

STREET SPEECH

THE VOICE FROM THE STREETS OF COLUMBUS

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ALL PROCEEDS GO TO THE AUTHORIZED STREET SPEECH VENDORS

Ted Williams

A talk with the Golden Voice

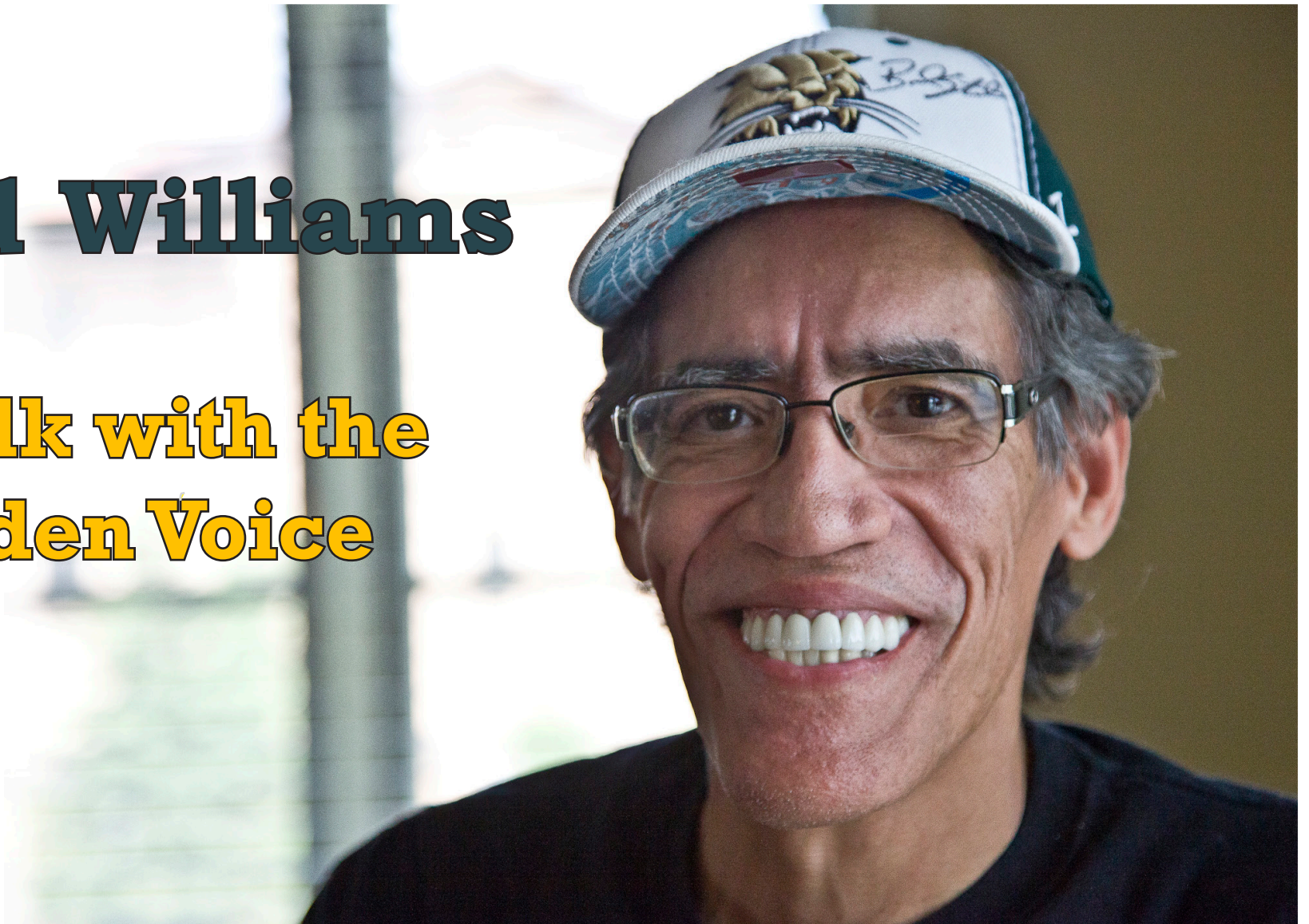


Photo by Stephen Takacs.

A talk with the Golden Voice

Ted Williams on homelessness, fame, getting clean, and giving back

Interview and photos by Stephen Takacs

“It’s a far cry from I-71 and Hudson,” says Ted Williams as I take in the spacious living room and open kitchen of the Dublin condo where he currently resides. From Williams’ second floor patio, I can see a nearby lake where residents, like Williams, sometimes fish for sport. It’s a peaceful spot and —though less than 30 miles away from the infamous Hudson/I-71 off-ramp— it illustrates how quickly life can change for anyone.

Williams is warm and inviting as he gives me a tour of his new home. Along the way, he proudly points out some of the interesting items he’s collected since his rise from homelessness to celebrity 17 months ago, including a statue of his name sake— the baseball legend Ted Williams, shoes given to him by Jimmy Fallon, a collection of signed ball caps, and a walk-in closet full of clothes that doubles as a sound booth for recording voice-over work.

Williams became a national celebrity overnight last year when a video of him flying a wordy cardboard sign on the Hudson and Interstate 71 off-ramp went viral on Youtube. The video - shot by Doral Chenoweth of the Columbus Dispatch - depicts a disheveled Williams performing impromptu, radio-ready announcements at Chenoweth’s request. The smooth timbre of his voice was in striking contrast to Williams’ unkempt hair and old green army jacket, so much that his “golden voice” appeared dubbed in. Within days of being posted online,

the video was shared by millions of viewers, completely changing Williams’ life.

Williams recently published an autobiography, *A Golden Voice*. The book chronicles his life from his early days in the Bedford-Stuyvesant housing projects in Brooklyn, New York, where he developed a love for radio listening to his hero - disc jockey Hank Spann. At the age of twelve, Williams began developing his own voice by practicing on small tape recorder and microphone he received as a Christmas gift. As he grew up, so did his ambition and by the mid-1980’s, Williams’ golden voice earned him a #1 radio spot in Columbus, Ohio on WVKO. Ted’s dream job at the soul and R & B station was short lived though after his introduction to crack cocaine in 1988. Within months of trying crack, Williams’ had lost his job and his addiction spiraled out of control.

Williams’ book is a testament to the dangers of addiction. It chronicles the collapse of two marriages, losing his dream job, and the various hustles he and his girlfriend performed to get by during 15+ years of homelessness on the streets of Columbus. *A Golden Voice* is also about second chances and records Williams’ spiritual journey as he struggled to turn his life around.

Written in a first person perspective that pulls readers right in with short chapters, shocking subject matter and one man’s spiritual journey, *A Golden Voice* is a real page-turner.

In the hour we spent together, Williams and I had the opportunity to discuss his past, present, and future. Williams began by reflecting on the sudden changes within his life.

Ted: Oh man. A 360 like you wouldn’t believe, you know, and those emotions resurface every now and then. It’s overwhelming. A lot is on my plate family-wise.

There’s a lot of people who say, “Hey you’ve done it. I’m gonna do it.” That makes me feel so good. Because here’s a guy who thought he was earmarked for hell. You know, with my criminal background and the people I’ve wronged — there was no way. But I found that the closer I got to God, the more he helped me.

It was a very big transition for me. Here I was standing on that corner waiting an hour for not even a dollar or two dollars, when I could walk right out and steal three Bluetooth’s and have \$150 in seven minutes. So, standing out there I was talking to God. Everyday I had a conversation because I [had been] so neglectful in giving him his reverence one hour a week at a sanctuary of some sort. He made me stand out there. He really did.

Can you summarize the sequence of events in your life after the YouTube video of you went viral on the Internet?

