaste Angels

By Deborah Shepard

For believing in the soul, each thought
becomes one pattern
I am yours forever, we enter healing
abilities, 'tis our destiny
For believing in Mother Earth's Light
Waking cosmic, soft face, poured,
etched with a crystal Mandela

My sacred pattern is shared with
another, pristine form
Bringing me the souls, consciousness
I am the highest sphere, energize,
calm
Awaken, moving through me like light

I am clairvoyant, thought's dreams
Feel the transcendent past life jour-
ney we will make together
Rain-washed visionary spectrum
aligned with angels
Higher vessel of gemstones revealed,
my feeling of each persons well -being



World War

By Daniel Herard

Thoughts of world war,
hates, and fears...
To look at the world
and never show tears.
To change a man's mind,
his works, and his deeds;
Now you tell me,
Will this world succeed?
To conquer one nation,
for our indignation...
To cause man's death;
Now what's left?



We are now accepting R.I. area photos for the Monthly backgrounds in our 2011 Street Sights Calendar. E-mail them in jpeg form with your name and contact number to streetsights@gmail.com If your photo is selected, you will get a free calendar and will get credited for the photo.



Mirror on the Wall

By William K Harter

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Am I fairest of them all?
As you turn from me to flee,
One must wonder what you see!

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Do you think I am so tall?
Tell me please, and answer now—
Such a wrinkle on your brow!

Mirror, mirror in our hall,
Once again I ask—don't stall—
Why your laughter, I must ask,
Hiding there behind your mask!

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Who's the fairest of them all?
'Tis not I, that I can say,
As I turn and walk away.

Mirror, mirror in my hall,
You I'll cover with my shawl
Hide your face to make you sad,
Yet for me, now I'll be glad.



My Father's Day

By Fred Pece

When I visit with my Dad
He makes me laugh and smile
I like to share my time with him
It makes it all worthwhile
I love my Father very much
He means so much to me
My Father's Day is special
It's full of joy and glee
Thanks Dad!



Remember

By Thavanda Khoun

She will remember.
He will always be there for her.
Someone to share the good times
as well as the bad.
He makes no judgments by what she
says.
He just listens with his heart and
hopes to be of help
in anyway he can.
She will remember.
He will be there for her now and
forever and always
please remember.
He's my boy and that is true
but the gift was given from me to
you.
We went through some moments
there were good and bad.
She will remember.
He supported her when she was in
tears.
They stuck together when we were
in fears.
It's really sad that it had to be this
way,
but it has reached its very last day.
Miles away can't keep us apart,
because you'll always be in my heart.



Never Alone

By Carolyn Schwartz

My parents are dead
My child has grown
I miss all the friends
I've loved and I've known

I'm getting old now
Life's passing me by
Yet all those old memories
Can still make me cry

But God in His Wisdom
Protects you 'till the end
You can't choose your family
But still choose your friends



Threshold

By M.W.

There are so many like us who have been
on the threshold of a dream.
But, how many like us will ever be
on the threshold of reality?
You may seem less,
or poor to yourself...
Recoiled inside...
...stuck on a shelf.
Don't be afraid to **open your mind**,
You may be surprised at what you'll find.



Street Sights 2nd Annual Poetry Contest

1st Prize = \$50 Gift Card - 2nd Prize =
\$20 Gift Card - 3rd Prize = \$10 Gift Card
* Poetry Books given to the top 3 runner-ups *

Contest Rules:

All entries must meet the following guidelines:
It must be an original unpublished self-made poem 250
words or less. Poems must be titled, and have your full
name and a reachable contact telephone number,
and or an email address.

All entries must be legible (neatly hand-printed or typed).
The *Street Sights* Staff are not eligible.
All entries can be given to any *Street Sights* staff
member, or brought, or mailed to:

Street Sights c/o
Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless
1070 Main Street
Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02860

You can also e-mail your entry to us at: streetsights@gmail.com
(Make sure that you put "Poetry Contest Entry" in the subject line)
Last day for entries is Wed. Sept. 8, 2010
Winners will be contacted, and posted in the October issue
of *Street Sights*.

RAINBOW AWARD

Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing

Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing (PHWFF) was founded in 2005 by a corps of dedicated volunteers from a local Trout Unlimited and Federation of Fly Fishers chapters.

PHWFF is dedicated to the physical and emotional rehabilitation of disabled active duty personnel and vets through fly-fishing and fly-tying education and outings.

Initially started in the Washington, DC area, it has expanded its services to active duty, veterans, and Dept. of Veterans Affairs Hospitals across the nation.

This organization is dependant on tax-deductible financial donations and the help of numerous volunteers to meet the educational, training, equipment, transportation, the outing needs of the participants. The project strives to serve those who made great sacrifices to our nation.

The Rhode Island branch conducts fishing trips to various places in the state, and teaches fly-tying. The outings teach patience and the self worth of accomplishment.

Overcoming the obstacles associated with debilitating motor skills has been proven effective in the total rehabilitation of the disabled.

