



OUR HOME

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

OUR HOME

January 2008

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THE GIFT OF GIVING LASTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

The last of the leftovers were tossed weeks ago, the tree placed out on the curb, the ornaments packed up, out of sight and mind, until next December. By now the holidays are rapidly becoming a distant memory and life is getting back to normal - whatever that is these days! Just a few short weeks into the new year we all have appointments and meetings penciled in on our already overbooked calendars, committee assignments, and reports due. I betcha there is one thing you haven't penciled in though - that 'holiday spirit' that we all seem to acquire about mid-November, and lose shortly after the new year. While the carols are softly wafting through the frigid air and the bells of that little red bucket peel at every street corner, we give pause, and thanks, and donate to those less fortunate than ourselves - THANK YOU! That said, remember that the need continues throughout the remaining days of the year and you have the opportunity to continue to carry on that spirit of giving each and every one of those days. In every issue of OUR HOME we strive to provide you, the readers, with resources and ideas, for giving sharing, and becoming involved, both within your school and your community. What you do can make the difference in the life of a homeless child! Please help us to celebrate throughout the year with the gift of giving and share your ideas with us!

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

HOLIDAY GIVING

Madeleine Keller, HEP VISTA Member

This holiday season, thanks to the generous donations from the Museum of Science and Industry, American Family Insurance, friends, family, and other organizations, Chicago Public School's Homeless Education Program (HEP) was able to provide gifts for children living in 24 of Chicago's family shelters. We were also able to donate gifts to 3 schools with high numbers of homeless students. That means that over 700 homeless children in the City of Chicago were guaranteed a gift this holiday season.

The gifts began coming in to Chicago Public School's Central Office by the gurney load two weeks before winter break. HEP staff and Americorps VISTA volunteers were charged with wrapping, sorting, and distributing them. Many volunteers, including representatives from the Museum of Science and Industry and American Family Insurance, employees from the Adams Street Starbuck's, Chicago Public School staff, and friends donated their time to the gift wrapping effort. Everything was wrapped, sorted, and shipped out before the children left school on Friday for a happy and healthy holiday break.

In addition, our volunteers' efforts doubled as a fundraising tool. Through their *Make Your Mark* program, Starbuck's donated \$10 for each volunteer hour of gift wrapping for the time that their employees spent on site. This gift giving effort was an excellent chance for HEP to provide additional support for our homeless students and their families outside the realm of academic support. Happy, healthy children make happy, healthy students!

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 mworthing@roe26.net

IN THE WAKE OF FIRES

Linda Delimata, Area 2 Lead Liaison, ROE #47-Lee/Ogle

There have been several fires in our area this year and last, leaving families without housing. Some of these situations left children not only without homes, but without possessions. One fire this year left 19 children living in an apartment complex homeless. Agencies such as Fire Departments and the Red Cross assist with these concerns routinely but contact with school liaisons is essential. The transportation coordinator

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BEST PRACTICES*3 Ways Teachers Can Make A Difference*

Teachers often have the opportunity to build relationships with students that is not possible for other school staff. Whether you are a teacher or someone who might enlist a teacher's support, here are a few tips to help homeless students in school.

Look for signs of homelessness. Homeless and highly mobile students often go unnoticed in the corridors of school. Parents may be unaware of the services their children are entitled to or embarrassed to admit that they are homeless. If a teacher notices that a student is frequently absent and tardy; frequently tired, sleeping in class, and/or hungry; regularly unprepared for class; or shows other signs of being homeless, it may be time to contact the school district liaison. The liaison can determine if the student is eligible for McKinney-Vento services.

Institute practices in the classroom that support homeless students. Simple things can often make the difference for homeless students! Recognize that homeless students may not have the same resources as housed children and it may be difficult or impossible for them to complete certain assignments. Assign jobs to homeless students so that they feel responsible. Try to keep routines and rules consistent. Use lessons that encourage self expression.

Promote sensitivity about homelessness. Incorporate information about homelessness and poverty into lesson planning. Children will become more understanding about the needs of others and ways that they can help if they are exposed to these issues. To find links to books and curriculum, please see: <http://isbe.net/homeless/default.htm>

To download tip sheets for teachers go to: <http://homelessed.net/Publications/Opening%20Doors%20Materials/C3%20Tip%20Sheet%20For%20Teachers.pdf> and http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/toolkit/app_1.pdf (page 6-7)

Send ideas for 'Best Practices' to Helen Campbell at: hcampbell@thecenterweb.org

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needs to know where to find the children, and the liaison needs to work closely to keep the children in their school of origin if the family chooses.

