



OUR HOME

Opening Doors: Statewide Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth

OUR HOME

January 2007

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2006 - 2007 Illinois Teacher of the Year Joe Fatheree

~NCLB Keynote and McKinney-Vento Workshop Presenter~



When S. Sam Field, a McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program Advisory Board Member for Area V in Southwestern Illinois heard that Joseph Fatheree was named Illinois Teacher of the Year, he commented, "Joe is a great teacher and an even finer human being." Field should know. He and Fatheree have both been teaching in the Effingham Unit #40 CUSD for many years, Field for 31 years and Fatheree for 16 years. Field and his other advisory board colleagues were also glad to learn that Fatheree had devoted much of his summer to guiding an Effingham senior in the production of a training film for use by the Area V staff. The film, much of it shot in East St. Louis and Granite City, features interviews with administrators, shelter directors and homeless students, incorporating provocative facts and powerful images. This is just one of the contributions Fatheree has made over the years to improving the opportunities for success of impoverished children in Southern Illinois.



Don't forget!

The Adult Learning Resource Center has moved:
 2626 S. Clearbrook Drive
 Arlington Heights, IL 60005
 224-366-8623 Phone
 847-378-6225 Fax

Fatheree is a nationally recognized educator and filmmaker. He has received numerous educational awards, with the 2006-07 Illinois Teacher of the Year award being the most recent. His television work has been seen nationally on PBS and the Documentary Channel. He is the recipient of three Mid America Emmy awards and a Telly.

As an educator, Fatheree is best known for his work in the field of technology integration and curriculum development. His most recent initiative - The No Barriers Project: Creating Opportunity Through Education - seeks to outline the damaging effects poverty has on society and how its members can stand up and make a difference. Since the project's start, a handful of students under Fatheree's supervision have: collected 3,000 coats for children living in East St. Louis, Illinois; collected over 4,000 books and worked with an agency in St. Louis to provide a literacy expert who would work with young mothers living in the inner city to help improve their literacy skills; started a relief drive for survivors of Hurricane Katrina; and raised funds for a home for Habitat Humanity. In addition to helping address the physical needs of the impoverished, the students have developed a partnership with a charter school in East St. Louis. The students from both schools are working together on cooperative projects to help make our world a better place to live.

Fatheree is devoted to helping improve the lives of children who live in poverty. As Illinois Teacher of the Year, he is granted a one-year sabbatical. During this time and into the future, he hopes to continue working on new initiatives that will encourage the development of educational opportunities for disenfranchised children.

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

- National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE**
<http://www.serve.org/nche/>
- National Coalition for the Homeless**
<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/>
- National Center on Family Homelessness**
<http://www.familyhomelessness.org/>
- National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty**
<http://www.nlchp.org/>

Hotline Assistance

If you have questions or comments regarding the Opening Doors Project, or a homeless student, you may contact the ISBE Homeless Hotline at **800/215-6379** or contact Peggy Dunn, Principal Consultant
 Accountability Division
 Illinois State Board of Education
 100 North First Street
 Springfield, IL 62777-0001
 Phone 217/782-2948
 Fax 217/524 - 8750

BEST PRACTICES

*Raising Awareness While
Helping the Homeless*

**Orphan Sock Project**

New Homeless Education State Coordinator, Peggy Dunn was a guest speaker recently at an Area 3 Liaison Meeting in Macomb. She discussed and later provided me with more information about an Orphan Sock Project she started last year in some rural communities around Champaign. She became aware that many homeless adults would lose their toes or feet from severe frostbite after their shoes and socks got wet in freezing weather. She also noticed homeless children going to school with no socks in the winter. She started a community wide campaign to collect "orphan" socks and then distribute them at shelters, schools and other locations. There are many ways an effort like this could be organized and carried out but the goal was to both educate and engage young children in a better understanding of homelessness and to do something concrete to help the homeless. If you would like Peggy Dunn's detailed description of her project, please email me and I will forward it to you.
hcampbell@thecenterweb.org

