



House the Homeless, Inc.

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www.UniversalLivingWage.org

2008 Annual Report

I. Promotion of the Universal Living Wage (ULW) Campaign

- Legislatively speaking: For the second time in our long journey to permanently fix the federal minimum wage and achieve a Universal Wage, a great legislative hero, Congresswoman Julia Carson (D-7th, IN) died before we could perfect legislative language on our bill. Her son Andre Carson has been elected to her seat and has agreed to carry the Bring America Home ACT (700 pages) which will carry our bill. R. Troxell has been engaged in multiple conversations with Senator Jeff Merkley staff regarding a possible ULW stand alone bill. Merkley-D OR is concerned about worker economics.

- Interagency advocacy: House the Homeless, Inc. again reached out to Philip Mangano, Executive Director of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, promoting the ULW and calling for adjustments to the nation's 10-year plans to end homelessness by including all persons affected by creating Livable Incomes for both those who can work and those who cannot work. (Click on the "What's New" button found at www.UniversalLivingWage.org to view the letter.) Mangano has now been replaced by Peter Dougherty of the VA which will give us new opportunities.

- Increased the number of endorsing unions, community and faith-based organizations, and businesses bringing the number to 1,696. National Days of Action were again held; i.e., "Bridge the Economic Gap Day" on September 1, 2008 and Tax Day April 15th 2009 with actions in every state.

These two national days of action were created and continue to be supported by House the Homeless, Inc. to promote the Universal Living Wage in communities across the nation. We go to our local post offices across the nation and fly 4'x10' banners that state "Reduce your Taxes with a www.UniversalLivingWage.org" drawing people to our web site where the names and contact information of participating organization can be seen. This serves as a great local organizing tool and helps us organize around living wages nationally. We distribute flyers that promote the idea that if businesses paid fair, living wages we could reduce to some degree our dependence on food stamps, TANF, General Assistance, EITC, etc. saving tax payers million of dollars. This year, we were again active in every state in the union.

II. HtH Direct Supports and Services (All Volunteer)

- Updated, printed and distributed the HtH created plastic pocket resource guide, now in its 9th printing with 10,000 copies, benefiting both the service recipients and service providers. HtH is presently contacting Executive Directors to update information for our upcoming 10th printing.
- Launched the release of a “Know Your Rights” guide prepared by Legal Aid for the Homeless and Texas C-Bar (both programs of TRLA) regarding laws affecting the homeless. Continuing wide spread distribution throughout Austin Metropolitan Area. We are now replicating the concept in other Texas cities with information specific to each metropolitan area.
- Provided targeted financial assistance to homeless and working poor persons for identification documents (birth certificates, etc.) necessary to access social services; for mobility-impaired bus passes; and for other critical needs.
- Initiated work with the Community Action Network, TX Homeless Network, Mobile Loaves and Fishes and Ending Community Homelessness Organization, regarding Troxell’s HtH-sponsored “Let’s Get to Work” Forum and Initiative creating a living wage work program (scheduled for May 2009). It brings together three "Best Practices" groups, including Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, and a panel of local experts already doing employment programs and ready to create a "Pathway” for people experiencing homelessness whereby they would emerge as a workforce earning living wages. Has secured support of Austin Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Austin Alliance, Seton Family of Hospitals, TX Dept of Child Protective Services and many more.
- Developed and conducted a survey that revealed 90 percent of Austin’s homeless would work a full 40 hour week if it provided them food, clothing and shelter (including utilities); i.e. an living wage. Findings widely distributed.
- Held annual Memorial Service to remember 135 individuals who died while living on the streets of Austin in the past year (November 2008)
- Conducted annual thermal underwear drive in the fall 2008; distributing more than 600 pairs at the New Year’s celebration with a meal and entertainment for area homeless persons.

Because of an un-silenced voice, House the Homeless leadership (including Troxell) sees and is able to communicate the problem and potential solutions as free-agents. As a grassroots organization that accepts no government funding, our voice has always been loud and clear, whatever the consequences. On the contrary, others feeling job vulnerable are not as vocal. One example includes our campaign to oppose the “quality of life” ordinances that criminalize homelessness and restrict people’s civil rights. When others worked to pass the “no camping” ordinance, House the Homeless bought a full page Sunday ad in the Statesman, showing the cost of jailing vs. job training. We framed the issue so people could understand the moral and economic concerns.
