

Safety Net

The newsletter of the Coalition for the Homeless

Winter 2013

The Coalition Responds to Hurricane Sandy



50,000 and counting...and then Sandy

Tonight, a record 50,000 New Yorkers – including 20,500 children will sleep in our emergency shelters. Thousands more live on the streets or in makeshift shelter and another 6,500 or so are living in temporary hotel and rooming house accommodations after having been displaced by Hurricane Sandy.

Each day more evacuees are leaving their cold, dark, moldy homes, seeking a temporary place to stay, and only a handful have been able to find housing they can afford. As our outreach workers report, many of the evacuees are those least able to cope with long-term displacement. Often sick or disabled, before Sandy they lived in basement apartments, unlawfully sub-divided units, doubled-up or in congregate facilities.

No Housing

The housing situation in New York City is bleak for homeless families and evacuees alike. With the exception of a trickle of housing that opens for disabled homeless

...for the first time in modern history, our city offers its poorest citizens no exit from homeless shelters.

people and those being discharged from psychiatric facilities, today there is simply – and shockingly – no housing program for homeless New Yorkers. Some evacuees may eventually qualify for federal or NYC housing placements, but they have already been living for months in hotels without sufficient food, medication, transportation or cash to meet their most basic needs.

No Exit from Shelter

What does all of this mean? It means that for the first time in modern history, our city offers its poorest citizens no exit from homeless shelters: No housing program to help them find a way out once they enter, thanks to the short-sighted policies of the Bloomberg administration. As regular *Safety Net* readers know, the number of homeless men, women and kids began to skyrocket when the Bloomberg administration eliminated the preference – previously granted by Mayors Koch, Dinkins and Giuliani – for homeless families to access public housing and Section 8 rental vouchers. Prior administrations wisely used those cost-effective resources, prioritizing roughly one-in-three federally subsidized units for homeless households. Bloomberg's failed series of experiments in time-limited rental assistance, such as the Advantage Program, led only to a revolving door that now returns unprecedented numbers of families to shelter:

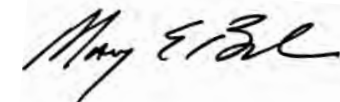
- Homeless households exiting shelter through Advantage subsidies are 18

times more likely to return to shelter than those placed in public housing, and ten and a half times more likely than those exiting to apartments with Section 8 assistance.

- The return to shelter of 6,508 previously homeless Advantage families (from the program's inception through November 2012) accounts for over \$188 million in avoidable shelter costs.
- One in three families applying for shelter are previously homeless – now returning to shelter after their time-limited Advantage housing subsidy was terminated.
- Seven and a half years ago, before the Bloomberg administration cut off access to federal housing resources for homeless families, 26 percent of shelter applicants had previously stayed in the shelter system. Today it's 63 percent.
- With no exit from shelter, the average length of stay in shelter now exceeds one year – and current record levels of homelessness are projected to continue to rise sharply.

Thanks to your help and support, the Coalition is there for homeless New Yorkers and Sandy evacuees alike to provide immediate relief as well as fight for sensible, humane and fiscally sound solutions. Your compassion makes a lasting difference in the lives of those living on the edge.

Mary E. Brosnahan,



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Law Firms and Corporations Kick Off the GCFP Sponsorship Initiative

As 2012 came to a close, homelessness in New York City continued to soar to record levels. The number of people sleeping in emergency shelter each night has reached a staggering 50,000 – **more than 20,000 of them children** – and the effects of Hurricane Sandy have left countless more of our neighbors homeless, hungry and in desperate need of help.

Record homelessness and the disastrous effects of Sandy come at the same time that many other service providers in NYC have eliminated programs or closed altogether due to economic hardship, creating a tremendous surge in need.

To help our critical frontline services meet the unprecedented demand, the Coalition has increased efforts to engage the private sector for help. In October we launched a new **Corporate and Law Firm Sponsorship Campaign** – an innovative collaboration with New York companies and firms to support the Grand Central Food Program (GCFP). For nearly 30 years GCFP has been delivering life-saving meals to nearly 1,000 homeless and hungry men, women and children on the streets of New York City each night.