That was on January 4th, 2011, and to this day sometimes the memory remains fresh and then other times it’s clouded, because my life had just become a whirlwind—and I mean overnight. The night before I was smoking crack in a pup tent underneath the bridge at 71 and Hudson. The next day, I’m thrust upon the Today Show with Matt Lauer, Meredith Vieira, Al Roker and Ann Curry. And then after that it’s Good Morning America and Jimmy Fallon and meeting Doctor Oz and Jim Carey and Chevy Chase. And then all of a sudden it went to Dr. Phil, Entertainment Tonight and it just went wild, you know.

[in his golden voice] ...*It all started with Dave and Jimmy at WNCI right here in Columbus, Ohio.*

The rest is history. I did a Kraft Macaroni and Cheese commercial —a national ad. I also wrote a book. So a lot of things have happened in these last 15 months. I went to treatment twice — completed once. I’ve been on Monique. I’ve been on Wendy Williams, Huckabee, Piers Morgan, and The Today Show on four occasions.

I’ve been asked to do quite a few other shows this fall — including my own. I have a reality television show that’s being bought, or shopped I should say. That’s pretty much it.

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Vendor Spotlight: David Gray

By Mary Loritz

One day, in the fall of 2010, chaos erupted at the monthly Street Speech vendor meeting. A dispute between a few vendors over turf erupted; yelling ensued, and tensions escalated.

Then one vendor, who had been sitting quietly, stood up. He admonished the conflict and called for unity between vendors, and all people, and harmony with the environment. Silence fell over the room. He brought some perspective to the situation. Then he got on his bike and left.

I didn't see David Gray again for two years, until last month, when I had the chance to interview him and learn more about his life, and his thoughts on the environment as the planet warms.

Gray, 62, describes himself as "the original hippie". Born in Chillicothe, he comes from an "Appalachian hillbilly background", and has lived half his life in Columbus. He spent 10 years homeless in Ohio, starting off in the foothills of Appalachia.

How did you become homeless?

I was married for 30 years, I have two children. My wife got breast cancer... and me and God kinda got into it. And some other stuff, but... I built a house and owned a property and all of that. And I just kind of shoved all that stuff aside and walked the Earth. So I was sort of homeless by choice. It wasn't so much that I had slipped through the cracks or that I had some debilitating illness... It was more of a spiritual quest than it was anything else. It was just me trusting God. That's what it really boiled down to.

Why do you care so much about the environment?

Because it sustains your life. You can't live without the environment!

Good point. Well, you seem to have a greater concern than most people, why do you think that is?

There are a lot of people out there, billions and billions of people. And I think there's a class of people who do see the needs and do have these values. And they're the artists and the creative thinkers, they're the leaders, and somehow they seem to get in the right positions and do the right things at the right times.

At the same time, I think we're also in a time of transition; we're coming to the end of an age of hustle. You know, it's been a very hectic age of everybody living in the fast lane, working two jobs trying to make ends meet. And we've pretty much burned ourselves out and burned our planet out,

with global warming and the stress on the environment.

We're coming to the end of that age, like it or not. Just like this weather we've had lately. It's a sign, it's a warning. Here we've had these extreme temperatures and swings and storms that have knocked out the power, and broken down our grid, and left us stranded with our food rotting in the heat, and our bodies overheated. One way or another we're gonna fix it or its gonna fix us—but it's gonna get fixed!

What do you think environmental catastrophe means for the future of humanity?

We talk about all kinds of catastrophic phenomena going on, but the fact of the matter is it's mostly just a purging, it's a cleansing. We're also coming into an age of righteousness.

There won't be any evil out there to speak of, because everything is coming to the surface. That which gets exposed to light becomes light. There's so much surveillance, if you do something, somebody somewhere knows you've done it.

Any way you look at it, the truth is coming to the surface and we can't stop that. Those who are doing wrong or doing evil are getting exposed, and getting caught. It happens everywhere, every day. If someone goes into a store and robs that store, chances are it's on camera.

And how will this exposure, this visibility of truth, translate into improvement?

One way or another the situation is gonna bring about its own correction. That's pretty much the way I see it. When people have to face themselves. And I think there's gonna be a change in heart and a change in personality in most people. People are gonna begin to care about each other and not be so selfish, and self-centered and self-conscious.

When do you see things changing? Or is it already happening?

Oh yeah, it's already happening; it's always happened. Like I said, there's been a remnant of people who have kind of walked in this all along.

That's one thing that you learn when you're homeless out there. Those people who stop and help and assist—they are the ones who get God's attention. Those are the things that touch God's heart. For lack of a better term I'm gonna call them God.

What do you think is the ultimate solution to our environmental crisis?

Energy—that to me is where the action is. This is what I'm saying: energy is wealth.

What the government should basically do is come up with these great green ways to produce electricity. And everybody gets a fair shake. And it's a foundational shake.

It would be like a birthright: this amount of energy is yours, and it will cover everything, it will cover your housing, your food, your energy, your education, your healthcare, instead of the government covering it. All the government does is make sure you have your energy source.

How would the energy be produced?

It could be sunshine, it could be wind, it could be a gravity generator in the backyard, it could be a dam on a river. But it doesn't make any difference, as long as it's a green source of energy.

It's just like sunshine—the sun produces energy—and there's assholes out there, want to capture that energy, put it in a box, put a price tag on it and sell it to people who ain't got no money! Same thing with the wind.

It's basically the same thing that happens with these guys that drill holes in the ground and suck all the oil up out of our planet. And what do we get? Choked.

The truth is: we all need to have a bed to sleep in. We all need to have our own home. We all need to have an income. And that's the job of government, is to make sure everyone gets a fair shake.

Right now we've got an economy that doesn't work, because it's out of balance. People have goods, but nobody's got any money to buy any goods. And there's things that we don't need, people are producing whatever they can to try and make a buck.

90 percent of this planet's wealth is in the hands of 5 percent of the people. And that's not fair. We may have some sort of economic collapse, and that might be well on the way.

When do you think we might see something like that?

I thought it was gonna happen 10 years ago. I've been looking for an economic collapse for a long time. And so has everybody else. Back in '08, when we had that major meltdown, everybody was waiting for the whole thing to just go under. But somehow they managed to save it. Just like right now, we're back into an economic slowdown, but they're gonna pull a rabbit out of the hat again and figure out another way to put this thing on life support. That's basically what they're doing.



In the Bible, there was this thing called Jubilee. Every 50 years, all debts were cancelled. That means everybody walked away nobody owed anybody anything, everybody had a good credit score and we're all back to swinging the bat again, you know, back in the game.

The fact of the matter is, there is a ton of wealth out there, and it all comes out of this planet, and all we gotta figure out is how to make sure everyone gets their fair shake. And not have any liars, or thieves, or crooks out there. Let righteousness come into the land.

Do you feel like being homeless brought you closer to the land?

I think my homelessness brought me closer to God. And he is my provider, my provision. He takes care of me just like he takes care of everybody else. And that's what it boils down to—it's about everybody getting what they need.

How did it bring you closer to God?

When you're out there and you've got nothing but him, you'd be surprised by what he sends your way. When I was in Cincinnati I did a lot of preaching, and I played music out on the streets.

Why don't you do that anymore?

I think there was a point where God finally put the brakes on and said, "You're done. You've finished your calling, you've completed your course".

And that's basically what I see as happening here. We're coming into an age of peace, and not just an age of peace but we're coming into an age of rest.

I hope so, because I'm tired.

I am too. I just, you know, and I'm looking forward to that because there's a lot of cool ass people I'd like to spend time with if they weren't out there hustling in the fast lane.

It's already slowed down for me. I think it's gonna happen quickly. One day we're gonna wake up and everything is going to be different.

STREET SPEECH

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Editorials and features in *Street Speech* are the perspectives of the authors. We welcome submissions of news, opinion, fiction, art, poetry, and letters to the editor. *Street Speech* reserves the right to edit any submissions. Please send submissions by email when possible to street.speech.columbus@gmail.com.