To contribute your tips, ideas, projects, or other best practices, send them to Helen Campbell at hcampbell@thecenterweb.org

Unaccompanied Youth – On the Road to College

Peggy Dunn
ISBE Homeless Education Coordinator

Unaccompanied youth are young people under age 18, who are living apart from their parents or legal guardians in unstable or inadequate living situations. The National Runaway Switchboard reports that one out of every seven children will run away before age 18. Safe housing, reliable income, education and adult support are needed to both save these young people's lives and assist them to grow into adulthood. The Unaccompanied Homeless Youth in Illinois: 2005 report of the survey research undertaken by the Survey Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois at Chicago with funding by IDHS and coordinated by the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless identified an estimated number of homeless youth in Illinois on April 26, 2005 as 4,102 with 1,411 receiving services on that date. The total number of unaccompanied homeless youth aged 12 – 17 in 2004 was estimated at 24,968 in Illinois. The research methodology and full report of this study are available online at <http://www.chicagohomeless.org/youthreport.pdf>.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Act supports the educational access of youth experiencing homelessness by protecting young people living doubled-up with friends or relatives, in shelters, cars, abandoned buildings, bus and train stations, cars, campgrounds or any unstable situation. This law requires schools to provide extra support to young people who have left home. These youth must be enrolled in school immediately and offered all the services they need. They may stay in their school even if they are staying temporarily in a different school district. The 2005 study of Unaccompanied Youth reports "that of the youth interviewed 91.2% indicated that they had planned to go back to school at some time in the future" (p.33). One self-reported educational service identified by 48.5% of the youth in this study was a need for help with going back to school. Only 64.6% (p.38) reported being able to get the help needed to go back to school. This means that 35.4% of those who wanted help to go back to school were unsuccessful in obtaining the assistance they needed. There is still an unmet educational service need for youth that must be addressed.

The lack of parent or guardian cannot delay the enrollment of an unaccompanied youth and they may be enrolled in several ways: the youth may enroll him/herself; an adult caregiver who is not a legal guardian may enroll the youth; or the school district liaison may complete the enrollment papers with the youth. Schools need to actively work with groups that serve unaccompanied youth to ensure these young people are aware of their right to attend school. Schools may offer supportive services with credit-for-work programs, vocational training, flexible school scheduling, partial or pro-rated school credits, virtual high school alternatives for some classes, mentoring, or other services designed to support and encourage success for unaccompanied youth to reach graduation.

With that goal reached, how do we assist unaccompanied youth to continue their education to college? The Higher Education Act provides scholarships and loans to assist low-income youth to pay for college and most youth experiencing homelessness will be eligible. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) requires parent

**Suitcases for Kids**

Suitcases for Kids is a national initiative to provide foster children with suitcases. Most foster children make several moves and often transport their belongings in trash bags. This is another project that could be adapted to meet the needs of your community. Perhaps your school or student body could organize a drive to collect used suitcases and then provide them to area shelters for homeless families. You may find out more about the national project at www.suitcasesforkids.org.

or guardian signatures for all students except those who are classified as 'independent students'. This classification currently covers students who are orphans, wards of the state, veterans, graduate students, married, or having a dependent. Unaccompanied youth need support from the financial aid administrator at the college, who armed with good information, can designate a student as independent due to "other unusual circumstances". Not all financial aid offices at colleges are aware that this designation can be offered to unaccompanied youth who have experienced homelessness. Liaisons can assist youth who wish to go to college by contacting the financial aid officers and assisting them in this designation for unaccompanied youth wishing to complete the FAFSA for college scholarships and grants.

Young people who have been able to complete their secondary education are eligible for the LeTendre Education Fund for Homeless Children. This scholarship provides assistance to students who are homeless or have experienced homelessness. The scholarship applications are available at <http://naehcy.org/2007application.html> and applications may be submitted by mail or fax from January 1 – September 21, 2007.

Share this information with your local secondary schools, youth shelters, and social service organizations providing services to youth and let's help homeless youth succeed in high school and go to college.

