

# Rural Voices

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HOUSING ASSISTANCE COUNCIL

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## MAKING IT WORK



## COMBATING RURAL HOMELESSNESS

Dear Friends,

Rural housing practitioners face a range of challenges serving homeless populations. The number of homeless people in a given community may be small, making congregate shelter unsuitable, and many communities lack the network of resources needed to adequately serve this population. Despite the overwhelming challenges they face in their efforts to combat rural homelessness, the organizations writing for this issue of *Rural Voices* are finding ways to take what is available and make it work.

The Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness illustrates how it is using valuable data collected through the Homeless Management Information System to understand trends and refine programs. Hazard Perry County Community Ministries and the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless provide examples of how local organizations can work together, through either a Continuum of Care or a loose coalition, to support each other and serve local needs.

Organizations at opposite ends of the country are addressing homeless issues by working with both women and their families. The Center for Family Solutions in California funded construction of new transitional housing units for homeless women and their children using state resources. In southwest Georgia, the Millennium Center illustrates the intricate funding puzzle often necessary to build effective treatment centers for women who suffer from substance abuse.

Two articles provide an overview of the strategies used by the federal government to address homelessness in rural areas. An article written by the Special Needs Assistance Programs office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides background on the Continuum of Care system and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness describes its work with rural communities to end homelessness.

This issue of *Rural Voices* illustrates some of the innovative ways rural homeless providers are accessing and using resources. As we shed some light on the situations of individuals and families who are homeless in rural America, HAC applauds the work of providers who work tirelessly to meet their housing and shelter needs.

Sincerely,



Gideon Anders, Chair



Arturo Lopez, President



Moises Loza, Executive Director

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## Nonprofits Learn About Downpayment Assistance

As part of its Rural Community Development Initiative, HAC has developed a training course on downpayment assistance. HAC's first training on this topic took place on July 17-19 in Kansas City, Missouri for organizations participating in HAC's RCDI program. Participants included:

- △ Seventh District Pavilion, Crowley, Louisiana
- △ Eastern Dakota Housing Alliance, Hillsboro, North Dakota
- △ Neighborhood Housing Services of Dimmit County, Carrizo Springs, Texas
- △ Allendale County ALIVE, Allendale, South Carolina
- △ Tierra Del Sol Housing Corporation, San Miguel, New Mexico
- △ Northwest Kansas Housing, Inc., Hill City, Kansas
- △ Southwest Georgia Housing Development Corporation, Cuthbert, Georgia

The course was created to build the capacity of rural community-based nonprofit organizations that help their clients use downpayment resources along with their housing programs. A one-stop "clearinghouse," the training brought together information on a variety of downpayment assistance programs. Participants learned about application procedures, eligibility requirements, and how to time downpayment assistance with housing production schedules. Follow-up trainings are being planned for 2008. For more information on HAC's training programs, visit [www.ruralhome.org/servicesTraining.php](http://www.ruralhome.org/servicesTraining.php).



## HAC Receives Excellent CARS™ Rating

HAC recently received a high rating from the CDFI Assessment and Rating System for its financial strength and performance and the highest possible rating for its impact performance. CARS™ is a comprehensive, third-party analysis of community development financial institutions that aids investors and donors in their investment decisionmaking.

CARS™ researchers provide analyses of impact performance and financial strength and performance to guide investment decisions. CARS™ is a service of the Opportunity Finance Network. For more information on CARS™, visit [www.opportunityfinance.net](http://www.opportunityfinance.net).

## New Report Highlights Immigration Trends in Rural America

To examine the impact of the growing foreign-born population on housing conditions in rural communities, a new HAC report looks in depth at rural immigrant housing in California, Iowa, and North Carolina.

HAC found that during the 1990s the immigrant population grew by 76 percent in nonmetropolitan counties, exceeding the 58 percent growth rate in metropolitan areas.

Newcomers were most likely to move to places with jobs available in manufacturing, particularly food processing. Like other rural residents, immigrants have higher poverty rates, lower incomes, and higher homeownership rates than their urban counterparts.

The research also found that local developers, advocates, and public officials can take both short-term and longer-term steps to help their communities. For example, public education campaigns can facilitate connections between immigrants and established residents.

*Immigration and Housing in Rural America* is free on HAC's website, [www.ruralhome.org](http://www.ruralhome.org). Printed copies are available for \$5.00 each from Luz Rosas at HAC, 202-842-8600 ext. 137, [luz@ruralhome.org](mailto:luz@ruralhome.org).

# MCKINNEY-VENTO REAUTHORIZATION

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was enacted in 1987 to create programs and offer services targeting homeless populations across the country. In the 110th Congress, two proposals have been introduced to reauthorize and amend Title IV of the legislation, which covers housing programs administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Both bills aim to consolidate the various housing programs into a single program to allow more local control over how funds are spent. The information below provides a brief summary of the two current proposals, and specifically examines the facets of each that are particularly relevant for rural areas.

## **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP TO END HOMELESSNESS ACT**

The Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act of 2007 (S. 1518) was introduced by Senators Reed (D-Rhode Island) and Allard (R-Colorado), along with 11 other sponsors, on May 24, 2007. CPEHA was approved by the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on September 19, 2007. CPEHA would:

△ **CONSOLIDATE CURRENT PROGRAMS.** CPEHA would consolidate HUD's three main competitive homelessness programs (Supportive Housing Program, Shelter Plus Care, and Moderate Rehabilitation/Single Room Occupancy) into one program called the Community Homeless Assistance Program. This is intended to allow more flexibility in designing programs and reduce the administrative burden on communities caused by varying program requirements.

△ **ESTABLISH THE RURAL HOUSING STABILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.** CPEHA would modify the Rural Homeless Assistance Grant program, a rural-specific assistance program that was authorized by the original McKinney-Vento Act, but never funded. CPEHA renames RHAG the Rural Housing Stability Assistance Program and makes amendments to the program, including:

- ♦ targeting resources to re-housing or improving the housing conditions of people who are homeless or in the worst housing situation in a rural geographic area;
- ♦ stabilizing the housing of people who are in danger of losing housing;
- ♦ providing a simplified funding application that recognizes the capacity constraints of rural community organizations; and
- ♦ allowing successful applicants to use up to 20 percent of their grants for capacity building activities.

## △ **AUTHORIZE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION SERVICES.**

Currently, Continuum of Care funds cannot be used for prevention activities. S. 1518 would allow homeless assistance program funds to be used for prevention activities and to assist individuals and families in obtaining permanent housing and supportive services.

## **HOMELESS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE AND RAPID TRANSITION TO HOUSING ACT**

The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (H.R. 840), also called the HEARTH Act, was introduced by Reps. Carson (D-Indiana), Renzi (R-Arizona), Davis (R-Kentucky), and Lee (D-California) on February 6, 2007. Highlights from the bill include:

## △ **EXPAND HUD'S DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS.**

Currently, for HUD program eligibility, homelessness is defined as living on the street or in a shelter. The HEARTH proposal would more closely align the HUD definition with that utilized by the U.S. Department of Education, including people who are living in doubled-up situations or in hotels/motels.