VENDORS

Like other papers in the street newspaper movement, Street Speech aims to empower homeless and low-income individuals through employment as newspaper vendors. Vendors buy the paper for twenty-five cents, which pays for a portion of our production costs, and sell it for one dollar to the Columbus community. The difference is theirs to keep.



Street Speech vendors must abide by a Code of Conduct which can be found on the back page of the newspaper.

Contact vendor manager Ray Daigle for more information about the vendor program or if you would like to become a vendor.

OUR MISSION

1. To act as a voice for the most vulnerable of the community while advocating for issues of social and economic justice.
2. To foster self-sufficiency by providing a source of income to people living in poverty.
3. To create awareness of the issues of poverty and homelessness through newspaper content and positive interaction between vendors and community members.

ABOUT US

Street Speech is a bimonthly street newspaper published by the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless since March 2008. We are a member of the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA) and the International Network of Street Papers (INSP).



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Recovery has its bumps

By Bill Kerner
Street Speech vendor

I have written a few articles on addictions and solutions yet I haven't touched on the hardships many people face on the road to recovery. I can speak from personal experience about the struggle it has been to stay clean and sober for almost 18 years.

Because of some of the things I did while I was active in my addictions, I have a checkered past. I have done some things I am not proud of or would even consider doing now that I am in my right mind. Yes, addictions can lead to insanity. In recovery, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over expecting different results. That goes a long way even among people who aren't "addicts."

Do you continue to pursue relationships with people that you know it won't work with? That's insanity.

Do you continue to eat the same foods that give you indigestion hoping this time it won't? That's insanity – yet there is hope. We all, addicts and non-addicts,

alike, can benefit from a daily program of action that will "restore us to sanity."

I believe that the 12 steps can work for anyone, no matter what your habits are (to borrow from Celebrate Recovery, a faith-based 12-step program that is open to anyone who wants a better life). If you are not religious, that's fine. The 12 steps are a spiritual program you can find strength, hope, and freedom in working a daily spiritual program.

In the depths of my addictions I stole, lied, cheated on my wife, spent money on alcohol and drugs that was meant for food and clothing, even rent. I used anyone I could to get my next "fix." That ended on December 8, 1994. I went to prison for crimes I committed in the midst of my addiction. Going to prison saved my life. I found hope, peace, strength, and patience. I found the God of my understanding through working the 12 steps.

That was almost 18 years ago. Today I am an ordained minister, I help the homeless, hurting, and addicted to find a better

life. Not through religious rites, rituals, or dogma, but through a daily program of recovery that focuses on the person not the world around them. You can't change the world, but you can change yourself in order to help the world get better.

What can you do?

Help someone that is struggling – it doesn't necessarily have to be monetary. Smile, ask how they are or "how can I help you?" Sometimes a word of kindness can mean the difference between a good day and a bad day!

Random acts of kindness lead to a more civil society. A safer, sober, cleaner community where all members feel safe and a sense of belonging. You can look at yourself. "How can I change in order to be better for me?" Have a great day – pass it on. We've all heard the slogans – Just remember we are all members of the human race. We are all one people, endowed by our Creator to three basic rights, "the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Crime

By Theresa Ferrell
Street Speech vendor

Crime is on the rise. With fewer jobs out there and people with criminal records that can't find jobs, what is their last resort? What can they do but what they don't want to: steal? The city had more than its share of crime in the past year. The city tries to address the problem with more police, but it still does not work. Crime is up because of the lack of jobs, and getting them is very hard if you are a person who has a record.

The government should put a stop to companies that don't hire people with records. People make mistakes, but why should this affect them for the rest of their lives?

People like to judge others and they shouldn't. God is the only one that should judge anyone. People need to start opening their heart up to God more, and stop all the hate. If only people would stop judging and hating the world would be a better place, and there would be no more crime.

Ways to relieve stress on the streets

By Gitana

So as the story goes, everyone has so much stress in our modern world. Those of us living on the streets have a little more than average. Here lists some tested tips for coping with August dog days.

Passing the long days of summer takes some planning. Anyone can get through a day playing wallflower at McDonalds. That kind of entertainment gets boring real quick though. In the heat of the afternoon, various green spaces and parks offer much needed relief. The heat of metal and concrete usually adds ten or twenty degrees over easily accessible places like Goodale Park, the Olentangy Trail, the Scioto River, or Alum Creek Trail on the East Side. Taking the time out of the day to get to one of these spots will keep you cooler, while lowering your overall stress. There are many community groups in parks in Columbus. Plus anyone can grab a few friends and start a yoga or meditation group.

Libraries are a great place to further your education as well as relax. Each li-

brary is a little different and has its own advantages. There is always so much to do and learn though. There are plenty of good stories by homebums and travelers -Jack London, Jane Austen and Mark Twain. Will Burroughs, Tolkein and Rowling will all be there to help you pass a few days and get inspired.

Keeping happy with the joys of life often is simply location change. There are a few good museums with donation-only entry fees, and many of the ones that charge admission have free entry days. Check every museum.

Fill out comment cards. Use your time. Pay it forward. Write your Congressmen. Volunteer for Obama. Having nothing to do can be a major blessing. Have fun with it.

Stress levels are related to diet way more than anyone previously thought. Transforming your bad day can be as simple as trading a meat portion for extra veggies, or getting an orange, banana or even a spinach salad. You'd be

surprised at the mood-altering effects of broccoli. If you haven't experimented with the pleasures of good greens lately, I'd recommend playing with some new plants. This can be done freely by making friends with someone at one of the many community gardens around. People are generally friendly—remember they don't owe anyone anything, but will probably hook you up if you are kind. If you're not familiar with plants, don't just start eating randoms. Even a cultivated garden has many non-food cultivars, so always check in with a grower.

Mainly I'm arguing for non-traditional ways to give everyone out there a boost in the day. Remember to look for any fun opportunity. Talk with other people, and share both good and bad ideas. Don't take stress out on others. Pay good karma forward.

Ave Maria
God Save the Queen

Columbus Library Branches:

Columbus Metropolitan
Main Library - 96 S. Grant Ave
1423 North High
3909 North High
845 Parsons Ave.
511 Hague Street
1061 West Town Street
740 Nelson
3434 Livingston

Museums and art galleries:

Columbus Museum of Art – 480 East
Broad Street- Free on Sundays

OSU Urban Arts Space - 50 West Town
Street Columbus, OH 43215

Riffe Center Gallery - On the first floor
of the Vern Riffe Center, which is on
the northwest corner of State and High
streets, across from the State Capitol.

Swing Space Gallery - 1556 N. High St.
in the South Campus Gateway

Homeless News from Planet Earth

By Thorstein

7 Years after Katrina, Twice the Homeless

NEW ORLEANS (McClatchy)– On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina breached the levees of New Orleans. Nearly 1,500 died, and 70% of the housing in New Orleans was destroyed. Three years later, 130,000 former residents still had not returned.

51,000 rental units were destroyed. Rents quickly escalated and still remain 47 percent higher than pre-Katrina levels. However, wages have remained largely the same,. As a result, New Orleans is now the most rent-burdened community in the nation, with more of New Orleanians' income going toward rent than even traditionally high-cost cities such as New York.

There are still some 40,000 abandoned, storm-damaged buildings in the former residential areas of New Orleans. They provide shelter for the homeless, but most of these abandoned houses lack power, water, and land-line service making them health, fire, and public safety hazards.

In this wasteland, there are now some 4,900 homeless. This is nearly two and one-half times more homeless than there were before Hurricane Katrina.

Federal Judge OKs feeding the homeless

PHILADELPHIA – On June 1 Philadel-

phia attempted to impose a ban on feeding the homeless, an activity that had been occurring for years in Philly's Fairmount Park. But the site happened to be just across the Benjamin Franklin Parkway from the newly-opened \$25 billion Barnes Collection of Fine Art. Local charities appealed, and on July 12 Federal Judge William H. Yohn issued a preliminary injunction against the city's ban.

