

# opening doors



It is our mission to work toward ending homelessness by educating the Central Ohio community about homeless issues and advocating in a unified voice for social and economic justice for all people, especially those who are most vulnerable.



## Mark your calendars:

### Annual Interfaith Memorial Service

Thursday, December 18<sup>th</sup>  
At 5:30 pm  
Trinity Episcopal Church  
125 East Broad St.

### Board Meeting

Thursday, December 18<sup>th</sup>  
From 4 to 5pm  
Coalition office  
132 South 3rd St.

## Get involved:

The planning committee for Mother's Day will begin meeting in January.

If you would like to volunteer for this event or for the Coalition in general, visit our website at [www.columbushomeless.org](http://www.columbushomeless.org)

## Annual Memorial Service

The lives of more than twenty-five homeless people who died in 2008 on the streets of Columbus will be remembered and celebrated at an Annual Interfaith Memorial Service on Thursday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm at Trinity Episcopal Church. This event, which is co-sponsored by the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless and the Interfaith Association of Central Ohio, highlights the insidious impact of homelessness and poverty.

Each year, on or near the shortest day of the year, the National Coalition for the Homeless sponsors services of remembrance for the homeless and recently homeless people who have died on the streets. This service is a solemn occasion to remember these people and to raise the consciousness of the community about this horrible and unjust fact—people die on our streets every year. Columbus holds its annual

celebration in conjunction with the national day of remembrance.

The memorial service will feature an interfaith group of religious leaders from central Ohio, including representatives from a wide variety of faith traditions including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Universalism, Unitarianism, Judaism, Sikh Faith and Baha'i Faith.

During the service, the names of those who have died will be read aloud. A candle will be lit and the church bell will toll for each person. Those who knew the deceased will have an opportunity to share some of their memories. A special offering will be taken to support the work of the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless.

Trinity Episcopal Church is located at 125 East Broad Street, on the corner of Broad Street and Third Street.

## Holiday Donations

During this holiday season, the Coalition is not actively pursuing a fundraising campaign. At the same time, the organization is always open to receiving donations to support its programs and advocacy initiatives. Like other not-for-profit organizations throughout

the country, the Coalition has seen a decrease in financial contributions. Thus, dollars will be greatly welcomed and appreciated. Remember that except for the two VISTAs on staff, who receive a small stipend, all work is conducted by dedicated volunteers.

## In Need of Material Goods

Because of the economic downturn, many of the Coalition's member organizations are in dire need of the following: coats, clothing, underwear, food, funds (to purchase identification),

toiletries, scarves, jackets, socks, towels and sheets. For information about potential agencies needing items, contact the Coalition for names and phone numbers.



**Membership Meetings** held the first Wednesday of every month from 9-11am at The Salvation Army 966 E Main St.

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

Visit us at: [www.columbushomeless.org](http://www.columbushomeless.org)



## Coalition Receives Grant

The Coalition has received a \$20,000 grant from the Reinberger Foundation to continue its education program, "Unsheltered Life." Reinberger is a Cleveland based family foundation which has given generously to non-profit organizations in the Columbus community for many years.

The grant will be used to staff "Unsheltered Life," for a one year period with a part-time employee. The education program created by Coalition VISTA staff two years ago was funded during 2007-2008 by the Columbus Foundation. During that period the unique and innovative program was offered to over 700 individuals. Participants included college students, church members, social service employees, city government workers and staff of the Columbus Foundation itself.

"Unsheltered Life" includes a simulation experience to help learners understand the multiple challenges faced by homeless persons on a daily basis. Participants are assigned roles and must negotiate their lives on the streets in an urban environment. Faced with meager resources, scarce shelter opportunities and complex bureaucratic service institutions, participants quickly comprehend the realities of an existence that requires a special set of strengths and skills.

For any organization or group interested in receiving "Unsheltered Life," modest fees are charged to augment the funding from the grant.

## Street Speech

Coalition Newsletter readers are reminded that the Coalition has been publishing a street newspaper, *Street Speech* since March 2008. Sold by trained homeless or formerly homeless vendors, *Street Speech* is designed to inform the public about homeless issues and challenges as well as to provide employment for persons who may have no other access to work opportunities. *Street Speech* is sold

for \$1.00, with \$.75 going to the vendor and \$.25 to the Coalition to cover costs to publish the paper.

Following the lead set by many of the nation's largest cities, Columbus received technical assistance from coalitions in Cleveland and Cincinnati to develop the paper. Columbus previously had been the only major urban center in Ohio without a street newspaper. Homeless

individuals are encouraged to write articles, poems or feature stories. Cartoons and Letters to the Editor are also welcome.

Persons who are unable to purchase *Street Speech* from a vendor because of location or other reason can access the paper through subscription for \$25 per year. If interested, contact the Coalition at 228-1342.

## VISTAs Join Coalition Staff

Two new VISTA members have joined the Coalition's staff. Arriving in August, Shea Davis joined the organization with the primary responsibility of editing the program's street newspaper, *Street Speech*. Armed with a B.A. in English from Kenyon College, Shea has already increased circulation as well as the number of vendors who have been recruited to sell the paper. She has launched an advisory board composed of vendors and volunteers who have offered many suggestions to improve the eight-page monthly. Shea is also responsible for training the *Street Speech* vendors and conducting a monthly meeting with them to develop new stories, troubleshoot vendor problems and award free newspapers to top-selling vendors. After her year at the Coalition, Shea hopes to pursue a graduate degree in English, with a specialization in Renaissance literature.

Emily Scott was selected by the Coalition as its second VISTA and began work in late November. Previously employed by Cord Camera, Emily decided to pursue a career change after volunteer work with a number of homeless programs, including Street Church. She is a 2007 graduate of Ohio State, with a B.A. in Strategic Communication. Emily will be responsible for developing employment opportunities for homeless persons, particularly *Street Speech* vendors, who wish to seek additional training or full-time work. At present, she is doing research to assess the existing programs which link homeless individuals to employment or which provide training. She will also be interviewing homeless individuals in shelters and permanent supportive housing programs to evaluate their work interests and skills.



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