△ **CONSOLIDATE CURRENT PROGRAMS.** H.R. 840 would consolidate all the current HUD McKinney-Vento programs (except Emergency Shelter Grants) into one competitive program. Eligible activities would include homelessness prevention.

△ **ELIMINATE CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS PRIORITIES.** H.R. 840 would eliminate HUD's current policy focus on chronic homelessness and allow more local flexibility in targeting of McKinney-Vento resources.

~For more information on either bill and access to Moises Loza's testimony, visit [www.ruralhome.org/homelesspolicy](http://www.ruralhome.org/homelesspolicy).



# HUD AND RURAL HOMELESSNESS

by Marcy Kinnaman

Since 1987, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has addressed the housing and service needs of homeless individuals and families sleeping on the streets and in shelters in rural areas with targeted assistance through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. HUD approaches alleviating homelessness through a community-based process that provides a comprehensive response to the needs of homeless individuals and families through a housing and service delivery system called a Continuum of Care, or CoC. Rural, suburban, and urban CoCs use McKinney-Vento funds in conjunction with HUD's mainstream housing and community development resources to address homeless needs. HUD's McKinney-Vento and formula grant programs are supported locally by 45 HUD field offices that cover state and regional areas around the country.

HUD's Special Needs Assistance Programs office, known as SNAPs, administers four McKinney-Vento Act grant programs and two non-grant programs. In 2006, these McKinney-Vento programs funded more than \$1.4 billion in grants to more than 450 CoCs. The Emergency Shelter Grants Program is a formula program that allocates funds to the 50 states, Puerto Rico, four Territories, and 324 large metropolitan cities and urban counties. The three grant programs funded through HUD's national CoC competition are the Supportive Housing Program, Shelter Plus Care, and the Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation Program for Single Room Occupancy Dwellings for Homeless Individuals.

Non-grant programs administered by SNAPs include the Base Realignment and Closure Program and the Title V Program. HUD's Title V program involves the collection and publication of information about surplus federal property that can be used to help homeless people and is not related to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Title V housing programs.

## Emergency Shelter Grants Program and Rural Homelessness

The ESG program funds emergency and transitional shelters with rehabilitation, operating costs, and essential services. Monies spent on essential services, including services related to employment, health, drug abuse, or education, are statutorily capped at 30 percent of the grant, although this cap may be waived in certain circumstances. ESG is the only HUD McKinney-Vento program that funds homeless prevention activities – primarily short-term financial assistance to persons at imminent risk of losing their housing due to eviction, foreclosure, or utility cutoffs.

Distribution of ESG funds is based on the Community Development Block Grant program formula for allocating funds. Eligible jurisdictions are comprised of “entitlement” areas that include metropolitan and urban communities and “non-entitlement” areas that include rural counties. Normally, the formula allocates 30 percent of all funds to non-entitlement/state programs. Under ESG, however, if

the formula allocation to an entitlement area is relatively small (less than 0.05 percent of the total funds), the amount is instead added to the allocation for the state in which the area is located. As a result, in the majority of states non-entitled jurisdictions, such as rural areas, are eligible for a greater share of their state's ESG allocation than of its CDBG allocation. In 2006, 48 percent of all ESG funds awarded nationally went to state programs, which could be made available to rural areas. In fact, in 35 of the 52 areas classified as states in the ESG program (50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia), the state program allocation was more than 50 percent of all ESG funding in the state. In seven states, 100 percent of ESG funding went to state programs.

### **History of HUD McKinney-Vento Competitive Programs** (1987-1994)

From 1987 to 1993 HUD conducted separate national competitions for the SHP, S+C, and SRO programs. SHP funds transitional and permanent supportive housing programs as well as supportive service programs through public and nonprofit agency grantees. SHP grants can include capital costs as well as funding of operations and service activities. S+C provides rental assistance through units of state or local government. The SRO program provides rental assistance for single room occupancy structures needing moderate rehabilitation.

Through 1993, the national competition was based on individual agency applications which were ranked on various criteria, including need. Rural advocates often faulted HUD's assessment of need and the resulting inadequate level of funding to address rural homeless needs. Congress authorized a separate Rural Homeless Assistance Program in 1992 (along with a Safe Haven Demonstration Program); however, neither program received an appropriation.

In 1994 Congress directed HUD to undertake Rural and Safe Haven set-asides of up to \$20 million each under the Supportive Housing Program national competition. Under this rural set-aside, 17 grants totaling \$17.4 million were awarded to rural areas, defined as: (a) all areas outside a metropolitan statistical area and (b) those areas within MSAs

that are considered rural. HUD has used this rural definition in the CoC program since 1995.

### **The Continuum of Care Process and Rural Homeless Needs** (1995-2006)

Beginning in 1995, HUD moved administratively to streamline the competitive process and adopted the CoC concept, which encouraged comprehensive and collaborative local planning and decisionmaking, inclusiveness of all essential stakeholders, and public and private representation from the community. The CoC approach helps communities plan for and provide a balance of emergency, transitional, and permanent housing as well as service resources to address the needs of homeless persons.

In 1995, rural areas competed in the regular CoC competition with no special set-aside and received \$60 million for 52 projects. Based on this outcome, HUD concluded that rural areas fared better in the national CoC competition than in the rural set-aside. Since the 1995 competition, the number of grants awarded to rural areas has grown significantly – from 52 projects in 1995 to 565 projects in 2006.

The development of a “Pro Rata Need” concept based on the CDBG/ESG formula factors encouraged more rural areas to form CoCs to compete for their fair share of the national competitive dollars. HUD is proud of the extraordinary expansion of the CoC concept in rural areas, especially through the development of broad CoCs that comprehensively address rural needs: Balance of State CoCs, each of which covers areas in a state that are not included in other CoCs, and Statewide CoCs. As of 2006, only ten states do not have a Balance of State or Statewide CoC, although their rural areas may be covered by other CoC structures. Figure 1 demonstrates the expansion of CoCs, especially in rural areas, between 1997 and 2006. Balance of State and Statewide CoCs are as competitive nationally as other types of CoCs. In 2006, 64 percent of all CoCs scored high enough to receive funding. Of all Statewide and Balance of State CoC applications, 63 percent scored above the funding line.

*Continued on Page 14*

# SHELTER IN THE DESERT:

## THE CENTER FOR FAMILY SOLUTIONS

By Barbara M. Shaver

The Center for Family Solutions is located in Imperial County, a large, sparsely settled area of southeastern California that borders Mexico on the south, Arizona on the east, rural Riverside County on the north, and rural San Diego County on the west. Cut off from the coastal cities by the Laguna Mountains, Imperial County is a vast desert area and, while the summer temperatures can reach over 120 degrees, the winters are delightful. The attractive climate draws a transient homeless population which is added to homeless residents already living along the river and irrigation canal banks.

Culverts and river and canal banks are not appropriate places to live. Since 1977, CFS has worked to create shelter in a community where it is sorely needed.

### Creating Solutions

Imperial County is home to many new immigrants in addition to the Quechan Indian Nation, which straddles the California-Arizona border. The largest proportion of the county's population is Hispanic, at 83 percent, and many of these residents are monolingual Spanish speakers. Non-Hispanic Caucasians comprise 12 percent of county inhabitants, and the remainder are Native Americans, Asians or Pacific Islanders, and African Americans.