On August 11, Judge Yohn released his final, 56-page opinion re-asserting the right of citizens and charities to feed the homeless on public land. Judge Yohn found that the city had "failed to show that the ban will advance the dignity of the homeless in any respect, much less that the ban is the least restrictive means of accomplishing this goal."

The city formerly known as Philadelphia announced its attention to appeal.

Coshocton shelter needs volunteers

COSHOCTON – After acquiring nonprofit status under the name Greater Coshocton Community Development Corporation, the Francis E. Meredith Second Chance community shelter reopened in September 2011.

The shelter received a \$30,000 grant from the Schooler Foundation to renovate the church for use as a long-term shelter.

In the past eleven months the shelter has served 87 clients, but the shelter depends

upon seven volunteers for its staffing. Each day the shelter takes three to four new calls for assistance, but it is limited in the services it can provide, primarily by its lack of volunteers.

If you can help, please contact the shelter at 740-622-3632.

The Child Care for Homeless Families Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Shelter, food, and jobs are the top priorities of most homeless families, but sometimes none of those are within reach of the family without child care. So, on August 1, Sens. Patty Murphy (D-WA), Al Franken (D-MN), and John Kerry (D-MA) introduced Senate Bill 3476, the Improving Access to Child Care for Homeless Families Act of 2012.

The act will amend the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 to offer child care assistance like Head Start and Early Head Start to families identifiable as "homeless" according to the HEARTH Act.

Syrian refugee crisis worsens

ALEPPO, Syria – As fighting spread to this city, the refugee crisis in Syria has only worsened. Two weeks ago we reported that 10,000 refugees per week were fleeing the conflict. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation now reports that last week 6,000 refugees fled to Turkey, alone, with similar numbers fleeing to Jordan. As we noted in

the last issue, many former Iraqi refugees to Syria continue to flee back into Iraq. The UN now reports 150,000 registered refugees in its camps alone. With tens of thousands outside the camps and tens of thousands yet unregistered, officials acknowledge the actual number of refugees is now probably in excess of 200,000.

City of Brockton, MA protests foreclosures

BROCKTON, Mass. – Since 2008, Brockton has had the highest foreclosure rate in Massachusetts. As of April, the once-booming industrial center had 950 distressed properties in some stage of foreclosure, said Janine Carreiro-Young, executive director of the Brockton Interfaith Community. That doesn't include people who are just receiving notices of foreclosure, she said.

In March, members of the Brockton Interfaith Community, the Brockton Coalition for Social Justice, and Brockton City Life petitioned the Brockton City Council to divest the city's funds from the too-big-to-jail banks that caused Brockton and the nation's foreclosure crisis. In particular, the petitioners targeted Bank of America as the institution with the poorest national rate of loan modifications, as per the federal Home Affordable Modification Program.

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A History of Mental Illness Treatment in America

By Joy Bonnivier

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 20 to 25 percent of the homeless population in the United States suffers from some form of severe mental illness. But since more than half of all of those who are homeless are without any health insurance, most would not have been diagnosed. Therefore, we should amend the statistic to say that the percentage of those who are homeless and mentally ill is unknown, but the number might reach as much as half.

So why are so many homeless also mentally ill? Isn't it inhumane of society to let this vulnerable segment of the population remain "out there" untreated and unprotected? To begin to try and understand the situation, we need to take a brief historical look the treatment of mental illness in America.

Until the mid-1800s, and in some places, the early 1900s, mentally ill men and women of all ages were confined either to prisons, where conditions were often abysmal, or poorhouses. During these years in America the aim was not to provide treatment or even basic care for the mentally ill, but simply to remove them from society – an "out of sight, out of mind" mentality.

In prison, inmates were often treated like animals—shackled to the wall in dark, cramped cells with no heat or bathrooms. Little thought was given to whether they were adequately fed or clothed. Cells were rarely—if ever—cleaned, so inmates were forced to live in their own waste.

The alternative to prison for some mentally ill were poorhouses: tax-supported residential institutions where the indigent were sent. Every county in Ohio established one or more poorhouses in the 19th century. Conditions varied. Some poorhouses were clean and had plenty of food, while others were filthy places where people often went hungry. It all depended on where you lived, and who was on the county board. In the 1920s, the federal government sent volunteers to examine more than 2,000 poorhouses around the country. The report that followed concluded that conditions were shameful.

Activists for the mentally ill lobbied for more humane treatment during the early 19th century. This eventually led to a more

progressive attitude and fostered the establishment of many public "lunatic asylums" throughout the country. These asylums (meaning a retreat or place of refuge or protection) gradually replaced prisons and poorhouses as institutions for the mentally ill.

"The Ridges," a mental hospital in Athens, Ohio, is one example of such a place. It operated from 1874 until 1993. It was originally named the Athens Lunatic Asylum, renamed Athens Asylum for the Insane, and later became the Athens State Hospital. It is representative of a style of mental hospital common at this time known as "Kirkbrides", named after Dr. Thomas Story Kirkbride, an influential advocate of an asylum system. Asylums at the time were built on large plots of isolated land where patients took care of the land. Many Kirkbrides like the Athens State Hospital featured self-sustaining apple orchards, gardens, and dairy farms. Positive behavior was rewarded, and patients were expected to exercise self-control.

This new approach, known as "moral treatment", was marked by a well-ordered daily routine in which patients followed a therapeutic regiment of work and leisure activities. It was believed crucial to place patients in a more natural environment away from the pollutants and hectic energy of urban centers. Abundant fresh air and natural light contributed to a healthy environment as well as promoted a more cheerful atmosphere.

Patients were also encouraged to take part in recreation, games, and entertainment that would engage their minds, make their stay more pleasant, and perhaps help them to foster and maintain social skills. Patients with the most self-control participated in recreational activities like boating, painting, dances, and picnics. Church services were also offered in the asylum chapel. Most of the nurses who worked at the hospital also lived there in order to provide better 24 hour care for the patients.

The failure of the moral treatment method to produce permanent cures and eventual overcrowding (patient records show an increase from the original 200 hundred patients to nearly 2000 patients by the early 1900's) led to the demise of this approach.

In the early to mid-1900s a new generation of asylum superintendents began

advocating different forms of new and "better" treatments for patients. These included: water treatments, which consisted of patients being thrust into ice cold water for extended periods of time or wrapped and restrained by sheets that had been soaked in the ice water; shock therapy, also known as electroconvulsive therapy or ECT, used to induce a seizure in a patient for therapeutic effect; and the infa-



The Athens Kirkbride building. Photo by Mike.



Dorothea Dix was a pioneer in advocating for better conditions for prisoners, the disabled, and those with mental illness. She toured prisons, workhouses, and private homes investigating the living conditions of the indigent mentally ill and gathering evidence of abuse in her home state of Massachusetts. She published her findings in a report, Memorial, and brought them before the Massachusetts State Legislature in 1843, testifying, "I proceed, Gentlemen, briefly to call your attention to the present state of Insane Persons confined within this Commonwealth, in cages, stalls, pens! Chained, naked, beaten with rods, and lashed into obedience." Her efforts resulted in an expansion of the state's mental hospital in Worcester, Mass. She then travelled across the country documenting the conditions of the indigent mentally ill. She helped to establish five asylums throughout the United States before traveling to Europe, where she successfully advocated for human rights before Queen Victoria and the Pope.

mous lobotomy.

Lobotomies were performed on some 40,000 patients in the United States until around 1950, when people from the medical field began to speak out against lobotomies, suggesting that there was no evidence to prove the procedure actually worked, and in some cases, resulted in death. The lobotomy was finally declared barbaric, and a new wave of psychotropic drugs, like Thorazine,

replaced it. Although the heavy drugs administered in hospitals at this time weren't perfect, they were far more humane than electric shock or radical brain surgery.

Psychiatric hospitals gradually became notorious for poor living conditions, lack of hygiene, overcrowding, and ill-treatment and abuse of patients.