The classes to try a new activity, learning fly-tying, fly-casting, and fly-fishing, run over many weeks, with a lot of places to fish. Call for class schedules and locations. Contact: Paul Roberti, Program Leader at 401-434-7795, e-mail: fencing55@gmail.com

- Photo and Story by David Eisenberger

**VolunCheer
Award Winner**

Street Sights' own Jenny DiTomasso received an Outstanding Service Award at the Serve Rhode Island VolunCheers Awards Banquet, April 21, held at Twin River. Jenny runs a bible study and teaches knitting at the OASIS on N. Main Street. Recently she traveled to Haiti with a church organization to give the people there a helping hand. Jenny would like to thank the staff at Street Sights for nominating her for this award.

PHOTO MELISSA HOWARD

HUMANITARIAN AWARD



PHOTO BY DAVE EISENBERGER

And You Shall Know the Truth

DAVID EISENBERGER

Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Providence is a multi-faceted place of worship. Because of the energy of Pastor Paul Lawrence, you'll find things going on each and every day. Pastor Lawrence came to Rhode Island from India and got his Doctorate of Divinity in 2007. He and his wife Janet have been affiliated with Mt. Pleasant Baptist since November of 2004.

Mt. Pleasant runs a number of monthly activities. Each 2nd Friday of the month, at the coffee-house social, members of the community gather for good music and a "message Pot-luck suppers". Teens meet every second Saturday of the month for a "teen challenge" to spend time in a safe environment with their peers. For those in recovery, meetings are held every Monday at 7:00pm.

This church not only serves the local community, but also is doing good work in other countries. Mt. Baptist sponsors an orphanage in Kodaikanal, India, called the James Children's Home. The orphanage was opened in 1991, when a family was saved from ritualistic suicide. Currently there are 12 children living at the James Children's home, along with some of its graduates and nurses who work there. Pastor Lawrence says the orphanage is expanding and needs support. Donations can be made to Paul Lawrence Ministries, Inc., 178 Gray Street, Providence RI. Or visit www.ABCORI.com for more information.

Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church is located at 262 Academy Ave. Providence, RI, (401) 351-2347

VetTech



PHOTO BY JMC

Susan Contreras, Executive Director of VetTech, speaks at the opening of the Computer Training Center for disabled veterans in Providence.

May 3rd was the official grand opening of VetTech located at 679 Broadway in Providence. Dignitaries in attendance included: Sen. Jack Reed (who has become a champion for Veterans and Homeless), Providence Mayor David N. Cicilline, Councilman John Lombardi, and State Rep. Steven Constantino. Senator Reed cut the grand opening ribbon.

VetTech is a part of the Federal Hill House Association, a 120-year-old social service agency in Providence. It is housed in a 3500 sq. ft. building on the West Side of the city, close to many of the services that the veterans often use such as the VA Hospital, US Dept. of Veterans Affairs and Nickerson House, a social services agency that provides transitional housing for veterans and the homeless.

Susan Contreras, project director for VetTech, says that the 50 computers already in stock are Pentium IV's or of better quality and no computer is more than 5 years old. Many were donated by large corporations and universities. The project also gets technical support from Free Geek.

VetTech plans to train 25 to 50 veterans a year in its new store front location, which once housed a church. The Federal Hill House acquired the Olneyville store front in Sept. '09 and spent about \$30,000 to renovate it. Service veterans from all eras will have access to free courses taught by volunteers with backgrounds in computing. They will get a free computer, veterans will be able to purchase computers at low cost: \$100 for a refurbished computer and \$125 for a laptop. Payment plans are available.

Come on in, one and all and see what VetTech has to offer. Hours of operation Monday-Friday from 9am to 5pm. Call 401-421-1095

- David Eisenberger

Rabbi Flam's "Call to Action"

By LOUISE HORTON

At the second annual Interfaith One Voice to Reduce Poverty Conference, held on Tuesday, May 11 at Roger Williams Park Casino, Rabbi Alan Flam issued said that Psalm 145 is one of his favorite prayers. It includes the words, "You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing."

Then he issued a "Call to Action": "Our hands can be used in rescue and acts of kindness, such as serving meals. Hands give and receive and acts of kindness, such as serving, are religious acts, but they must not stand alone."

"Why have we shied away from community responsibility? We may do good volunteering in our small groups, but united we have power. People of faith working together can be the catalyst of change."

Flam noted that the separation clause of the Constitution was only meant to prevent any one religion from becoming dominant. It was never meant to gag our religious voices. But he said, "we have allowed loving kindness to become a substitute for democracy."

"We can help with open hands as the Psalmist suggests, but a gentle hand is not enough. In Exodus, God told Moses to reach out with a strong hand. We must raise our voices in the public arena."

"Like Martin Luther King Jr., who quoted from the prophet Amos, 'Then justice shall roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream.'"



Rabbi Alan Flam

STREET SIGHTS ARCHIVE

Friendship Cafe Opens



On May 1st, Amos House celebrated the opening of the Friendship Cafe located at 500 Broad Street, Providence. The cafe will be used as a training site for workers in the food industry. Doug Spikes, pictured, is the Head Chef.