Imperial is the poorest county in California, with the lowest average annual family income, \$33,000. The county's unemployment rate is the highest in the state, ranging from 14 to 34 percent depending upon the time of the year and which crops are being harvested. Agriculture is the principal employment sector, followed by government services.

To meet local shelter needs, the Center for Family Solutions operates two emergency shelters and 14 transitional shelter apartments for women and their children who are victims of domestic violence or who are homeless for other reasons. Shelters enable CFS to provide much-needed medical, dental, legal, educational, social, and mental health services for its clients. These services include educational classes in Spanish and English, English as a Second Language courses, computer skills, driver's education, and a children's program.

CFS shelter programs have met only a portion of the need for shelter for the homeless in Imperial County. In this large county of 4,500 square miles there are only three other shelter programs and two housing authorities.

### Putting the Pieces Together


In August 2007, CFS introduced its latest group of seven transitional apartments, called T-Houses, which became the organization's first construction project. By working with several state and local programs, CFS was able to tap into the resources needed to make this development feasible.

- Critical information and help throughout the process came from the City of El Centro and the Imperial Valley Housing Authority. The Housing Authority's invaluable assistance was based on its experience; it has built or acquired nearly 4,500 units of housing throughout the county.
- The land on which CFS built the seven transitional units was donated by the City of El Centro. The units are conveniently located near a school, a city park, a child care center, and public housing units owned by the Imperial Valley Housing Authority.

- Funding for the project was provided by the Emergency Housing Assistance Program Capital Development Grants program of the California Department of Housing and Community Development. Proposition 46, a ballot measure passed by California voters in 2000, created this program to build housing for the homeless. If the housing constructed using these resources is used exclusively to meet the needs of the homeless for at least 10 years, the initial loan converts to a grant and carries no interest.
- Furnishings for the new shelters have been provided by pulling furniture, household goods, and other donations made to the organization's thrift store, which exists to meet the needs of its clients.

With a total of 14 apartments, CFS can now help twice as many formerly homeless women and their children as before. The benefits of these housing options are considerable for the community and the women and children who live in the units. However, operating the new transitional shelters is an ongoing challenge. While the state has made funds for capital development projects available, it is unable to provide support for operating expenses due to severe budget cuts over the last several years.

### Appreciating the Results

For the individual clients who were formerly homeless, CFS's shelters, both old and new, have had a big impact. Women enter the transitional apartments because they want to further their education. The participants are required to enter an academic associate degree program or certificate program at the local community college, participate in an internship, or attend a work-training program. Several two-year degree options are available, including nursing, legal aide, law enforcement, computer science, and early childhood education. Other education and training options include a beauty school course or training on how to be a skilled sales clerk, home health worker, or secretary. Participants learn skills that will enable them to support themselves and their children in a middle-class lifestyle. 

*Barbara M. Shaver, Ph.D. is the Executive Director of the Center for Family Solutions, [www.womanhaven.org](http://www.womanhaven.org).*

### Taking Steps toward an Accurate Homeless Count

For most of the last decade, homeless providers and other stakeholders have relied on data from the 1996 National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients to examine homelessness issues. The recent implementation of the Homeless Management Information System in most Continuums of Care has made it easier to get a more accurate and unduplicated count of the number of individuals utilizing housing services in those areas.

Two reports were recently released using the 2005 HMIS data, yielding similar results. The National Alliance to End Homelessness concluded that there were 744,313 homeless individuals in the U.S. on a single day in January 2005 and that just over half (56 percent) of the nation's homeless utilized shelters. The report did not estimate how many homeless persons were located in rural areas.

In the *Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress* (AHAR), HUD estimated that there were 754,147 homeless individuals in the U.S. and approximately 55 percent were sheltered. This report, which provides geographic location data for the sheltered population only, found that nearly one-quarter of those receiving services were located in suburban or rural areas.

Both the NAEH and AHAR studies are expected to be repeated annually utilizing data collected from an expanding network of homeless providers.

For more statistics and information on the data collection methods and the limitations of these data, see the original reports:

National Alliance to End Homelessness. 2007. *Homelessness Counts*. Washington, D.C.: NAEH. <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/1440>.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2007. *The Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*. Washington, D.C.: HUD. [http://www.huduser.org/publications/povsoc/annual\\_assess.html](http://www.huduser.org/publications/povsoc/annual_assess.html).



# CUSTOMIZING SOLUTIONS FOR RURAL APPALACHIA: HAZARD PERRY COUNTY COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

by Gerry Roll

While rural communities like mine may exist in isolation, most of us are paying attention to state and national trends in program design and evaluation. We must also acknowledge, however, that what works in Denver probably will not work in Hazard, Kentucky. Models like Housing First, Assertive Community Treatment, and Permanent Supportive Housing are succeeding where a critical mass of people need them and enough resources are aligned to implement them. This is simply not the reality of central Appalachia where all the land is vertical and street outreach takes on a whole new meaning. These models do, however, provide us with new ways of thinking as we design locally sensitive strategies.

## Three Parts of the Whole

Mountainous Perry County is located in the heart of the eastern Kentucky coalfields. Fewer than 30,000 people live in the county and 5,000 of them are in the county seat of Hazard. The area median income is \$23,786 and basic infrastructure is expensive to obtain and maintain. Hazard Perry County Community Ministries operates several childcare centers, an emergency shelter, a crisis aid program, transitional housing, case management for persons who are homeless, a health outreach program, and a welfare-to-work mentoring program.

Perry County was fortunate to receive funding early on in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Continuum of Care process. We gathered our stakeholders, conducted a needs assessment, pooled the resources we had, and asked for help to fill in the gaps. The result is what we refer to as Community Programs. There are three key components of our assistance strategy: Corner Haven Crisis Center, the Family Support Center, and Rental Housing.

Corner Haven Crisis Center is the epicenter of intervention and the point of contact for almost any crisis in the community. Families, individuals, churches, local governments, law enforcement, the courts, and the health care community all look to Corner Haven for answers whenever housing, homelessness, or prevention are part of a crisis. Corner Haven is visibly located on Main Street in Hazard and provides a welcoming environment with refreshments, hot meals, and other comforting amenities. Corner Haven also has 20 shelter beds for families and individuals.

The Family Support Center provides case managers, mentors, and lay support workers for those in need. Services range from daily intervention for crisis management to housing counseling and educational support. Everyone who

chooses to be involved with HPCCM's housing programs receives some form of case management.

The Rental Housing program has a variety of transitional housing options. The 20 beds at Corner Haven serve as emergency or transitional housing and a family could stay at Corner Haven for two days or two years. Rental Housing also includes 13 scattered-site family units and 10 tenant-based rental vouchers. In addition, we also have a partnership with the state housing finance agency to provide case management for recipients of transitional vouchers. While the vouchers are critical resources, there are sometimes simply not enough units where the vouchers can be used.

By linking these efforts and creating HPCCM Community Programs, the community was able to serve 350 people last year.

### Creating a Network of Support

As is typical in more urban settings, we have a multitude of community-based partners supporting people along the path from homelessness to permanent, stable housing. Our local Housing Development Alliance produces single-family houses for homeownership and rental units for permanent housing, and also rehabilitates homes, making it possible for families to remain in their own homes. In addition, Hazard has one of the nation's few rural stand-alone Health Care for the Homeless federally qualified health centers, where more than 2,000 patients receive care.