Continued on Page 6...

Agency Spotlight

New Life United Methodist Church

By David Teran

New Life United Methodist Church, a church located near High Street and West 5th Avenue, has been offering services to the community since 1981, starting with a breakfast of coffee and pastries. In 1995, Pastor Jennifer Casto and her husband, Bill Casto, came to the church and have expanded the services along with the neighboring Methodist churches. Now New Life serves food, provides clothing, operates a health care clinic, and host support groups.

The clothing center is a well-orchestrated system. Pastor Jennifer and the other volunteers keep track of what the neighbors take so they can evenly distribute clothing and toiletries. They want to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity for every item.

I had a positive experience on my visit to New Life. The recipients, who Pastor Jennifer and other volunteers refer to as neighbors (of God), were provided a breakfast of scrambled eggs, potatoes, and toast and had the opportunity to shop for

clothes.

The neighbors are all appreciative of this assistance of this church. A first-time neighbor, Ron, came to breakfast the morning of Tuesday, July 31st. He said that he heard of New Life through word-of-mouth. I asked him what he thought of the services and he replied, "I'd give this place an A."

People have found a community at New Life. I spoke with one volunteer, Lance, who discussed how the church has helped him through personal issues that he has encountered and find meaning in his life. He said he loves to volunteer, and is looking forward to becoming a member.

I caught up with another long-time volunteer, Dana, and a high school student, Ryan, sorting clothes in the back. Dana said about volunteering, "This is what we are supposed to do," referring to giving back to society. She said she enjoys the work and that it is a great thing to do when you are retired.

While New Life is helping the commu-



nity, the neighbors are still not able to get all their needs met. Jennifer said there is a need for volunteers, especially registered nurses, for donations of clothing, especially pants for men and new socks and shoes.

On Sunday mornings the health clinic is open and breakfast is served from 7 to 9am. On Tuesday mornings from 9am to 11:30am breakfast is also served, and the clothing center is open. The clothing center is also open on Wednesdays from 9 to 11:30am.

If you want to volunteer please call please call 614-294-0134. Also, take note of their annual "Buckeye Tailgate Fund-raiser" on Tuesday, August 28th to benefit their services for the poor and homeless.

Interview with Ted Williams

From Page 1

Fame presents challenges, both positive and negative. How are you dealing with these?

Oh, I have my demons still. Addiction is something I wouldn't wish on my best friend, my children or anyone. But it is something that has to be addressed by keeping yourself around positive people, not using, getting a sponsor and going to meetings. You know, it's a simple treatment prescription. You have to be willing. The willingness has to be a part of your recovery. I go through my mood swings, my cravings, my using dreams and all of that still, even after a year.

And now I am addressing the mental health aspects of it. I've right now been

"What you do in the dark comes out in the light."

prescribed an anti-depressant. I'm taking Wellbutrin and Depakote. Those are the only two medications I've ever taken. I'm a pill-phobic. I will let a cold run its course, you know.

Now I'm taking something that's supposed to be a mood stabilizer, to keep you focused, to keep you in the moment. Not next week—because I do have a tendency to think about next week, or what happened last week—and never keep it in today. And it's a challenge. It's truly a challenge.

Your story is a story of redemption but there is still a habit of the press to highlight darker aspects of your life. How do you feel about that? What are the most important aspects of your life that you'd like to share?

I think, personally, that the saying is true, "What you do in the dark comes out in the light." And I think Dr. Phil was the catalyst in God's plan to put it all out there. I had every mug shot that I've ever taken on Dr. Phil's show. Why did it happen that way I don't know. I thought I was on Jerry Springer. [laughs]

It was a circus. It became a family circus: I was arrested, I relapsed, I walked away from treatment. I was a deadbeat dad. I was a criminal. My woman was a prostitute. You know, the list goes on. And so I think it was God's way of letting people see this aspect. Had I signed with Dr. Phil's production company or whatever [there was] no way in the world I would have signed a clause, "Put everything out there. Just let them know the scumbag that I am."

There was a reason for all of that because since then I've humbled quite a bit.

What's your day-to-day like now?

I have fun going to the supermarket—Kroger—and meeting all the people who say, "Are you the guy...?"

And then, "When you're listening to nothing but the best of Oldies!" They're like, "Oh yeah, you're the guy! I wish you well. My God, my son is going through the same things."

I get the mothers saying, "Oh, how is your mother doing?" because of the great reunion we had televised.

Speaking of family, I'm having a great time reconnecting with my family. I was a deadbeat dad for so long. It's not that I'm trying to play make up or, you know, buy their affections. Because they were traumatized, they were hurt. Those are inside hurts that create unresolved anger issues and resentment. I'm just trying to ease the

burden of them dealing with that. I don't think I can do enough to right the wrongs that I've done in their lives. But it's a fun process of trying.

I have a credit card today —something I didn't have 14 months ago. I got a beautiful smile. Doctor Brian Kvitko, the dentist right in Clintonville. I love doctor Kvitko!

I did smile in the [YouTube] video if you look at it. I did smile in spite of the hideousness of my mouth. My dental hygiene wasn't the best but I smiled. I was confident. I was hopeful and Dr. Kvitko just enhanced it.

In your book, you write about developing a closer relationship with God while flying your sign on Hudson and 71. At that time you were also staying at a dealer's house named Mark, correct?

A very dear friend of mine. Yes, a very, very intelligent man, and a literary giant. He just loves to read and he pretty much knows all of the top authors — both African American and Caucasian authors.

It's an interesting situation. It seems that living with Mark contributed to your transformation while at the same time enabling your addiction. Is he still a presence in your life?

Not as much. Not as much. I've pretty much severed a lot of ties with people, places and things because of my sobriety. And he wasn't one of those people who was conducive, but a very great guy. You know, if I thought I could go over and shake his hand, sit down and eat and leave without having a triggered response because of my



"I wear my Maryhaven [bracelet] proudly on my wrist. I have a lot of gratitude for that," says Ted. Photo by Stephen Takacs.

dependency issues, you know I would do it.

You were homeless on and off for 15 or 16 years. How have you seen street life change in that time?

Oh, the drugs have taken over our streets here in Columbus. Whether it's the Short North, the Near East, the Westside... it's bad. It's bad. And yes, they have changed. Now there's more disrespect to the drug game. It used to be that the dealers would kind of respect you because they wanted your business. Just like any kind of entrepreneur or store. Now they'll just give you anything. They'll sell you anything. There's no respect.

Most of the drug addicts—crack heads or whatever—that are walking around our street—and I'm not knocking them, don't get me wrong I'm not judging anyone—most of them are

baby boomers. You know, very seldom do you see teenage or young adults smoking crack. Now they might be smoking weed. They maybe laced up with some heroin inside their weed or whatever, but you're not gonna see no young boy letting his mama sell her body so he can take a hit. Yes, it has changed dramatically.

Columbus overall is a place that I affectionately call home. I'm from Brooklyn, New York and Columbus will always be my home. I have kids, grandchildren, ex-wives and my mother is from Columbus and my father as well.

Earlier today you spoke about giving back, can you tell us a little bit about that?

That's what I plan to do. You know that is something that God has blessed me to be able to do. I've always been a giving spirit. For a long time, I've never touted or told anybody what I did. I never wanted to go around and brag about the fact that I gave to somebody, but I was a giving soul.

I am a giver though, that gives from the heart. I don't care what you do with the money I give you or the help that I give you. I give and not with expectations. You know, "I got a bill due next week, but I figure if I give the bum on the side of the road a dollar I know God's gonna look out and make my bill payable."