This new campaign gives NYC law firms and corporations the opportunity to sponsor a GCFP van for \$10,000 per month, delivering 10,000 hot, nutritious meals to those most in need. The name and logo of each sponsor appear on the van for that month, and the Coalition gratefully and publicly acknowledges the sponsor's generosity on its website and in social media.

The campaign kicked off with sponsorships from **Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP**, **Lane Office**, **Troutman Sanders LLP** and **Proskauer Rose LLP**. In addition to providing invaluable financial sup-



Lane Office President Greg Burke and family volunteering on the Grand Central Food Program



Volunteers from Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP

port, sponsoring groups send volunteers to help GCFP distribute the hot and healthy meals at 31 street sites throughout Manhattan and the Bronx. “These new volunteers have been a wonderful addition to the program,” said Juan De La Cruz, GCFP director. “They tell me again and again how they get more out of their experience than they ever imagined.”

“We are honored to be one of the first corporate sponsors of the Grand Central Food Program,” said Gregory Burke, President of Lane

Office. “It’s extremely rewarding for everyone in our company to be involved in this.”

It’s been truly inspiring to see New York’s legal and corporate communities respond to the crisis by stepping up to help us continue this critical program, and we look forward to working with many more sponsors in the future.

If your company or law firm is interested in learning more about becoming a GCFP sponsor, please contact us at pbayley@CFTHomeless.org.

The Coalition Responds to Hurricane Sandy

Hurricane Sandy has devastated New York City, but some of its worst impact has been on New Yorkers who were already living on the edge. Many of the hardest-hit neighborhoods – from Far Rockaway to Red Hook, from Coney Island to Midland Beach in Staten Island – are low-income communities. The storm instantly displaced thousands of poor New Yorkers, who have struggled ever since to obtain food, clothes or alternative housing. And more than a month after the storm, government efforts to shelter victims remain chaotic, leaving many in need of basic necessities and housing.

Sandy also worsened New York City's already historic homelessness crisis. The thousands displaced by the storm have added to the all-time record number of homeless people bedding down each night in the municipal shelter system – 48,700 people before the storm even made landfall, including more than 20,000 children. And we have yet to see long-term housing assistance to help kids and adults who were homeless both before and after Sandy – so those numbers will continue to skyrocket.

Preventing Harm During the Storm

In the days before Sandy hit, the New York City Department of Homeless Services and not-for-profit service providers made extraordinary efforts to protect homeless New Yorkers from immediate harm. Shelters and intake centers that were located in flood zones were evacuated and nearly 1,200 homeless single adults and 300 homeless families were relocated to other facilities across the city. DHS temporarily stopped the denial of families from entering the shelter system, and a directive was issued

to ensure single men and women also would not be turned away from emergency shelter.

After the storm struck, many municipal shelters were left without electricity and some without heat, particularly those in Manhattan below midtown. Many were able to operate with emergency

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generators while City workers and non-profit shelter providers continued to provide food and other vital services to shelter residents.

A number of other private shelters were also hit. In the immediate aftermath of the storm, facilities housing HIV/AIDS patients had no heat and had run out of blankets – their residents left literally shivering in the dark as the days wore on. The premiere shelter for LGBT youth – the Ali Forney Center – was completely demolished. Men and women who had suffered through the storm on the streets were in desperate need of assistance. Food was scarce, and the need was dire.

As soon as the storm passed, the Coalition's Grand Central Food Program vans hit the streets to feed hundreds of hungry storm victims, many with no power and no access to a hot meal. When the first refugees were placed in hotels and YMCAs in Manhattan, we were there with extra meals, dry cloth-



Coalition staff offering help to those displaced by Sandy

ing and warm blankets – working closely with the Legal Aid Society to provide comprehensive care to homeless evacuees.

City's Response Grows Chaotic

In the dearth of any coordinated effort to monitor and ensure the well-being of those displaced by the storm, Coalition staff worked – and continue to work – 24/7 in the field, helping hundreds of evacuees – first in the makeshift evacuation shelters set up in high schools and colleges; then in the even more haphazard and unsafe evacuation shelters crowded into existing homeless shelter facilities; and since late November in dozens of hotels and YMCAs scattered across NYC.