Our continuum also includes the local medical center, which is a 308-bed acute care and psychiatric hospital. The community mental health agency, state offices for family services, and the judicial system all participate as integral pieces of the homeless and housing infrastructure of Hazard and Perry County. We also enjoy the very real participation of our governing boards, advisory groups, local congregations, civic clubs, and public schools.

HPCCM's role is to keep all of these stakeholders at the table and to keep them engaged in the process. The impact has been tremendous, and after 15 years there are visible results. But there is still more work to do, and that will require some thoughtful planning for future program development.


### The Impact of Rural Homeless Definitions

After gaining a little traction in the early 1990s, funding for rural communities to provide housing and homeless services has been on a slow downward spiral. At the same time, the number of people needing those services is steadily growing. One of the keys to this paradox lies in the definition of homelessness.

The definition adopted by Congress and used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which administers most of the federal funding for homeless assistance, limits most resources to those who are living unsheltered or in temporary shelters.

In rural Hazard, Kentucky there is one homeless shelter and it has only 20 beds. Given the lack of options, those in critical need live in severely overcrowded conditions or in badly dilapidated structures. People live in campers and all manner of improvised construction; some of these makeshift homes have electricity and plumbing, some do not. If HUD does not recognize them as homeless, these families and individuals will not qualify for the limited aid that is available. Yet we know they all need help.

### Learning and Innovating

As we begin to plan our Continuum of Care for the next 10 years, or our plan to end homelessness, we will do our research diligently and explore all the models that work. As we adjust these strategies to the realities of the demographics and geography of central Appalachia, we will come up with a comprehensive, effective, and culturally appropriate Continuum of Care. While our results may slightly horrify some traditional health care providers and academics, and cause government workers to shake their heads in awe, it will do some other things too. It will be inclusive of the people we serve in Hazard and it will be responsive to their needs. It will include stakeholders that people in San Francisco and Portland never dreamed of, and it will get results that matter to all of us. We hope it will be funded equitably as well. 

*Gerry Roll is Executive Director of Hazard Perry County Community Ministries in Hazard, Kentucky, [www.hpccm.org](http://www.hpccm.org).*

# HARVEST TIME:

## USING HMIS TO END HOMELESSNESS IN RURAL MICHIGAN

by Herman DeGroot

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Like many human service workers in rural America, Kimberlee Reinking wears multiple hats. Reinking works for the Housing Resource Center of Allegan County as a Grant Administrator and also as the Homeless Management Information System Administrator for the Allegan County Continuum of Care in rural southwest Michigan.

Reinking and her family are also blueberry growers and own and operate one of the premier processing sites in Michigan. Many of the things she has learned on the farm over the years are the same things that make her a good administrator. She understands that planting, pruning, patience, and plain old hard work are all essential ingredients that must be invested before any berries can be harvested.

Like blueberry farming, the Homeless Management Information System does not offer immediate gratification. When HUD mandated HMIS a few years ago, it seemed like more of a challenge than a resource to many serving the homeless and poor in rural America. For many of us, implementing the system meant more work with little immediate benefit. At first, the long hours of data entry and quality control seemed like time that would be better spent serving clients. We soon learned, however, that the benefits of the data collected far outweigh the costs.

### Planting the Seeds

In response to HUD's HMIS mandate, Michigan hired Barb Ritter, a well known West Coast HMIS and measurement consultant, to lead the implementation. Ritter's approach

was not to force HMIS participation but to design and implement a system that is safe and flexible and provides valuable information.

To help alleviate some of the privacy concerns that accompanied the HUD mandate, the HMIS system was housed under the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness, a well known and agency-friendly nonprofit organization. Ritter, with the help of a broad-based steering committee, then fashioned an HMIS process designed to maximize participation from publicly and privately funded organizations as well as state departments. Michigan's version of HMIS is conservative and protective with regards to privacy, but flexible and creative with regards to workflow, data-sharing, participation level, training opportunities, and configuration options.

It is clear that her approach is paying off. Michigan's statewide implementation boasts 1,100 licensed HMIS users and over 400 participating agencies, a large percentage of which are privately funded and not required to participate. The implementation now encompasses 58 of the state's 60 Continuums of Care, including three of five that originally opted not to participate.

### Fruits of the Harvest

The HMIS system collects information on client characteristics, service needs, and service utilization of individuals experiencing homelessness, whether they are adults or children, alone or part of a family. This

information can then be used by organizations across the state for a number of purposes.

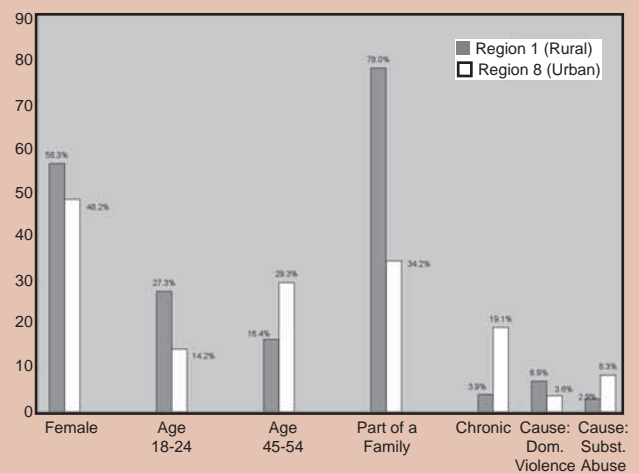
- ◆ **DECISIONMAKING.** Not long ago, the Allegan County Continuum of Care was basing its decisions on conventional wisdom, anecdotal information, local politics, and a few unverified statistics from its member agencies. Now, Reinking can get the facts, not only about her agency's clients but also how HRC's services dovetail with the other services offered in the Allegan area. She can find out the average monthly income for the families she assisted with motel vouchers last year as well as how many of them received help with their utility bills from Christian Neighbors, a partner service agency, or how many received food baskets from Project Hope. The Allegan agencies can see how and where they are duplicating efforts and adapt accordingly.

- ◆ **PROGRAM MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT.** HMIS data allow HRC to track its client engagement rate and also its program performance as measured by its clients' living situations following exit from the transitional housing program. The report includes tables and graphs charting HRC's performance over time and breaking it down by gender, age, and other demographic factors. Reinking can compare her program to similar ones across Michigan by referencing a multicolored chart where each line represents one of the programs in HRC's statewide peer group.

The Statewide Outcomes Benchmarking pilot project is one of several HMIS creative initiatives underway in Michigan. It matches similar programs and develops program outcome measures that can be monitored through HMIS. By running the custom reports developed around the outcome measures that participants help develop, administrators can both monitor the effectiveness of their own programs from month to month and also see how their performance stacks up against other similar programs in the state.

## What We've Learned about Homelessness in Rural Michigan

Michigan is divided into eight regions for data reporting purposes, ranging from the sparsely populated Upper Peninsula, Region 1, to Region 8 which encompasses the densely populated southeastern area, including Detroit. To see the differences between urban and rural homelessness one need only lay the demographic data from Region 1 and Region 8 side by side.