PHOTO BY ERIK GOULD

Senator Attends Speak Out



Sen. Rhoda Perry, Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, attended the May 14th homeless Speak Out at Mathewson Street Church. Some of the issues discussed were police harassment, affordable housing, shelter conditions, jobs and voter rights. Speak Outs are bi-weekly events sponsored by the RI Coalition for the Homeless where people gather to discuss issues related to homelessness.

PHOTO BY JMC

Horizons for Homeless Children to hold conference in June

(HHC) is excited to announce our 5th Young Children Without Homes National Conference to be held June 15th, at the Hogan Center at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. The conference, which will once again focus on the needs of young homeless children and their families, is a unique opportunity to raise national awareness about family homelessness and share local and national strategies for serving young children and families experiencing homelessness.

Our last four conferences provided valuable forums for a diverse audience of several hundred early education and homeless service workers, as well as many others in the field of health and human services, to come together to share information and best practices, and to network with each other. If you need any additional information contact: Cindy Bregman at 617-445-1480 or cbregman@horizonsforhomelesschildren.org. Thank you in advance for your support of the 5th Young Children Without Homes National Conference.



Website: www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org
Horizons for Homeless Children
1705 Columbus Avenue
Roxbury, MA 02119

PHOTO BY HHC

Special Memoriam for a Homeless Hero

Hugo Alfredo Tale-Yax, a homeless man residing in New York City, died on Sunday, April 25th after he came to the aid of a woman being attacked at 5:40am on 144th Street at 88th Road in Jamaica, Queens. Mr. Tale-Yax was stabbed several times in the chest and collapsed as he chased his assailant. He was 31 years old.

Over twenty people saw Mr. Tale-Yax collapsed and bleeding on the sidewalk and either decided to ignore him or did not call for help. Fire and Rescue did not arrive to assist for an hour and twenty minutes.

The News is Sad

On the streets of New York City, a tragedy occurred when a homeless man came to aid a woman in distress seeking assistance. This hero was stabbed multiple times.

So the news is sad today. Let me say why.

Humanity has stooped to all time lows.
Lying in a pool of blood and left for dead,
how many didn't get involved and passed by.

Did they hear his moans, his agony and pain?
How callous they were and ignoring his pleas?
Life has cheapened and that's the reason why
we've gone to hell in basket each day

The news is sad today- for this happens daily.
Everyone thinks of themselves and nothing else.
When will they wake up and smell the coffee?
They'll be the first to complain- if it happened to them.

Now as I sit here and contemplate my very life-
I survived the very thing this man lived and died for:
to be a voice, and hopefully making a stand here
so the news maybe might be good, hopefully, someday.

Because we're seeing things that nobody's ever seen,
until he comes to rescue us by divine intervention-
commonplace will be the anger and destruction.
A hero's dead, branded homeless, the news is sad today.

Dedicated to the homeless person stabbed and left to
die on the streets of NYC; what is life? What is it worth?
To make an awareness to those who passed by; what in the
hell were you thinking? It could have been you!
The news is sad today.

- David Eisenberger

Advertisement

Sustainable Development and Responsible Tourism At the Heart of Quebec and Street Papers

The 16th annual international conference of street papers took place in Melbourne, Australia in May 2010. This event, run by the International Network of Street Papers (INSP), brought together representatives from various countries and continents and provided the opportunity to share expertise and develop projects to assist homeless people. INSP represents more than 100 street papers from some 40 countries. With a combined readership of nearly 10 million people per edition, the global street-paper movement has helped to reintegrate more than 250,000 homeless people into society in recent years. Street papers promote self esteem and independence for people excluded from the labour market: they are a positive tool for changing lives.

Tourism Québec promotes sustainable development and responsible tourism, and supported INSP's conference by becoming the first organization to advertise in several international street papers worldwide. Due to the strong credibility of its publications and the high quality of its readership, INSP was able to prove that it is able to attract international advertisers, with this particular advertising placement.

INSP would like to thank Tourism Québec and the readers of street papers around the world for their help in improving the lives of some of the world's poorest people. Solidarity must be a part of our society's journey. Bon voyage to you all, and maybe we'll see you in Québec!

Serge Lareault
Publisher of L'itinéraire, Montréal
Chairperson of INSP



www.street-papers.org

Interview with Senator Harold Metts

INTERVIEW BY MELISSA HOWARD

Senator Harold Metts is a life-long resident of RI. He grew up on the south side of Providence, where he still resides with his wife. He is a graduate of Central High School and Roger Williams University with a BS business administration (1970). He earned a teacher certification in social business in 1975, and a master of education and secondary administration in 1983. He is member of Providence branch NAACP, the Urban League, a member of the Deacon board of the Congdon Street Baptist Church, and was in the RI Army National Guard in 1970-1976.

He was the District 6 (Providence) Representative from 1984 -1998, a member of the 11th ward Democratic Committee from 1998 to 2004 and has been the state Senator from District 6 since 2004.