**Working Hand-in-Hand
Illinois Rural Homeless Symposium**
March 20, 2007



Collinsville Holiday Inn Conference Center - Collinsville, Illinois
Additional information, brochure and registration form can be found at:
<http://homelessed.net/Calendar/calendar.htm>

A full day working symposium is planned to include local homeless liaisons from Illinois, homeless shelter personnel, community service members who are willing to share their expertise in a small group forum working on specific topics related to rural homeless issues.

An excellent deli lunch buffet will be included in the registration cost plus each participant who is pre-registered will receive a copy of *Homelessness in Rural America* by Paul A. Rollinson, Ph.D. and John T. Pardeck, Ph.D. at Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri and a packet of resource materials.

Seating is limited to 65 so register early!

IT'S NOT TOO LATE!

NCLB: No Child Left Behind Conference
Beyond Boundaries: Strategies for Reaching All Students

Bringing together Illinois educators associated with: Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV & Title V.

February 14 - 16, 2007

Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers · Chicago, Illinois

There will be a strand of sessions related to homeless education on Wednesday and Thursday!

For more information go to: http://www.thecenterweb.org/irc/pages/f_events-nclb.html



Save the Date - November 11 - 13, 2007
Oregon Convention Center - Portland, Oregon

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth 18th Annual Conference

For more information go to <http://naehcy.org>



Opening Doors

Who are we?

Opening Doors is an Illinois State Board of Education grant-funded project provided through the McKinney - Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001.

Under the direction of the Accountability Division, the goal of this initiative is to disseminate information and provide technical assistance to Illinois schools and shelters as to the educational rights and needs of homeless children and youth. The Opening Doors project partners include:

Adult Learning Resource Center
2626 Clearbrook Dr.
Arlington Heights, IL 60005
Phone 224/366-8623
Fax 847/378-6225

Regional Office of Education #26 Hancock/McDonough
130 S. Lafayette Street
Suite 200
Macomb, IL 61455
Phone 309/837-4821
Fax 309/837-2887

Illinois Coalition to End Homelessness
P.O. Box 3956
Oak Park, IL 60303
Phone 708/263-3590
Fax 708/401-0105

Visit us on the world wide web at
<http://homelessed.net>
to receive FREE materials!

Our Home

To submit an article for OUR HOME please send to:
Eileen Worthington
ROE #26 - Hancock/McDonough
130 South Lafayette
Suite 200
Macomb, IL 61455
Phone 309 / 837-4821
Fax 309 / 837-2887
mworthin@roe26.k12.il.us



Opening Doors

Statewide Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth

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130 S. Lafayette - Suite 200
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Email: mworthin@roe26.k12.il.us

We're on the Web! <http://homelessed.net>

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Homeless Education State Coordinator Corner

Peggy Dunn, Principal Consultant, Accountability Division, ISBE

With each issue I hope to shed some light on homeless education in Illinois and around the country. I will focus on best practices, new ideas, areas in the state with innovative programs and ideas, and recognition of the successful endeavors of those people who connect our families in transition with educational access and other homeless services in Illinois. It is not enough that we share information with school personnel. Many times it is vital that we interact with the registrars and school administration to assist them in gaining a larger understanding of the issues of homelessness and its impact on the children we educate in Illinois. This interaction goes a long way to reinforce the idea that homeless is not a "bad word"; but a state of being – hopefully a short-term one. One concern I am finding is – once a child and their family is re-housed, many schools apparently believe that finding housing ends the homeless classification. Therefore, when it is time to report the number of homeless students in their schools, these students are left out. Homeless students enrolled in Illinois schools are classified as homeless for the entire academic year and must be counted as such in the reporting of school data. Helping our schools build this understanding is important as we remind ourselves that the impact on children and youth who experience homelessness does not disappear when they have a roof over their heads again. Let's stay cognizant of this issue as we work with schools in this new year.

Peggy



"We view young people not as empty bottles to be filled, but as candles to be lit." - Robert Schaffer