The numbers reveal that an adult homeless person in rural Region 1 is most likely to be a woman between the ages of 18 and 24, while in urban Region 8 such a person is more likely to be a man in the 45 to 54 age range. Homeless adults in the rural Upper Peninsula are more than twice as likely to be a part of a family than their big-city counterparts. Chronic homelessness is a far larger problem in urban areas. Finally, the root causes for homelessness vary: while eviction was the reason most often given for homelessness in both regions, domestic violence played a larger role in the rural setting than in the city, while substance abuse was a more prevalent factor in urban Region 8 than in the rural Upper Peninsula.

*Continued on Page 18*

# USING FAMILY TO FIGHT HOMELESSNESS:

## THE MILLENNIUM CENTER IN SOUTHWEST GEORGIA

by Dean Nelson

The Millennium Center is a unique homelessness program for women in southwest rural Georgia that takes a holistic family approach. While it is a drug rehabilitation program, the Millennium Center is much more than that. Developed by the Southwest Georgia Housing Development Corporation and operated by Volunteers of America, the Millennium Center recognizes the importance of the family in substance abuse treatment. The women who enter the year-long program learn job and life skills while receiving intensive family intervention, as well as counseling for their specific substance abuse issues.

Since 1997 SWGHDC has focused on meeting the needs of rural southwest Georgia by producing housing for people at all income levels, developing employment opportunities, and increasing educational opportunities. Based on our work in the region, we knew there was a great need for a facility like the Millennium Center. Making the facility a reality required a great deal of creativity and collaboration.

### Coming Together

SWGHDC's service area consists primarily of six rural Georgia counties (Calhoun, Clay, Early, Randolph, Quitman, and Stewart) that have been plagued with population loss, falling high school graduation rates, and declining economic opportunities.

The six-county area is approximately 40 percent white and 60 percent African-American. Almost half the adults over the age of 25 living in the organization's service area

have not completed high school, significantly hampering their abilities to obtain employment and the region's ability to develop economic opportunities. Of the 35,272 total population in SWGHDC's service area, 10.4 percent are living below the poverty line – twice the state poverty rate – and the average per capita income is \$14,296.

In a study commissioned by SWGHDC and conducted by the University of Georgia, over 1,000 residents were found to be cost burdened (paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing). Further, there are significant amounts of substandard housing in the region and owners are financially unable to build new housing or move to better units. SWGHDC's market research further demonstrated that due to the high levels of poverty and low incomes in the region, new rental properties would require deep subsidies to provide any cash flow to the property owners, much less to break even. Given these challenges, there are no incentives for a for-profit developer to build and there are strong barriers to nonprofit development.

While these problems are not unique to southwest Georgia, the region previously lacked an institutional mechanism to address them. Three local housing authorities that worked in Randolph and Clay counties developed a new



Single-family and duplex homes rented by families at the Millennium Center

independent entity that would concentrate on meeting the needs of rural southwest Georgia: the Southwest Georgia Housing Development Corporation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit housing developer headquartered in Cuthbert, Georgia. The Millennium Center has become a critical piece of the organization's housing provision strategy.

### Partnerships Make it Possible

The Millennium Center, a permanent supportive housing program located in Cuthbert, was opened in August of 2002. The partnerships that make the Millennium Center work are reflected not only on paper, but in the physical location of the shelter and services that are made available to participants on the facility's 20-acre campus.

The campus includes the First Steps Child Care Center, an administration/counseling building, a multi-purpose building, and 21 single-family homes and duplexes. The homes include two-, three-, and four-bedroom units and are leased to the individual families. Adjacent to the site is a satellite campus of Albany Technical College built on land donated by SWGHDC.

VOA acts as the third party service provider under contract with the Georgia Department of Human Resources Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases, which funds the services. Women and their families are referred to VOA by the court system and the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. To be eligible a woman must have a substance abuse problem,

### Putting the Puzzle Together

*The creation of the Millennium Center was the result of many partnerships.*

Agency or Funding Source	Supported Activity
Southwest Georgia Housing Development Corporation	Developed and owns the facility
Volunteers of America	Provides services
HOME program and Georgia State Homeless Trust Fund via the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Permanent Supportive Housing Program	Loaned funds for construction of the multipurpose building and family rental units
USDA Rural Development Community Facilities loan	Funded construction of childcare center and administrative building
Georgia Department of Community Affairs Permanent Supportive Housing Program	Provides 21 project-based vouchers and also portable vouchers for graduates
West Georgia Consortium [of Housing Authorities]	Acts as management agent
Cuthbert Housing Authority	Served as general contractor
City of Cuthbert	Constructed water and sewage connections
Randolph County and the County Development Authority	Sold and donated property
First State Bank of Randolph County and Regions Bank	Loaned up-front money until state funding became available
Georgia Department of Adult and Technical Education	Built satellite campus of Albany Technical College
Georgia Department of Human Resources Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases	Funds and provides oversight for VOA
Modular builder	Constructed the facility



Playground at the First Steps Child Care Center

be eligible for reunification with her children, be 18 years old or older, and be income-eligible for a Section 8 voucher.

As the women progress through the program's three phases, they begin to work in the local community and take GED classes to further their education. Their children receive counseling and intervention as well. Husbands or significant others take part in the family counseling and may receive counseling at a separate facility in Cuthbert for any substance abuse problems of their own.

To insure the security of the families, SWGHDC has provided fencing and 24-hour security services and is installing a security camera system. These protections are intended to protect the families from outside influences that could potentially harm the program and participants.

Most, if not all, of the participants come from substandard housing and are either homeless or at great risk of becoming homeless. The program offers participants a chance to create a better life through the skills learned while on campus. Each family is given a housing voucher by the Department of Community Affairs when graduation nears. The family is then able to use the portable voucher to relocate and start fresh either in Cuthbert or in another community. Even after graduation, supportive services are available from VOA for those who remain in the region.

For those who relocate, referrals are made to local providers with continual follow-up by VOA staff.

### Benefits for All

A major impact of the Millennium Center is the successful placement of program graduates into the Randolph County community. Residents have transitioned into privately owned rental units using the portable Section 8 vouchers and many have successfully moved into public housing units managed by the West Georgia Consortium of public housing authorities. Several former residents have full- or part-time jobs in the community.

In addition, the project has been an economic development catalyst for a very rural area and provided social services for the community at large. More than 50 jobs were created in Randolph County as a direct result of the development including those at the center itself, in the security guard service, and at the Albany Technical College campus.

The Millennium Center's development also provides educational opportunities not only for the participants but for the entire community through GED preparation and literacy training at Albany Technical College. Both program participants and members of the community have the opportunity to utilize the childcare facility, which is located outside the security fence.

### Looking to the Future


With the success of the Millennium Center, Southwest Georgia Housing Development Corporation has moved forward in developing a low-income elderly Section 202 project, Southwood Village, and is accepting the donation of two Rural Development Section 515 properties. SWGHDC will also begin development of a permanent supportive housing program for victims of domestic abuse and their families adjacent to the Millennium Center. 🏠

*Dean Nelson is the Program Manager for Southwest Georgia Housing Development Corporation in Cuthbert, Georgia.*

Since the 1995 CoC competition, the number of grants awarded to rural areas has grown significantly – from 52 projects in 1995 to 565 projects in 2006.