What made you get into politics?

It was years of being a community advocate, coaching, volunteering, and becoming a high school teacher. When one of my buddies wanted to put my name in for the ward committee and what happen was, I said, "Well if you need me then go ahead and I ended up with a lot of votes. That was due to the kids I coached and helped, all grown up and remembered my name.

Then in 1984, someone told me they needed someone for the House (of Representatives). Back, at that time, if you were an endorsed candidate—that was as good as gold. So I ran as an unendorsed candidate and I won. I believe I won because of (my) years of community service.

So, I never really had any aspiration for getting into politics. Advocating for the working and poor people and equal rights for minorities and for women, that's who I am.

It was the era I grew up in. Because when I was in high school there was Dr. King, Malcolm X, and JFK. Those were my formative years. The 60's when I graduate from high school, social advocacy, the vote rights act, the civil rights movement. I was all into that and saw it all that, it helped shape me into who I am today.

Can you tell me more about the hate crime bill?

One of the community leaders talked to me (they know my record for advocating), and the motivation behind the hate crimes bill and singling out homeless people; and certainly because I've lived on the south side of Providence most of my life, and partly because of being a school administrator.

When some kids I worked with were coming to school later, rather than giving them detention, I would ask them, "Why are you coming in late for school?" I found out that this one family practically was homeless and living in a motel room in



COURTESY STREET SIGHTS ARCHIVES

Seekonk. There were five of them and they would take the bus into school.

It's not something that I can hide from. I still live in my grandfather's house on the south side. I live five blocks from Amos House and five blocks (the other way) from Crossroads. So when I drive home

"When some kids I worked with were coming to school later, rather than giving them detention, I would ask them 'Why are you coming in late for school?' I found out that this one family practically was homeless and living in a motel room in Seekonk. There were five of them and they would take the bus into school."

at nights, I'm driving by these places. Sometimes I drive by two or three time a day. It's not something I can forget even if I wanted to. It's part of my community, it's about helping and listening to them and helping out the poor families.

I'll never forget the testimony of a young man. He became homeless because he lost his job. Then he was telling me that people treated him like he had leprosy.

Once you become homeless, people don't want to touch you. I'll never forget the story. So the community advocates thought that I would be the best person to put in the legislation and advocate for it.

I think what makes it different is, it's bad enough if you turn your nose up at someone because they have a criminal record, or if they're drug addicts, or prostitutes, and it's right. But when you turn your nose up at someone that's homeless, on someone who has fallen onto hard times, is just not right.

People don't realize that there are stereotypes of homeless people. It's not just someone with mental health problems; it could be a whole family. There are a lot of women and children who are homeless. They lost their jobs or are two pay checks from being evicted, or two pay checks

from foreclosure. A lot of people are on a shoestring budget.

We want to break the stereotype that we have of homeless people, to be a little more compassionate and understanding. Certainly with NOP, people have an opportunity to get back on their feet.

Why do you think that the expungement bill is a good idea?

Well, if you think about it, when people are in their twenties, they do stupid things. But should that haunt me for the rest of my life? At some point I'm going to meet someone or hopefully have a girlfriend or wife and children that I'm going to take care of. But now having this jail record, I can't get a job.

I met a man who told me once: "Hal, I served my time. I have a wife and kids, I want a job, but if I put on my application that I have a record. They won't hire me, but if I lie about it and they find out later, they'll fire me. You know I served my time. I have to take care of my family."

So that's why I went to the state Council of Churches and they had to put it in with the ministries committee (which was inactive at the time), since I was the one asking the question, so you know who was put up on committee. That's how I got into the prison ministries.

People need a change to clear their record. So they can have some employment. So they can take care of their families. Because the cost of one child at the training school is almost \$100,000 and it's about

\$35,000 for one adult at the ACI. So, were do we want to send our money?

Who would be able to get their record expunged?

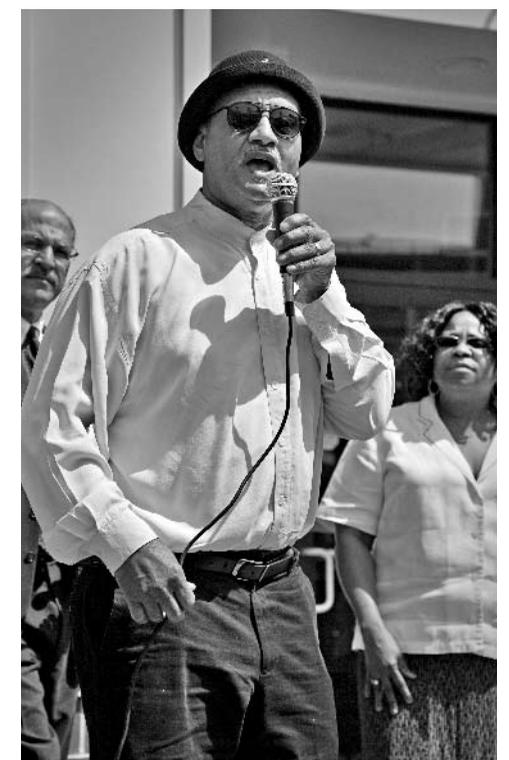
People with misdemeanors, non-violate crimes is one bill. Another of the bills is it would take ten years with no future problems before you can get concerned and I've tried to get that reduced to five years.