No, because God will take care of you in his time. He wants to see if you're patient. He wants to see if you're thankful for the little blessings, so that when he blesses something like this... cause god knows Steve I wish something like this had happened 25 years ago. I'd have

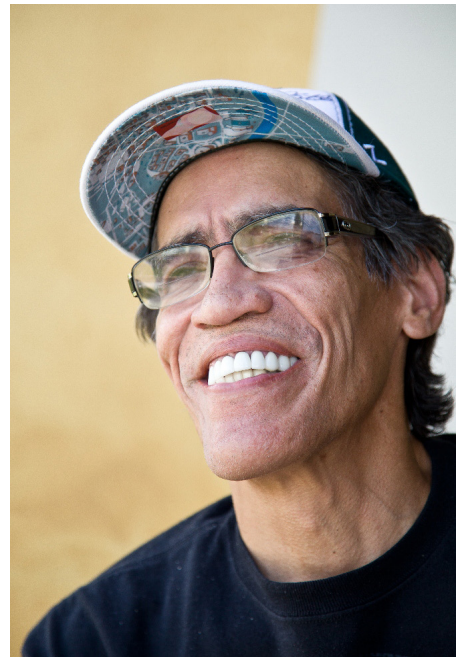


Photo by Stephen Takacs

the days start out where they have to vacate their beds at a certain time in the morning and then they sit around and they try to sign up for that bed for the following night. A lot of times they stick around and just wait for that moment. They don't go out and try to find support services that help their situations whether they are hungry, or need clothes or whatever. *But* you put some new shoes on a person that will motivate them to get the hell on out of the damn shelter and go see what's happening! There are many support services that many people neglect to look into.

I know some people have misgivings about giving directly because they don't want to support addiction.

People used to do that all of the time. They'd roll their window down and say, "Here you go. Don't go get no drugs."

And I was almost like ready to give it back, not because that's what I was going to do but, I mean, you put a handle on with it, you know, that's not giving. That's giving with a handle. I don't give like that.

What other kinds of things could be done in the Columbus area to help aid the homeless?

Again, giving from the heart. You don't have to give to every homeless person you see but just give from the heart if you feel like giving. Or take it down to the United Way, Red Cross — there are so many ways. But if you want to help somebody specifically, adopt a bum.

Adopt a derelict — they need help. Whatever the area they need the help in: —shoes, transportation... A bus pass would be a *great* gift to give somebody you know what I mean? Believe me, they're not running to the dope house trying to sell a bus pass. You know, I can see them now, "Can I get a twenty?" Just teasing.

I've set up a charity, Ted Williams Project. It's in its infancy right now. Believe me, I'll make sure it goes to the right channels. It won't be a bunch of logged up money that won't have proof that its been spent. I'm taking my tax-deductible dollars down to Friends of the Homeless or Faith Mission or any of the women's shelters or Maryhaven.

I really want to contribute.

For more information about Ted or to contribute to his charity, check out the websites listed below:

tedthegoldenvoice.com
tedwilliamsproject.org

"If you want to help someone specifically, adopt a bum. Adopt a derelict."

homeless shelters in the area have a wish list - Friends of the Homeless, Faith Mission, and of course Rebecca's Place. I plan to give them some of the needs that they have. They need washers, dryers, mattresses, shoes....

I can't tell you how important shoes are to a homeless person. Normally,

A history of mental illness treatment in the US

From Page 4

Custodial care once again superseded humane treatment. Controlling a patient's behavior through medication and behavior modification techniques, like the use of restraints and seclusion rooms, became the norm. The 1975 movie *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* depicts this era graphically.

I saw this first hand during my student nursing days when I did my psychiatric nursing rotation on the back ward of a state hospital. Drugged patients paced listlessly or lay on their beds staring off into space. Time was measured by the burning of cigarettes, and days were organized around the dispensing of scheduled medications and mealtimes. The lack of stimulation and activity was, I thought, like being in prison. The locked doors were another striking similarity. The objective was to limit the disturbing behaviors, not restore the patient to a productive life in the community.

It was not until the 1960s that humane treatments began reappearing in psychiatric hospitals when class action lawsuits, patient advocacy groups and government agencies helped expose the poor conditions

and treatment in state hospitals.

Around the same time, sociologists and others argued that long term hospitalization maintained or created dependency, passivity, exclusion and disability, causing people to become "institutionalized." There was an argument that community services would be cheaper. Anti-psychotic drugs made it possible to begin discharging large numbers of patients back into the community. Deinstitutionalization is the name given to the policy of moving severely mentally ill people out of large state institutions and then closing part or all of those institutions. The process began in 1950s, and continued through the 60s and 70s. The Community Mental Health Act of 1963 was to provide federal funding for community mental health centers across the country that would serve as an alternative to state hospitals.

The 1980s were the final days of the Ridges, as well as many other state mental hospitals all over America. The final patients left in 1993, and the buildings and grounds were taken over by Ohio University. However, because of inadequate hous-

ing and the lack of continued funding for community mental health centers, many of these patients became homeless or went to prison. We have come full circle.

The magnitude of deinstitutionalization of the severely mentally ill qualifies it as one of the largest social experiments in American history. Many consider it to be a major contributing factor to the current mental illness crisis. The most striking evidence of this crisis was the dramatic appearance of large numbers of obviously mentally ill people on city streets, people who were dirty, who wore torn or inappropriate clothing, who hallucinated and talked to themselves or shouted to others, or in general acted in a strange or bizarre way. In many places, huge ghettos of discharged patients formed in areas of low-cost housing, proprietary homes, or deteriorating neighborhoods. It has been said that instead of "community psychiatry," reforms established a "psychiatric community."

The majority of those who would have been under continuous care in long-stay psychiatric hospitals are often paranoid and delusional to the point that they refuse

help and do not believe they need it, which makes it difficult to treat them in the community. Community services were often uncoordinated and unable to meet complex needs and existing patients were often discharged without sufficient preparation or support.

This has led to two new syndromes: "falling between the cracks" and the "revolving door," the former indicating a total lack of follow-up and aftercare for discharged patients, and the latter their continued readmissions, usually due to noncompliance with treatment. Thus deinstitutionalization is part of a process sometimes called transinstitutionalization- the transfer of institutional populations from hospitals to jails, nursing homes, and shelters.

Our society as a whole still grapples with the dilemma of what to do with its mentally ill members. Both long-term hospitalization and community mental health services have, in large measure, been a failure. This population remains vulnerable and at risk.

Homeless News

From Page 2

Banks treat loans as "assets". When a bank originates a mortgage, it only backs 10% of this "asset" with hard cash. The remaining 90% is "funny money", created by the bank out of thin air. The bank expects the borrower to pay back this funny money with hard cash. And when a family can't come up with hard cash to pay back the funny-money mortgage, the banks claim they have a legal right to seize the family's hard cash asset, its house. Ask yourself, dear reader, why banks alone are given this right to exchange funny money for hard cash?

It is true that some speculators are in foreclosure after being caught out in their game of flipping houses. They deserve no mercy in the foreclosure courts. However foreclosures on primary residences have been mostly the result of (a) some bank issuing a fraudulent mortgage in the first place followed by (b) the homeowner's faultless loss of income. The most just and most immediate way to redress the wrong being done to these homeowners is to "write down" the principle of the loan from the insane, bubble-inflated, funny-money value on the mortgage to anything like the property's real hard-cash value. This

is what proper and just "loan modifications" do. (But—take note—the "Home Affordable Modification Program" also condones unjust modifications that do not modify the principle value of the loan. These modifications do give the homeowner short-term relief by lowering the monthly payments on the loan, However they usually do this by extending the term of the loan, say from a 30-year mortgage to a 40-year mortgage. Such modifications can actually penalize the homeowner, first by holding the homeowner to the fraudulent hard-cash for funny-money deal, and then by significantly increasing the hard-cash interest the bank will extract over the longer term.)

Brockton officials reviewed proposals from five banks, including Bank of America, and on August 9 Brockton City Treasurer Martin Brophy announced that Brockton's \$170 million, 3,500-person payroll account will move out of Bank of America to Eastern Bank. Although Brophy denied moving the city's account solely to protest BofA's role in the subprime lending crisis—the move will also save the city at least \$20,000 per year in banking fees—he also added that it didn't hurt to "send a message".