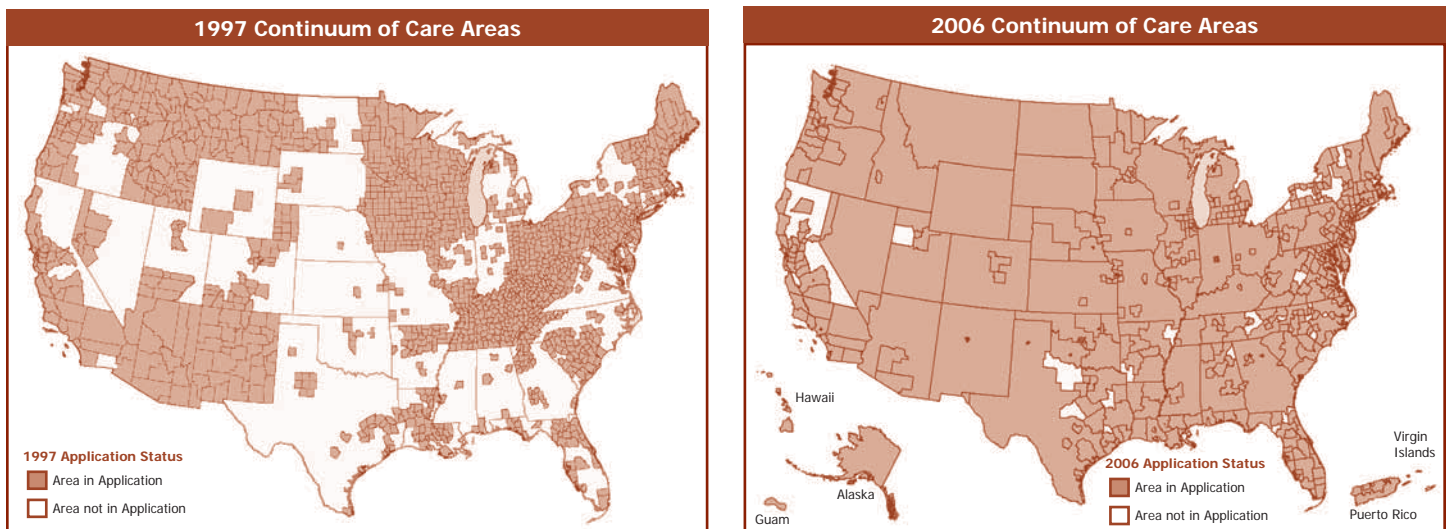
### HUD's Future: Addressing Rural Homelessness More Effectively

HUD recognizes the need for homeless assistance programs in every community throughout the United States regardless of geographic location or population. HUD's McKinney-Vento programs allow rural areas to access their proportion of homeless assistance funding under the ESG and CoC programs. The federally sponsored National Survey of Homeless Assistance Programs and their Clients found that 9 percent of the nation's homeless people were located in rural areas, 21 percent in suburban and 70 percent in urban areas. Since 1999 HUD has awarded, on average, 10 percent of annual CoC funding to projects located in rural areas.

As more rural areas gain access to HUD's homeless assistance grants through Balance of State and Statewide CoC applications, the number of projects awarded to rural areas will continue to increase. HUD encourages smaller CoCs to merge or join Balance of State CoCs in order to increase comprehensive rural planning and access to competitive funding. HUD also continues to provide technical assistance resources to assist rural CoCs with program development, capacity building, and implementation of Homeless Management Information Systems, which strengthen CoC structures and increase program and CoC performance. 

*Marcy Kinnaman, M.S.W., is a Special Needs Assistance Programs Specialist at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov).*

Figure 1: Comparison of Claimed CoC Areas (1997-2006)





# WORKING TOWARDS A COMMON GOAL:

## THE MINNESOTA COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

by Sue Watlov Phillips

Over 3.5 million people experience homelessness every year in this country and about one-third of us are one paycheck away from becoming homeless. Even though most of us believed our society would not allow homelessness to grow to this magnitude, rural and urban stakeholders from across Minnesota joined together in the early 1980s to develop and implement a plan to help people stay in their own places.

As an urban homeless provider, Elim Transitional Housing is the outgrowth of a church-based shelter at Elim Baptist Church. In 1983, Elim developed Minnesota's first transitional housing program utilizing scattered site housing and with a goal of reintegrating people in the community and providing mainstream services. We learned many lessons from listening to the wants and dreams of the people we served: employing prevention, finding strategies for rapidly exiting homelessness, utilizing existing housing in the community, and helping people reconnect with their community. Those lessons became the basis for our work at the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless.

### Identifying Our Purpose

In 1984, urban and rural shelter and service providers joined together to form the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless.

Our mission was, and is, to end homelessness. Our efforts are grounded in two core beliefs. First, people who have experienced or are experiencing homelessness need to be key decision makers. Second, it is everyone's responsibility in a civilized society to end homelessness by providing flexible resources so local communities can design their own ways of preventing and ending homelessness. We decided early on to focus on creating community-based housing opportunities rather than creating a statewide system.

In an effort to utilize the knowledge and experience of formerly homeless individuals even at the highest levels, approximately one-third of the Coalition's board of directors is made up of people who have experienced homelessness during their lives. The rest of the board members are direct service providers who are presently working with homeless individuals through outreach, shelters, education, and more throughout the state. An effort is made to have representation from each of Minnesota's 13 Continuums of Care, not only as members but as leadership. The Coalition has several vice presidents with the goal of having at least one from the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area and a couple from greater Minnesota.

While our common beliefs unite us, as a coalition of separate organizations we must also acknowledge our

differences. We agreed to disagree on a number of issues: how people experience homelessness, the definition of homelessness, what types of housing and/or services work best in a community, and the roles the community plays in creating homelessness and in helping to end homelessness.

Since 1984, MCH has assisted in developing over 100 community-based transitional type housing programs across the state. Our definition of transitional housing – which differs from that of the federal government – is community-run housing that can be scattered-site or congregate, owned or rented, that has tenant-based subsidies, and that includes services to help people within their communities. There are many examples of how members of the coalition have worked over the last 23 years to develop and maintain housing options for rural Minnesotans.

I'd like to recognize the great work done for years by rural providers in providing outreach, prevention, emergency shelters, transitional and permanent housing with and without services across Minnesota.

Here are some updates on additional services around Minnesota:

### Rural Homelessness Exposed

Operation Community Connect is a one-day event designed to bring multiple service agencies face-to-face with people experiencing homelessness and/or poverty. OCC gives community members an opportunity to apply for needed services and receive assistance all under one roof on one day. In 2006, six simultaneous OCC events were held in rural counties across Minnesota, resulting in more than 430 families receiving assistance. In addition to the families helped, the event brought this issue to the awareness of community members who may have thought homelessness to be a problem reserved for large cities.