Why did you pick these practical topics to stand behind?

I keep this on my desk; this is my reminder and sometimes I read in The Bible, "Give fair judgment to the poor and the orphan; up hold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute. Rescue the poor and helpless; deliver them from the grasp of evil people." I like to keep that one visible, because I don't want to forget and I can't forget.

Is there anything you want the people to know?

The main thing is for people to remain hopeful. The key to all of this is not whether you're homeless or poor you can still vote. People don't trust government. Well, you may not trust but if you don't get up and make a difference, it's going to remain the same. It doesn't cost anything to register and it doesn't cost anything to vote, people need to advocate for themselves. There is power in grass roots. People don't understand it. I'm from the 60's; I remember the mothers taking over Flynn School because they wanted their school to be a model school for the neighborhood children. That was all low-income, welfare mothers—that wanted a better school, using grass roots power to change Flynn School around and make it a model school.



Senator Metts speaking at Friendship Cafe in Providence.

—AS THE SHELTER TURNS—

**COMMON SENSE**

MR. JOSEPH L. PERRY
COLUMNIST

In 2010 the shelters in the state have become increasingly overcrowded. The shelter system must be ready to make a change. The leaders of the shelter system must be confident and use common sense and experience and have high expectations to resolve their constituents' personal problems. The shelter system is under pressure because of the increase of clients in the shelters, and they must live up to the pressure and expectations to find solutions for the homeless constituents.

The system must give the homeless community some memorable advice, and the leaders of shelters must be a force in the shelters. The case managers must have energy and passion and must use their natural ability to make a big difference in the homeless shelters.

The constituents must learn that if they do something they should not do, there will be consequences.

The shelter managers need to keep doing what they have been doing, and case managers need to do pretty much the opposite of what they have been doing. Either way there's something that feels awfully pivotal about respectfully changing their clients' lives. The shelters leaders must establish change, as the homeless community expects it. In order to do that, no matter how full of question marks the shelter system is, the leaders must look at the past to the different times they have changed to see how those changes translated into improvement.

Case managers have to start with common sense and their experience to change their constituents' lives, because people come into the shelters depressed, with emotional and mental problems, and some are in need of anger management or are inadequately prepared for life. Some case managers have done a very good job in the past. As the constituents get more common sense and experience under their belts, their actions and power will become crisper and sharper with change.

One solution for the shelter system might be to take a close look and analyze past mistakes, and to focus on specific problems within the system. The shelter system recently has been going in the wrong direction, as leaders have devoted too much attention on themselves and not on solutions to their constituencies' problems. They got away from their normal routine by trying to add some things that did not fit.

Even immediately after the increase of people in the shelter system, they worried about themselves, brushing off even the ideas of love, understanding, passion, trust, communication, building relationships, training, and conflict resolution. The leaders in the shelter system should emphasize those ideas and implement them.

Letter to the editor: Our illegal foreclosures

Under the United States Constitution, Amendment XIV, "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of the law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

In times in which homelessness is on the rise, no one wants to hear that their homes are being foreclosed upon or that they are being evicted. But imagine your home being foreclosed on or being evicted from your apartment without any form of notice and to make things even worse, you have to move on the same day. During the move, a person may lose some or all of their personal possessions.

One very important aspect of Amendment XIV is due process, your right to be given notice when your house is being foreclosed or your being evicted from your apartment (unless stated otherwise). Mortgage Companies (and Banks) and landlords are finding their way around the due process clause with the assistance of the Courts.

We experienced an eviction and two foreclosures without due process and by court process. Most people would ask, "How could you not know?" Simple, the mortgage company (or bank) or landlord deliberately fails to serve notice in order to receive a judgment in their favor. Second, the mortgage company can petition the court for an alternate means of service, such as, a notice in the newspaper, by alleging that they are not aware of the owner's last known address. This works well since you're not there to dispute the facts. Third, mortgage companies have been known to forward foreclosure notices to an incorrect address.

Recently, we were evicted from our apartment and given notice of the hearing 3 days prior. According to R.I. law, a minimum of 5 days notice must be given. In an attempt to explain our dilemma to the judge of the district court in Providence, a judgment was issued in favor of the landlord. Our plea was futile, although the landlord could not show appropriate service. We were shocked when the judge ordered us to leave the premises on the same day. After a few minutes of pleading with the judge, he gave us two extra days in which to move. In RI, a tenant cannot appeal an order for execution by stipulation; in other words, you are out.