These visits revealed an increasingly chaotic and ever-shifting patchwork of shelters that failed to meet the basic needs of evacuees, which included particularly vulnerable groups like children,



The Coalition staff and volunteers were on the ground immediately, handing out blankets and other basic necessities

people struggling with disabilities and seniors. On November 20th, a scathing front-page report in *The New York Times* echoed many of the findings of Coalition and Legal Aid outreach workers: Babies, youngsters and adults crowded in cots on armory drill floors, with no cribs for infants; evacuees stranded with no money for food and no cooking facilities; and traumatized storm victims shuffled from one makeshift setting to another and another.

By Thanksgiving more than 2,000 of these at-risk evacuees were moved into hotels and thousands more into other temporary accommodations. Many still remain without food or assistance, access to medical and mental health services or subway fare to get to now-distant schools and employment.

In early December, Coalition staff found an 85-year-old woman who was placed on the third floor of a decrepit East Harlem hotel with no elevator. She was dehydrated, unable to get up and down the stairs and had to rely on one compassionate security guard – himself living in a homeless shelter – who bought her food with money from his own pocket. Coalition workers

Fueling the pre-Sandy crisis, almost 6,500 families (with 14,000 children) became homeless again after their short housing stipends...were terminated. Any Sandy evacuee who ends up in this system will face the same stark lack of options.

reconnected this elderly woman with her Coney Island seniors' residence and moved her back to safety. As December rolled on, the Coalition met scores of displaced families, unable to find affordable apartments with their FEMA grants, on the brink of eviction to the streets because their hotel stays were being terminated. We battled with government officials to get their hotel stays extended so they would not be forced into the

bursting-at-the-seams municipal shelter system.

Not Yet Moving Forward

Sandy exposed and exacerbated long-standing problems within New York City's housing market. Many of the people we've helped had been living in the most marginal housing – illegal basement apartments, rooming houses and severely overcrowded apartments. Many have been found ineligible for FEMA assistance and as a result, are still left with few options.

An all-time record 48,700 people crowded the municipal shelter system each night before the storm – fully 20 percent more than last year alone. Another 5,000 slept nightly in other public and private shelters. And thousands more were sleeping rough on the streets and in the trains.

Yet amidst this unprecedented crisis, Mayor Bloomberg and his administration still have no plan in place to help homeless families move from shelter to stable housing. Fueling the pre-Sandy crisis, more than 6,500 families (with 14,000 children) became homeless again after their short housing stipends – from the City's failed short-term subsidy programs – were terminated. Any Sandy evacuee who ends up in this system will face the same stark lack of options. And yet Mayor Bloomberg remains adamant in his refusal to give homeless New Yorkers priority for cost-effective Federal housing assistance.

In the aftermath of this historic storm, unless leaders at every level of government move quickly to coordinate efforts and secure resources sufficient to meet both the urgent and long-term needs for housing and vital services – Sandy's evacuees will be swept into the record ranks of New York's homeless.

The Coalition Makes the Holidays a Little Brighter for New York's Homeless Kids

The holiday spirit was in full display this season as hundreds of people responded to our annual toy drive with tremendous generosity. We received more than 2,000 toys for homeless girls and boys, from skateboards and Barbie dolls to basketballs and MP3 players.

Dozens of companies and schools from across NYC were eager to help. AIG, Rubicon, Nickelodeon and FGI Finance held extremely successful drives, collecting hundreds of toys. Francesca, a thoughtful ten-year-old who's already a seasoned toy-drive veteran, nearly doubled her efforts from last year and brought two truckloads of toys that she purchased with the help of friends and family. And we received nearly 300 gifts – many with warm holiday notes – from compassionate Americans across the country thanks to our new Amazon wish list that let caring folks everywhere easily participate in the drive.

With the toys coming in, the holiday season became a flurry of activity as volunteers from Missy Farren Associates, Global Strategy Group, AIG, Curtis Brown Ltd, and UHY-US wrapped hundreds of the gifts for our annual holiday party in mid-December.