Many lives were touched by Operation Community Connect. One story that stands out is that of a homeless man who was living in a camper trailer. He stopped by the housing area at the Aitkin County OCC and spoke to representatives from the local housing authority and USDA Rural Development. They were able to find a local

## Minnesota's Rural Homeless Today

Wilder Research's 2006 statewide survey of persons experiencing homelessness identified 968 adults and 53 youths whose last regular housing had been in towns with populations smaller than 25,000 in the state of Minnesota.

According to the survey's findings, the rural homeless were more likely to have children with them and they experienced periodic rather than chronic homelessness. This population was less likely than Minnesota's urban homeless population to be staying in emergency shelters and slightly more likely to live in transitional housing. More of the small-town homeless were employed at the time of the study and slightly more were working full-time.

### 2006 Wilder Survey Results

	Small Town (percent)	City (percent)
Accompanied by children	36	26
Had first child while still in teens	31	23
Staying in emergency shelters	21	31
Unsheltered/informally-sheltered	32	24
Staying in transitional housing	43	38
Homeless for a year or longer	38	48
Homeless prior to their current episode	64	70
Employed	33	25
Working Full-Time	19	15

To end homelessness and 'Bring America Home' we need to invest our resources in creating and maintaining affordable housing everywhere, creating livable incomes, universal health care, and educational opportunities, and respecting and protecting people's civil rights.

landlord who just happened to be volunteering at the event. The landlord offered the man an efficiency unit she had available and he was able to receive rental assistance from the housing authority. One year later he is still living in his apartment and is now using his carpentry skills to assist the landlord with maintenance.

### Mobile Support Teams

Rural homeless providers must often address critical barriers not found in urban areas. Some organizations' service areas span as many as 250 square miles, covering territories where cell phones do not work and Internet access is nonexistent. As a result, service providers must devote a great amount of time traveling to provide assistance. Minnesota's Long-term Homeless Services Fund has established Mobile Support Teams in rural communities to provide rental assistance and support services to families, youth, and single adults.

Mobile Teams have adapted to rural case management by creating mobile offices with phones, PDAs, mobile fax/printers, and laptop computers. The Mobile Teams allow staff to cover large service areas and connect participants with needed services. Program records show teams traveling up to 100 miles per day. The program staff utilize community feasts or other events to bring participants together to connect with the community and receive services.


### Red Lake Homeless Shelter

In 2006, its first year of operation, the Red Lake Homeless Shelter provided emergency shelter services to 210 people, including 79 children and 131 adults. More than 90 percent of these people met the state's criteria for "long-term homelessness" given repeated periods of "doubling-up" with relatives or friends. By federal standards, however, these individuals and families are not counted as homeless, even though they lack permanent housing.

Without a stable place to live, other problems may develop. A 2004 National American Indian Housing Council study of American Indian housing found that "tribal people are more than six times as likely to live in overcrowded or physically inadequate conditions as are Americans in general." The resulting harm to people is pervasive, especially for children: more frequent infectious illnesses, compromised parenting in a chaotic household, sleep deprivation due to noise and cramped sleeping arrangements, difficulty attending school or completing homework, and general insecurity and instability resulting from frequent relocations.

American Indian people who are "doubled up" in reservation homes should be counted among America's homeless, and should receive attention from the federal government in the form of homeless services funding allocations and eligibility. Safe, decent, permanent housing is a human right that could be viewed as primary prevention in reducing the social problems existing on today's Indian reservations, an investment in the future of American Indian people.

### Achieving Our Goals

In addition to our statewide work, an important part of the Minnesota coalition's focus is supporting broad-based activities on the national level, including the "Bringing America Home" campaign spearheaded by the National Coalition for the Homeless ([www.bringingamericahome.org](http://www.bringingamericahome.org)). To end homelessness and Bring America Home we need to invest our resources in creating and maintaining affordable housing everywhere, creating livable incomes, universal health care, and educational opportunities, and respecting and protecting people's civil rights. 

*Sue Watlov Phillips, M.A., C.S.P., is the executive director of Elim Transitional Housing, Inc., founder and board member of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, and past president of the National Coalition for the Homeless.*

# HAC ANNOUNCES NEW INITIATIVE TO ADDRESS RURAL HOMELESSNESS

The Housing Assistance Council is proud to announce the creation of the Rural Homelessness Capacity Building program. Funded by the Department of Health and Human Services Compassion Capital Fund, this three-year initiative will target those faith-based and community organizations serving homeless populations in rural areas.

The RHCB program will bring together the knowledge and resources of HAC and the National Alliance to End Homelessness to provide the following services:

- △ **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.** Organizations will be able to receive one-on-one technical assistance via a toll-free telephone line, email, and listserv.
- △ **TRAINING.** Audio web trainings will be presented on specific aspects of organizational capacity building and scholarships will be offered to regional and national training events.
- △ **INFORMATION.** Rural homelessness providers will have access to capacity building information resources including funding summaries and best practices case studies.
- △ **GRANTS.** Grants will be available to fund the capacity development goals of organizations serving homeless individuals and families in rural persistent poverty counties.


~The initiative will be launched in January 2008.

For more information on the RHCB program, please email [RHCBinfo@ruralhome.org](mailto:RHCBinfo@ruralhome.org).

## *Rural Michigan Continued* from page 10

Despite the proven value, some still question the costs compared to the benefits of HUD's attempt to gather homeless statistics in rural counties. They argue that the rural numbers are just a tiny fraction of those in the big cities like Detroit and risk being hidden by the urban data. Those in rural Michigan, however, contend that their relatively small numbers are exactly the reason their statistics are so important. The nature of homelessness, and the reasons it exists, are much different in rural and urban environments. In order to further understand these differences and the accompanying programmatic differences, rural data collection is crucial.

### **Reaping What We Sow**

What makes HMIS work in Michigan and in other implementations across the nation is that the focus has been kept on harvest time. In order for HMIS to really succeed, the day-to-day drudgery of data entry and data cleaning must be seen as planting and pruning that produces a crop of hard facts about homelessness in America. Without these facts, homelessness cannot be understood, and without understanding, it cannot be defeated. Where HMIS is viewed as a mandate, it is failing. But, where HMIS is seen as a tool to be used and relied upon, it is succeeding and proving its value. If Americans are to be successful in their attempts to eradicate the national disgrace of homelessness, it is now clear that HMIS will be playing a crucial role. 

*Herman DeGroot is Technical Support Coordinator, MSHMIS, at the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness, [www.mihomeless.org](http://www.mihomeless.org).*

# RURAL REVELATIONS:

## THE UNITED STATES INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS PARTNERS WITH COMMUNITIES TO END HOMELESSNESS

by Philip Mangano

Rural homelessness is just as destructive to the human condition as its more glaring counterpart on urban streets and in inner city shelters. Homelessness, rural or urban, is an issue that communities across our country, large and small, coast to coast, are engaging anew.

The long misery of homelessness is now encountering a national partnership led by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness and its jurisdictional partners – governors, county executives, and mayors – all across our country. What is uniting these leaders across the urban-rural divide and fostering the new approach is the presence of unprecedented research, innovation, resources, and results.

### Partnering on All Levels

There is no question that the economic distress of recent years – failing family farms, plant closings, job loss, and increased housing costs – have left many in greater need of assistance. Through focus groups we have listened to rural residents and elected officials and learned that the old rural axiom “we take care of our own” is now frayed by economic difficulties.