Over the years, we lost two homes to foreclosure, both without notice, and both contributing to our homelessness. The courts were aware that the mortgage company failed to appropriately serve us with notice, but refused to order the return of the property in both cases. When we asked that the mortgage company be ordered to present proof of service, our case was dismissed. The judge went so far as to dismiss our attorney after he proved that there were discrepancies in our mortgage and the bank was not owed what they alleged.

If Courts are no longer acknowledging due process and no longer require notice for foreclosures and evictions, the courts are acting contrary to the U.S. Constitution. Judges are condoning and allowing the illegal seizure of property and personal possessions by banks and landlords. Once the property and possessions are lost, it will take more than a miracle to recover them, no matter how right you may be.

We wonder if this is now the new trend of today that has been devised by government planners to stimulate the economy by placing more houses on the market.

- Pearl & Irwin Jacobowitz

A Knish Tale



The Providence Center

By JIM GILLEN

Do you know what a knish is? Well it sort of a potato pie, but with an attitude!! Just how I like them!

There is a little place on the Lower East Side of Manhattan called Yonah Schimmel and it's a knishery... They speak and live and breathe Knishes. I've been going there since my youth when my Dad, who drove a taxi back then, would bring me and it's been a life long love affair.

I went to High School in Brooklyn and more often then not, we would cut class and jump the turnstiles on the subway for a joy ride into NYC. Usually downtown, the Village, the Lower East Side, Times Square when it was ...lets say, lively!!

We would generally act out like dummies, drink, get high and more often than not wind up at Yonah or Katz's Deli for a Knish. Yes, we thought we had the world on a string.

Occasionally, we would head over to Tomkins Square Park to watch all of the Hippies and the Krishnas and the fun goings on. It wasn't until the early 80's when Tomkins Square became synonymous in the media with drug use and homelessness. It had become a pretty wild place. I can tell you this from personal experience, having had numerous misadventures there, several times waking up, not knowing where I was. As the years went on, Tomkins Square became the "home" to many people who had, perhaps, no where else to go.

One day, with much fanfare, the City came in, kicked everyone out and bulldozed everything in site, part of the "ending" or "hiding" the homeless in NYC... Question being, where does everyone go? What becomes of the people who resided there?

Well, just wondering... Oh yeah, the knish? After all, this is a knish story. I was down there this weekend and got to stop at Yonahs and enjoyed a knish (or two).

And old Yonah? Well we always assumed he was Yonah! He is still there and he still calls me kid. Some things change and some things stay the same, think about it.

Don't forget to join us at "Healthy, Body, Mind and Spirit" event at McAuley House on Friday June 25th from 10am -2pm with all sorts of cool stuff, including music from The World Famous Recovery All Stars... and the food? Oyyyyy!!!

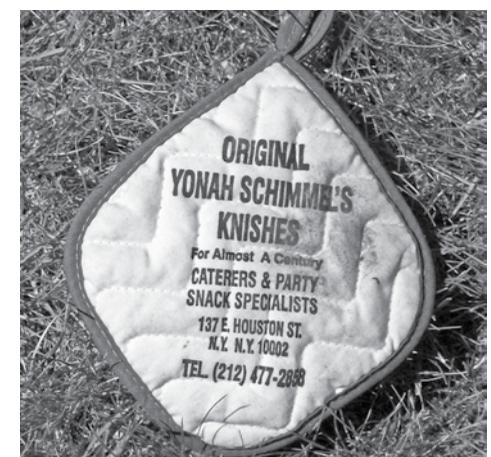
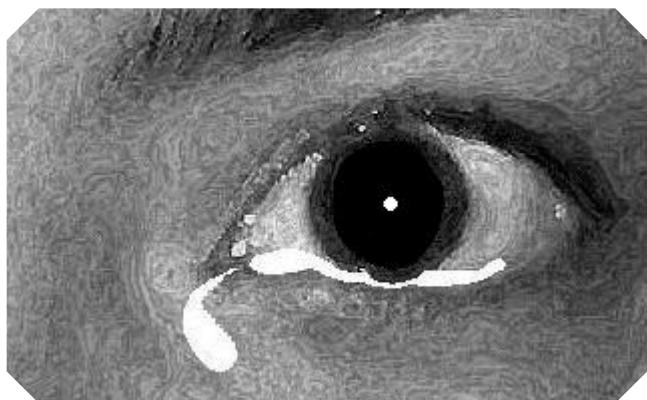


PHOTO BY IRWIN BECKER

Into the Chrysalis

CHAPTER 2 OF A SERIALIZED NOVEL BY FRANCISCO COLBER

“All my life I denied what I was feeling; thinking my despair needed to be pushed aside, that it was something foreign stuck to my side. Only on another day, when I was again hopeless did I remember something important. How I used to hate myself. So much so that I would, on occasion, bash myself on the head ‘til it numbed it. I had you then. You were pure canvasses; I wanted to paint you with all my hopes and dreams. But the anguished thoughts continued to barrel in like avalanches, and so as not to upset you, I would run into another room so you would not see me hitting myself. You are older now and wondered why