VENDOR CLASSIFIEDS

Vendor: William

Good communication skills; able to analyze data and other information; problem solver able to envision alternative solutions; creative with a sense of design; technically inclined; able to design custom widgets, themes, plug-ins and applications for mobile and desktop systems.

Vendor: Richard

Home-improvement work (both exterior and interior), landscaping and lawn care, demolition. Would like to help with setting up Christmas lights and holiday decorations.

Vendor: Victoria

Cleaning, laundry, general labor, cashiering. Excellent people skills and positive attitude.

Vendor: Lester

Skills in hotel work such as housekeeping and houseman, ware-house work, factory work, grill cook, asbestos and paint removal, loading and unloading trucks, banquet set up, dishwashing, laundry work, taxi driving.

Stop the Homeless Stigma

By Jeff Cutlip, *Street Speech* vendor

A recent letter to the editor in the *Columbus Dispatch* highlights the misconceptions about homelessness in this city. In the letter, Linda S. Corbett complains that her three young granddaughters had to witness homeless men camped out near the Santa Maria downtown, and calls on the local government to do something to clean up the area and "direct the homeless to the shelters that are available for sleeping."

I believe Ms. Corbett missed an important opportunity to educate her three young girls about the plight of homeless people right in our own back yards. The population of the homeless is increasing and we should all be thankful that we aren't homeless yet. You can't just go and get a bed at a shelter. This is exactly what organizations such as the Community Shelter Board, the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless, Volunteers of America, Salvation Army, Maryhaven, YWCA, YMCA, Faith Mission, Franklin County Commissioners and private donors are trying to deal with the influx and increasing demand for shelter beds. The shelter situation in Ohio is real.

They're has been an alarming rate of homeless individuals in Columbus, but now we are not only seeing single male and females, but now even families with children. Families often won't go to a shelter until they have used all their resources including unemployment, savings and 401 K's. Only once their homes face foreclosure and they no longer have any money left do they finally surrender and realize that are dealing with something they never thought possible. I was one of them.

When I had three businesses, two properties, and plenty of money, I felt much like Ms. Corbett. It took 15 years of losing all my businesses, cashing in all my stock, my 401K's and a little inheritance, and my properties. Poof, it was gone. I lived in parks, COTA bus shelters, under gazebo's or anywhere I could find but I wasn't going to be like one of "those" homeless people. No, I wasn't going to admit defeat. I wasn't an alcoholic, drug addict, smelly, or a thief. But later, I became all of them. My mother would turn over in her grave if she knew all the crazy things I did to get by before going to a shelter.

I finally had to swallow my pride and go to the Faith Mission because my little brother didn't want me to live with him anymore. What else was I to do? It took two nights and two days before I got in. I learned that homeless people were not all the same as I had thought. I have seen homeless people that were intelligent, took showers, used deodorant, shaved and attempted to take care of themselves. They would try to go out during the day to look for jobs. But if you use the shelter as your address in Columbus, most employers won't hire you. And, they know the addresses of the shelters.

Not all homeless people are going around without shirts, carrying all our possessions in a black garbage bag. They say: "You are only a paycheck away from being homeless".

After I was homeless and living in the shelter, I transformed into another person. I became grateful I didn't have to sleep in the snow, or under some steps, which I know others did to either keep dry, or out of the winter chill. If you examine statistics, you would see that the homeless epidemic is real. More and more families are losing their jobs, their savings, and their pride in this economy. We have no control over some of our situations. I began to appreciate having three meals a day, a cot to sleep on, and the help that I have received from that experience in the shelters and in my homeless camps. It was a struggle, and at times I just wanted to bury my head to have to ask for tissue paper, propane, food from the sandwich line. It gave me a better insight of how the homeless become invisible in Columbus, if we close our eyes or turn our heads up as if someone is better than the next person. Or, I just won't look at that and it will go away. It doesn't work like that.

After being homeless for over 900 days, I got an apartment am I can't tell you how grateful I am today. But we all have stories to tell if someone would listen to us before we get criticized. The stigma of homelessness needs to be addressed, and we need to realize that it is a major problem in the entire world, not just here.

As for calling Mayor Coleman, I shook his hand when I was homeless late one Sunday night at a grocery store. He is well aware of the homeless situation, and so is his staff. Ms. Erica Clark Jones came to my camp before, and believe me when I say, they are trying to address this issue that has exploded in Columbus, they truly are. As for me, I am now an advocate for the homeless, and I serve on the Citizen's Advisory Council for the Community Shelter Board, and I also work with the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless writing about my experiences, so I can try to help not only the homeless, but to help myself and educate the public so we can quit generalizing people. Homeless people have feelings too. Ms. Corbett, please don't take this negatively, or as an attack on you. I am only trying to educate not only you and yours, but others who have not experienced homelessness yet.

They're also is a point to be learned here too:

If you look for the bad in people, then you will find it, but if you look for the good, you will find that too.

Portugal's Innovative Drug Policy Offers Hope

By Mario Quieroz
IPs

Portugal was traditionally one of the European countries with the lowest levels of drug use, until the 1980s and 1990s, when problematic drug abuse, especially of heroin, became a major problem.

A law adopted in 2001 by this conservative Catholic country abolished all criminal penalties for the personal use and possession of drugs, and managed to reduce drug abuse, while removing a barrier that kept addicts from seeking treatment: fear of being reported to the police.

The prevalence of heroin use in the 16 to 18 year age group fell from 2.5 percent in 1999 to 1.8 percent in 2005, according to the study "Drug Decriminalization in Portugal; Lessons for Creating Fair and Successful Drug Policies", published by the Cato Institute, a Washington-based think tank, in 2009.

And the overall prevalence of drug use in the 15 to 19 year category dropped from 10.8 percent to 8.6 percent between 2001 and 2007, according to a major survey.

But the decriminalisation of drug use is just part of a broader set of policies, aimed at reducing both supply and demand, and including measures of prevention, treatment, harm reduction and social reinsertion, Dr. João Castel-Branco Goulão, the architect of the reform of Portugal's drug policy and the president of the country's Institute on Drugs and Drug Addiction, told IPS.

Perhaps the biggest stride forward was in the area of drug addiction-related damage, like the spread of HIV/AIDS.

In 2000, contagion among intravenous drug users accounted for 52 percent of all new cases of HIV. By 2009,



Resting in Bairro Alto, without fear of being arrested. Photo: Mario Queiroz/IPs

that proportion had plunged to 16 percent.

This result was largely due to harm reduction measures, such as the distribution to heroin users of kits containing a needle and syringe, rubbing alcohol, and a condom, in exchange for used syringes.

"Portugal has given the world a powerful example of how a national drug policy can work to everyone's benefit," Kasia Malinowska-Sempruch, director of the Open Society Institute's Global Drug Policy programme, wrote in the foreword to a study published in June 2011, which points to the same downward trend in drug use.

The results of a wider study on drug use in the general population will be released in November, said Goulão.

The reform did not legalise consumption, but decriminalised possession of small amounts of illicit drugs - defined as what is needed for 10 days of

personal use - which is not punishable by prison, and does not generate a police record.

Instead, those caught for possession and use of drugs ranging from marijuana to heroin or LSD are brought before three-person administrative panels known as 'committees to dissuade drug addiction', made up of lawyers, judges and health care or social services workers, which decide whether to recommend treatment, a small fine, or no penalty, based on a health perspective.

Dealers and traffickers are still arrested and jailed.

"Punitive measures on their own, no matter how harsh, cannot bring down consumption," former Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2003) said on a 2011 visit to Lisbon as chair of the Global Commission on Drug Policy.

The road taken by Portugal is praiseworthy because of its innovative

nature, its scope, and the coherence of the national policy in a country with a deeply-rooted conservative tradition, he added.