Since 2003, when the Interagency Council convened its first focus group on rural homelessness, Regional Coordinators for the Council have been partnering with state and county officials, community agencies, and faith-based groups from Alaska to Florida, Guam to the Virgin Islands, to develop results-oriented plans to end the homelessness of the most vulnerable and disabled in ten years. In his 2003 budget

message to Congress, the President set this new marker in front of the country. The work of the Council is to realize that vision.

When the Council was revitalized by President Bush in 2002, bringing together 20 federal agencies to make their resources more available and accessible on the issue of homelessness, we committed to coordinate the federal response to homelessness. As importantly, the Council set out to create a national partnership connecting every level of government and the private sector. That partnership now includes the 20 federal agencies, 49 governors, and the jurisdictional leaders from more than 300 communities across the nation.

As a tangible expression of their partnership, governors are creating State Interagency Councils and local communities, large and small, are creating 10-Year Plans to end chronic homelessness. These plans are targeted to people living on our streets and languishing in our shelters and intend to end their homelessness. In fact, the national partnership has changed the approach to homelessness in our country. After 20 years of managing the crisis, our intent now is ending the disgrace.

Oregon offers a prime example of a Council-inspired partnership to end chronic homelessness in rural America. Last June, the Council, working closely with the Oregon Association of Counties and the State of Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services, sponsored a leadership summit on ending homelessness

in Salem, the state capital. The summit attracted county commissioners, mayors, and city and town councilors from throughout the state. As with all Council-sponsored activities, we were looking for a result. Just one year later, ten new plans to end homelessness were created, with eight of those plans to be implemented in rural counties. In Lincoln County, County Commissioner Bill Hall led the planning process and has become a national spokesperson on rural homelessness.

Clallam County in Washington is another case where a rural county is impacted by the work of the Council. In partnership with the Council, the community launched a 10-Year Plan which became one of the first implemented plans in the state and was characterized by national best practices promoted by the Council. This plan has seen results – a dramatic 24 percent reduction in homelessness in the 18 months since it was implemented.

In Michigan, Governor Granholm inspired a campaign to end homelessness in all 83 of the state's counties. The collaborative effort includes the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, the Michigan Departments of Human Services, Community Health, and Corrections, the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness, and other organizations. Michigan is the first state in the country in which every square mile, rural and urban, is covered by a 10-Year Plan to end homelessness.

Other states, including Missouri, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Hawaii, are moving forward with new funding and new plans to remedy chronic homelessness. Earlier this year, West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin III reinvigorated the State Interagency Council on Homelessness and charged the Council to develop a long-term plan to end homelessness, to prevent homelessness, and to coordinate initiatives among state agencies.

The work of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness and its partners in states and communities across the country has resulted in new momentum to move beyond simply maintaining a status quo to investing in innovation that reduces homelessness. This new national mindset is framed around partnership, business principles,

and results – results that can now be seen in the reduction of street and chronic homelessness in more than 300 communities, large and small, all across our nation.

## Investing New Resources

While new strategies are important, new resources are also a part of the plan. Federal resources targeted to homeless people have increased for six consecutive years, and the President's budget for the next fiscal year includes another record level of funding, \$4.47 billion. Increased resources at the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services are being invested both to end and to prevent homelessness, and new initiatives from the Social Security Administration are extending its benefits more rapidly into the lives of our most disadvantaged citizens. The Department of Agriculture, whose Rural Development division includes resources for housing, community facilities, utilities, business development, and other rural development activities, is seeking new partners to make greater use of its wide-ranging resources available for communities of under 20,000 people across the country.

After 20 years of soup kitchens, emergency shelters, and an unchallenged status quo that managed the long misery of homelessness, the national partnership is identifying and investing in innovations that are creating a new standard of expectation on the issue of homelessness. Across our country we now expect visible, measurable, quantifiable change on the streets and in the communities of our rural and urban areas. Jurisdictional leaders and community stakeholders are moving beyond the policy and people myths and stereotypes of homelessness to fashion realistic strategies to reduce homelessness.

The national partnership is working. And the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness stands ready to partner with rural communities and the Housing Assistance Council to end this moral, spiritual, and economic disgrace in our nation.

*Philip F. Mangano, executive director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, was appointed by President Bush in 2002 to lead the nation's fight on homelessness.*

## IN MEMORY OF JOHN E. FOSTER



John E. Foster, a member of the Housing Assistance Council's Board of Directors since 1979, passed away on August 2, 2007 in Columbus, Ohio. HAC joins Mr. Foster's family and friends in mourning his loss.

A registered professional engineer with over 35 years of engineering experience, Mr. Foster retired in 1999 as president of John E. Foster & Associates, Inc., a professional corporation engaged in the practice of engineering, architecture, planning, and surveying.

Throughout his career, Mr. Foster was a board member and officer of many organizations in addition to the Housing Assistance Council. A few of the organizations he served include the City of Columbus Equal Business Opportunity Advisory Board, the Columbus Neighborhood Partnership, the Ohio Association of Minority Architects and Engineers, and the Children's Hospital Research Foundation. Mr. Foster received numerous awards and honors, including recognition as the City of Columbus Equal Business Opportunity Advocate of the Year in 2002.

Members of the HAC board have expressed their deep admiration and appreciation for Mr. Foster. He will be remembered for his work all over the country, providing technical assistance and planning for water and sewer programs, as well as for his warm character and his ability to give of himself. HAC's board adopted a resolution in honor of Mr. Foster, which can be viewed at [www.ruralhome.org/infoAnnouncements\\_2007JFoster.php](http://www.ruralhome.org/infoAnnouncements_2007JFoster.php).

Mr. Foster leaves his mother; his companion Ethel Baldwin; his sons, Michael, of Oakland, California, Timothy, of Chillicothe, Ohio, and Jeffrey, of San Jose, California; and three granddaughters and one grandson.



### RURAL VOICES

[ruralvoices@ruralhome.org](mailto:ruralvoices@ruralhome.org)

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The Housing Assistance Council (HAC) is a national nonprofit corporation founded in 1971 and dedicated to increasing the availability of decent housing for low-income people in rural areas. HAC strives to accomplish its goals through providing loans, technical assistance, training, research and information to local producers of affordable rural housing. HAC maintains a revolving fund providing vital loans at below-market interest rates to rural housing developers. Developers can use these funds for site acquisition, development, rehabilitation or new construction of rural, low- and very low-income housing. HAC has a highly qualified staff of housing specialists who provide valuable technical assistance and training, and research and information associates who provide program and policy analysis and evaluation plus research and information services to public, nonprofit, and private organizations. HAC is an equal opportunity lender.

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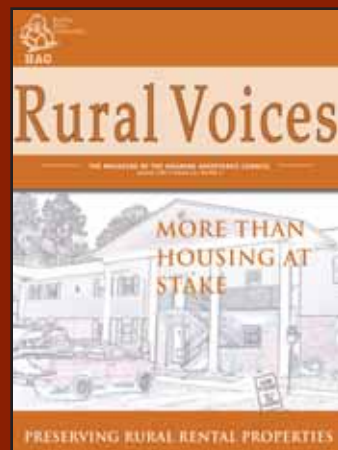
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