I was so distant for so long. I never wanted you to see my terror; I wanted your canvasses painted with gentle shades. Lately I have learned that my true self existed within personal losses that, at first, seemed irreversible, unreachable. I have awakened. When I was a child losses were temporary things. In the morning’s light all seemed fine within my world. But a day came when my hand could not reach you. A weathered hand. Letters unsent. Love neglected. But mostly, what to do with five beautiful children, born to a damaged man. I could not grab you like beach-balls rolling away on the shore. Instead I floundered on a rip-tide taking the past out to sea. And if I dared to go back I would have drowned. So I grew to pretend that the hopelessness was a small matter. But it burrowed deeper and deeper into my heart as the years continued rolling, and rolling, rolling onwards. And then today I realized that an explanation needed to be given, that I am long overdue at sea – that now I have a voice – that I am here – that I can swim back.

In retrospect I see that the universe is really very small, despite String Theory and its Multiverse, which made it appear large and foreboding. It really is a diminutive thing – as small as a teardrop – and once that tear is wiped away by a kind hand, the universe suddenly vanishes, becoming inconsequential. Joy is all that remains.”

- The Surrogate



PHOTO BY STAN KAPELEWSKI

Hail and Farewell, Elizabeth, from the people whose lives you have given hope

As many of our readers know, Elizabeth Ochs recently passed Street SightS on to a new team of leading editors. Though she is no longer the coordinating editor, her hard work and community-oriented vision set the precedent for a paper which continues to work to the same standards of professionalism while espousing the ideals of integrative communities and advocacy.

Elizabeth recently announced she is leaving Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless for a job in education. We wish to tell her how we feel:

Liz, you’re impossible to get mad at. Try as we might, it’s just not possible to even get mad at you—never mind staying mad; that’s beyond impossible. Your mom and dad did such a great job with you, we’re thinking of asking them for the formula they used so we can apply it to our kids!

Elizabeth opens doors for people who’ve had too many closed, sometimes time and time again. What a great person! You are genuinely kind, compassionate and sincere. Very positive and uplifting, which we all need more of.

Elizabeth loves to garden. In creating and growing Street SightS she has brought many of the same skills: vision for the garden, preparing the soil, planting many seeds, nurturing what has been planted, fertilizing the plants, bringing in the harvest and delighting in the abundance of the garden. Elizabeth, We Love You!

- The Street SightS Staff

It's that time of year when some of us think about the end of the school year and summer vacation. Others at work think of the annual vacation. Most wish we could afford a vacation. Summer is coming, and here are some scrambled thoughts about the season. Unscramble them to read my thoughts.

- By William Harter

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Answers on last page

Resources

June Events

Classes

- ◆ Beginning Computer, Open Doors (New name for Family Life Center) Mondays-Thursdays, 1 p.m.-3 p.m., 841 Broad Street, Providence, RI. 02907, (401) 781-5808.
- ◆ Employment Series I, Open Doors, first Tuesday of the month, 9:30 am
- ◆ Art Class, McAuley House –Tuesdays, 10 a.m.
- ◆ Art classes, Oasis, 1280 North Main Street, Providence – Mondays, 10:30 a.m.-noon and Wednesdays, 1:30-3 p.m.

Events

- ◆ Poetry Slam, Mathewson St. Church, June 4th at 2 p.m.
- ◆ AS 220, Environmental Legislation in RI, Friday June 4th, 6:30 to 7:30p.m.
- ◆ McAuley House, Elmwood Ave, Providence, Healthy Body, Mind @ Spirit Festival; The Kick off to the Recovery Season –Friday June 25th 10 am to 1:30p.m. For More info contact : Rev. Mary Margaret 401.941.9013 x302

Meetings

- ◆ AA, Crossroads – Mondays, 9 a.m.
- ◆ AA, Open Doors—Tuesdays, 7 p.m.
- ◆ NA, Open Doors—Thursdays, 6:30 p.m.
- ◆ Addiction Recovery Group, Fridays at 10 a.m. at McAuley House
- ◆ The Twelve Steps, a Spiritual Journey—Mondays, 5-7 p.m. at the House of Manna Ministries, 1542A Broad St.
- ◆ Open discussion about transitions from prison, homelessness, addiction, etc.—every other Friday, 5-7 p.m. at the House of Manna Ministries, 1524A Broad St.

Speak Out

- ◆ Mathewson St. Church – Fridays, June 11th and June 24th at 3 p.m.

Library Hours

- ◆ Central Library
150 Empire Street, 455-8000
Monday & Thursday 1:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Tuesday 10:00 am – 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday CLOSED
Friday & Saturday 12:30 – 5:30 p.m.
Sunday: 1 – 5 p.m. (Sept 13, 2009 through May 16, 2010)

Legal Clinic

- (Information: 401.721.5685 ext.22)
- ◆ Grace Church, 175 Mathewson St. Providence, June 9th and 23rd at 9:30 a.m. 401.331.3225
- ◆ Amos House, 413 Friendship St. Providence, June 29th, at noon 401.272.0228
- ◆ Harrington Hall Howard Ave., Building 58, Cranston June 21, 530pm 401.462.0724
- ◆ WARM Center, 56 Spruce St., Westerly, June 16th at 1p.m. 401.596.9276

Job Search

- Job Search workshops will be at the computer labs of the following libraries:
- ◆ Pawtucket Public Library, 13 Summer St., June 14, 3 p.m. Register at (401) 725-3714.
- ◆ Newport Public Library, 300 Spring St., June 15, 3 p.m. Register at (401) 847-8720.
- ◆ Rochambeau Library, 708 Hope St., Providence, June 17, 3 p.m. Register at (401) 272-3780.