The party was a truly wonderful day – made possible by the kindness of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). For one afternoon, 130 homeless girls and boys escaped the dreary life in a shelter for fun, music, games and great food. Our DJ got even the shiest kids moving on the dance floor, while face-painters turned our young guests into lions, butterflies and superheroes. Volunteers from Camp Homeward Bound entertained the kids with games and crafts, and artists from Xmental Inc. created personalized graffiti art



UFT President Michael Mulgrew and PIX11's Mr. G with some very happy children at our annual kids holiday party.



For one afternoon, 130 homeless girls and boys escaped the dreary life in a shelter for fun, music, games and great food.

for each child. The arrival of Santa brought squeals of delight as each child had a chance to sit on his lap and whisper holiday wishes in his ear. At the end of the party, PIX 11 weatherman Mr. G, UFT President Michael Mulgrew and other Coalition supporters pitched in to hand out the toys and other gifts to all the happy partygoers. Each child left



Volunteers from Missy Farren Associates were one of the groups who helped us wrap hundreds of gifts for the party.

with a glowing face – a reminder of the magic that the holidays can bring to us all.

The remaining toys were delivered to homeless girls and boys in nearly a dozen other shelters by our Grand Central Food Program and Scattered Site Housing Program staff, so that hundreds more youngsters would have a bit of holiday cheer, even amidst their hardships.

As we enter the New Year at a time of record child homelessness, we are deeply thankful to each of you who took the time to brighten a homeless girl or boy's holiday this season.

Coalition Celebrates its Most Successful ARTWALK Ever!

By Maria Fregoso

Despite a sudden Nor'easter, nearly 700 New Yorkers joined us on November 7th to honor the accomplishments of artist Jack Pierson and photographer Patrick McMullan at the Coalition's 18th annual ARTWALK NY. Although the storm peaked just before the start of the event, it didn't deter our dedicated ARTWALK attendees! Several guests remarked that the severe conditions outside reminded them why everyone was there: To help the record number of New Yorkers trapped in homelessness and to raise awareness about their plight.

As guests arrived at 82 Mercer they were greeted by restaurant tasting stations hosted by Indochine, The Odeon, Michael's, The National, Macao Trading Co., and David Burke Kitchen. A selection of wines was generously provided by Brancott Estate and specialty cocktails by the evening's liquor sponsor, Belvedere. Guests traded stories about that night's storm, the previous night's presidential election and the previous week's terrible hurricane. They then began bidding on the more than 100 stunning pieces in the silent auction. Highlights included works by Jonah Freeman and Justin Lowe, Shelter Serra, Bill Jensen and Lola Montes Schnabel; prints by Raymond Pettibon, Marcel Dzama and Pat Steir; photographs by Patrick McMullan, Patti Smith and Robert Longo, to name a few.

The highlight of the evening was the live auction. Guests heard special

remarks from ARTWALK honorees Patrick McMullan and Jack Pierson, who spoke movingly of their admiration for the work of the Coalition and their concern and compassion for the tens of thousands of men, women and children suffering the trauma of homelessness in New York City. Their inspiring words were followed by a thrilling live auction, led by auctioneer Aileen Agopian, which featured exquisite works by



Honoree Jack Pierson and Mary Gail Parr



A special thank you to Art Advisory Board Chairs Vincent and Shelly Fremont



Kayce Freed Jennings, honoree Patrick McMullan and co-chair Coco Rocha

Jack Pierson, Patrick McMullan, Louise Fishman, Barnaby Furnas, Wade Guyton, Jenny Holzer, Kim McCarty, Roxy Paine, Ed Ruscha, Andy Warhol and a unique commissioned portrait by photographer Adam Fuss. The live auction alone raised an astonishing \$400,000 – a new record for ARTWALK!

Following the excitement of the live auction, guests returned to finalize their bids in the silent auction while DJ Donna D'Cruz kept everyone entertained through the end of the evening.

We were inspired by the hundreds of ardent Coalition supporters who overcame the brutal weather to help us raise \$900,000, making this our most successful ARTWALK to date. We are truly grateful to our generous sponsors, artists, Art Advisory Board and Benefit Committee members whose amazing efforts made this year's event possible!

Thank You!

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