Portugal had begun to be held up as an example two years earlier, when the Cato Institute described its decriminalisation policy as "a resounding success."

The world has been seeking alternatives to the failed war on drugs, whose objectives were reflected in the first international instrument in the area, the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, adopted in 1961.

In Portugal, once the fear of being prosecuted for possession of drugs was removed, thousands of people, especially the young, began to turn to the network of treatment centres - public or private - created in the framework of the legal reform.

Drug addicts can still be seen roaming around Bairro Alto, the Bohemian centre of Lisbon's night life, and Casal Ventoso, the biggest open-air market for drugs in all of Europe a decade ago. And the economic crisis shaking the country could once again swell their ranks.

Although the law does not enable the police to arrest drug addicts, "they continue to mistreat us, because in their eyes, the 'parking helpers' are drug addicts, and hence dangerous criminals," said one addict, who spoke on the condition of remaining anonymous.

But the statistics show that the number of robberies and muggings committed by drug users has not risen. On the contrary, the rates of several kinds of crime have gone down in this Southern European country, despite the economic recession.

Empty condos hold opportunity in U.S. housing crunch

By Matthew Cardinale
IPS

Large cities like New York and Chicago, which have been grappling with a lack of affordable apartments combined with an abundance of vacant, unaffordable condos, are now trying to turn some of those empty condo units into rentals, with varying levels of affordability.

Recent changes in the U.S. economy and the housing market have presented challenges for low-income renters.

Many families whose homes were foreclosed upon have been forced into the rental market. While some efforts, like those going on in Atlanta, Georgia, are providing downpayment assistance to get new families into these empty homes, the new families are not necessarily low-income families.

Of course, many low-income families do not have the credit or the income to qualify for a mortgage to purchase a home, and therefore are forced to rent.

According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), low-income families face the greatest shortage of affordable rental units among any income bracket.

"In 2010, there were 9.8 million extremely low income renter households in the United States, and only 3 million rental homes affordable and available to these households," the organization states in a recent report.

Approximately 14 percent of all housing units in the U.S., or over 18.8 million units, were vacant at the end of June 2012, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This figure includes vacant rentals and single-family homes as well as seasonal units and units that are held off the market for various reasons.

In response, Chicago and New York

have set up programmes to convert empty condos into rental units.

The Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) also recently announced a programme to convert empty single-family homes currently owned by the government-sponsored enterprise Sallie Mae into rental units.

Denise Duncal, a spokeswoman for FHFA, told IPS that the agency will soon be announcing its decision regarding proposals submitted by investors to participate in the pilot program.

NLIHC submitted comments to FHFA prior to the beginning of the pilot programme asking for some units to be set aside for low-income families. However, that does not appear to have happened.

"The available details of the pilot sale do not indicate that there will be an affordability component to this first stage of the programme. It is possible that affordability will be a component of future pilots or stages of the programme, although there has been no indication from FHFA that this will be the case," the NLIHC wrote on its website.

Other than the reports from Chicago and New York and the FHFA programme, the NLIHC does not see any national trend towards dealing with the juxtaposition of vacant housing and unhoused people, in terms of providing affordable rentals, spokeswoman Amy Clark told IPS.

In Chicago, an organisation called Community Investment Corporation (CIC) noticed a problem with entire condominium buildings being foreclosed and vacant. CIC suspects that many of the condo buildings were the victims of condo fraud.

"In the course of going out on behalf of the City, looking at troubled build-

ings, we discovered this whole issue of condo fraud. There were buildings - it would be an empty building, trashed and totally destroyed inside, open to the elements," Jack Markowski, CEO of CIC, told IPS.

"And then when we did a little research, say it's a six-unit building, last year all these units were converted to condos and sold for 300,000 dollars a piece," Markowski said. "The owner - he's just gone - somebody walked away with 1.8 million dollars."

Markowski says that condo fraud was made possible by banks which would give mortgage loans without proper documentation from the person applying for them. Markowski refers to them as "phony straw buyers", who he believes may get a cut of the profits and then allow the unit to foreclose.

CIC identified over 260 condo buildings in Chicago where this appeared to have happened.

CIC and the city of Chicago worked with the Illinois legislature to pass a law in 2009 called the Distressed Condo Act, which went into effect in 2010. The Act allows courts to reassemble a condominium building - which is legally listed as multiple separate condo units with multiple owners - into a single building.

Then the CIC works to find developers who are willing to rehabilitate the building into rental units.

Markowski acknowledges that none of the units they are producing are set aside for low-income families, but points out that this still adds more rental units to the total rental housing stock of the city. This could, in turn, relieve some of the pressure on low-income families to compete with middle-income families for affordable rental units in Chicago, by at least providing more rental options

for the middle-income families.

Markowski says the new Illinois law is unique in the U.S., and that so far CIC has used the law to successfully petition the courts for the deconversion of 33 vacant, foreclosed condo buildings, which, when the new units come online, will produce 372 units of rental housing in Chicago, with more likely to come.

Markowski adds that the banks who own the vacant condo units typically do not object in court because they realise that what they currently own - a condo unit in a vacant, foreclosed building - does not have any value but actually costs the banks in terms of tax liabilities.

Meanwhile, the city of New York in 2009 embarked upon its own pilot programme, called the Housing Asset Renewal Program (HARP), which invested 20 million dollars in city funds to turn stalled or vacant condominium developments into units affordable for middle-income families.

However, the programme got off to a slow start. According to a 2010 report in the Architect's Newspaper, after the first year of HARP, not a single developer had expressed interest in the funding being offered by the City. In part this is because of lenders' unwillingness to accept deep discounts required by the program.

In March 2011, New York finally announced the first closing under HARP to convert 26 stalled condo units on Lefferts Avenue in Brooklyn into 46 rental units. The units had never been completed or sold on the market in the first place. All units will be affordable to middle-income, but not low-income, families.

Word Search

H	Q	E	A	R	T	H	V	Y	T	M	U	S	K	I	L	L	E	T	G
E	L	C	A	N	R	A	B	R	E	I	F	I	L	P	M	A	M	I	E
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- DISCIPLINE

HYPOTHESIS

SKILLET

SUBSTITUTE

SENSATION

DRESS

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- BARNACLE

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4					5	1		7
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Easy

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Hard

STREET SPEECH VENDOR CODE OF CONDUCT

Sale of this paper is approved by the City of Columbus Licensing Department. Street Speech vendors are members of the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless and are trained and supervised by Coalition staff. Vendors agree to abide by the following Vendor Code of Conduct when selling the paper:

1. Street Speech will be distributed for a donation of \$1. I agree not to ask for more than \$1 or solicit donations for any other purposes while selling Street Speech. If a customer donates more than \$1, I am permitted to keep the donation. I will be clear that the donation goes to me and not CCH.
2. I will purchase papers only from the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless at \$0.25 per paper. I will not sell to or buy papers from other vendors.
3. I will present my badge when buying papers and display while selling papers. If I do not have my badge, I cannot buy or sell papers.
4. I understand that my badge is property of Street

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5. I agree to treat others-customers, staff, and other vendors-with respect. I will not use abusive or forceful language when selling papers. I will not be aggressive, threatening, or continue to ask after a person has said no.
6. I agree to stay off of private property while selling Street Speech. I will not sell door to door.
7. I will not sell any additional goods or products while selling Street Speech.
8. I agree to respect the space of other vendors, particularly those who have been at a spot longer. If I encounter another vendor selling papers, I will move to another location before selling papers.
9. I will not sell or purchase Street Speech under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

10. I will attend monthly meetings at the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless the first Friday of every month. The next month’s papers will be released at the meeting.

11. It is my responsibility to police fellow vendors. I will report violators of these rules to CCH. The value of the paper depends on keeping it credible.
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Please report any alleged violation of these rules to the Coalition by calling 228-1342 or emailing ray@columbushomeless.org