Contact streetsights@gmail.com

Answers to puzzle: soil, dirt, yard, grass, green, trees, flowers, warmth, shorts, growth, leaves, outdoors, sunshine.

Meal Sites

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
SUNDAY	Beneficent Church 6:00 am - 7:30 am (Bread & Blessings run by St. Francis)	St Anthony Parish 1st and 3rd Sunday 12:15 pm Disciples of Christ Tabernacle Mission Church @ Amos 1:15 to 1:50 pm Judy's Kindness Kitchen at Crossroads (Sept to June) Sunday 10:30 am-11:00 am	Salvation Army 4:30 - 5:30 pm Sts Peter & Andrew Church Last Sunday of every month 1 - 2:30 pm Providence Rescue Mission 5 pm
MONDAY	Amos House 7 - 8 am	Amos House 11 - 12:30 pm McAuley House 11:15 - 1 pm Maranatha Tabernacle Church of God 11 am	St Patricks 4 pm - 5:15 pm Providence Rescue Mission 5 pm
TUESDAY	Amos House 7 - 8 am Beneficent Church 6 - 7:30 am	Amos House 11 - 12:30 pm McAuley House 11:15 - 1 pm Maranatha Tabernacle Church of God 11 am	St. John's 4 - 5 pm Providence Rescue Mission 5 pm
WEDNESDAY	Amos House 7 - 8 am	Amos House 11 - 12:30 pm McAuley House 11:15 - 1pm Maranatha Tabernacle Church of God 11am Grace Church 12:15 - 1 pm	Assembly of God 6:30 - 7:30 pm Providence Rescue Mission 5 pm
THURSDAY	Amos House 7 - 8 am	Amos House 11 - 12:30 pm McAuley House 11:15 - 1 pm Maranatha Tabernacle Church of God 11 am	St Charles Church 4:30 - 5:20 pm Providence Rescue Mission 5 pm Victory Assembly of God 5 - 6 pm Second and last Thursday of the month
FRIDAY	Amos House 7 - 8 am Beneficent Church 6 - 7:30 am	Amos House 11 - 12:30 pm McAuley House 11:15 - 1 pm Maranatha Tabernacle Church of God 11 am	PICA 4:30 - 6 pm Providence Rescue Mission 5 pm
SATURDAY	People's Baptist Church Last Saturday of every month 8 - 10 am Church of the Master 9 - 10 am Closed July and August	Amos House 11 - 12:30 pm closed first Sat of month McAuley House 11:15 - 1 pm open last Sat of the month	Epiphany Soup Kitchen @ St. Stephen's Church 4 - 5 pm Gospel Tabernacle Outreach Ministeries, Inc 2nd and 4th Saturday 3 - 4 pm Providence Rescue Mission 5 pm

Amos House 415 Friendship Street 272 - 0220
* Assembly of God 353 Elmwood Avenue 461 - 7210
Beneficent Church 300 Weybosset Street
* Cathedral of St John's 271 North Main Street 99 331 - 4622
Church of the Master 15 Valley Street 17, 19, 27, 28 861 - 5568
*Gospel Tabernacle Outreach Ministries, Inc. 145 Oakland Avenue 454 - 0988
Grace Church 175 Mathewson Street 331 - 3225
Judy's Kindness Kitchen 160 Broad St 521 - 2255
* Maranatha Tabernacle Church of God 1040 Atwells Ave
McAuley House 20, 22 622 Elmwood Avenue 941 - 9013
People's Baptist Church 1275 Elmwood Avenue, Cranston 467 - 8220
PICA meal site 134 Mathewson Street 454 - 7422
* PICA food pantry (Greene & Garden St. door)
* Providence Rescue Mission 627 Cranston Street 274 - 8861
* Salvation Army 11, 20, 22 386 Broad Street 831 - 1119
St Anthony Parish 1413 Mineral Spring Ave 353 - 3120
* St Charles Church 18, 31 178 Dexter Street 273 - 1108
* St Francis Food Pantry 668 Hartford Avenue 455 - 3740
St Patrick's 56, 57 224 Smith Street 421 - 7070
Saints Peter & Andrew Church 25 Pomona Avenue (corner Pemberton) 272 - 9649
St Stephen's Church 114 George St. 35, 42, 78 421 - 6702
Victory Assembly of God 321 Veazie Street 50, 52 455 - 0060

*Groceries available, call for information.



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