One way that we found to keep the liaison in the loop is to provide the local fire departments and the Red Cross with the contact information for school liaisons. When a fire involves children they call us and we are able to start work immediately.

VERMILION COUNTY HOMELESS AWARENESS TRAINING

Jim Moberly, Area 4 Lead Liaison, ROE #32 - Iroquois-Kankakee

On December 6, 2007, a training was held at Danville Community College to bring social service organizations and the school districts from Vermilion County ROE 54's area together to discuss how to identify homeless students. In addition, the rights of homeless students and the services available to them were explained. Approximately 25 people attended this informational training which included instructional videos and McKinney-Vento materials.

The goal of the training was to open doors for the referral process between the community and schools. A panel discussion was held after the formal training. The discussion included ways for social service organizations and the local school districts to partner regarding homeless families and children. As throughout the state, many of the local social service organizations are not aware of who to contact in their local school districts when a homeless family or student seeks assistance. Contact information for homeless school district liaisons was shared with the social service organizations. After the training, there was positive feedback regarding the information that was shared.

NATIONAL HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS WEEK 2007

Celebrated annually, the last full week before Thanksgiving, National Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week affords your school and community an opportunity to create awareness and to get involved. Here is how it was done in two different areas of Illinois in 2007:

Mary Scanlon, ROE #33-Knox

In an attempt to bring homelessness and hunger problems to greater community awareness and in conjunction with National Homeless and Hunger Awareness Week, Galesburg ROE #33 made arrangements for the Mayor, Gary Smith to make a Mayoral proclamation for the city. The Proclamation was declared November 5th at the City Council for the week of November 11-17. It was broadcast on local TV and was followed up by a newspaper article and 40 minute radio interview of the Regional Homeless Liaison during National Homelessness and Hunger Awareness Week. A great deal of feedback and questions came into the office as a result of the publicity. Also the local Rescue Mission who had their annual Harvestime Sharathon brought in \$2,000 of pledges above their goal. Plans are underway to repeat the publicity next year along with community activities to heighten awareness of homelessness and hunger.

Jessica Ryder, Bloomington School District #87

During Homelessness Awareness Week (November 11 - 17) Bloomington School District #87 not only raised awareness about homelessness in their community, but also helped raise funds for the local homeless population. Every day during the week, emails were sent to the entire district staff highlighting national and local statistics on homelessness, facts about how homelessness affects families and children, and information relating to the specific needs of homeless students within their schools.

Throughout the week, staff members were asked to donate to PATH Crisis Center, a local service agency that manages the McLean County Continuum of Care. PATH provides hotel stays for those turned away from shelters and assists with paying for state ID's and birth certificates needed for homeless residents to receive benefits and gain employment. PATH also helps clients with rental and utility fees to avoid eviction. During the week, District #87 raised \$245.

District #87 continues to provide support to their over 60 identified homeless students through two school social workers working directly with the homeless population. Assistance is provided in the form of school supplies, transportation, school fee payment, and advocating to keep students enrolled in their school of origin.

Homeless Education State Coordinator Corner

Head Start and Homeless Preschool Children

Peggy Dunn, Principal Consultant, Accountability Division, ISBE

On November 14th the House and Senate passed the "Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007" which reauthorizes the Head Start Act. President Bush has signed this into law.

There are numerous provisions that directly impact homeless preschool children:

- The definition of homelessness is now consistent with the McKinney-Vento definition.
- Regulations will be issued by the Secretary of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services that will require Head Start agencies to:
 - Ensure that homeless children are identified and prioritized for enrollment
 - Allow homeless families to apply to, enroll in, and attend Head Start while awaiting document receipt
 - Coordinate efforts of individual Head Start centers to implement the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act Subtitle VII-B
 - Recognize homeless children as eligible for Head Start services
- Requiring applicants for new Head Start programs to meet the needs of homeless children and children in foster care, including transportation needs.
- In determining the allocation of future funding to expand existing Head Start Programs, consideration will be given to:
 - the extent to which such programs have undertaken community-wide planning and needs assessments that involve the LEA Homeless Liaison
 - the extent to which such programs coordinate services, establish channels of communication, and implement family outreach and support services with the LEA Homeless Liaisons
 - the extent to which Early Head Start programs coordinate services with programs in the community for homeless infants and toddlers.
- Establishing standards for Head Start agencies that include best practices with respect to homeless children and those in foster care that include consideration of the family structure of such children.
- Requiring that Head Start programs collect data on the number of homeless children and children in foster care participating in the program that the Secretary of the Dept of HHS will use to prepare a report on the status of children in Head Start programs. The report will include homeless children, children in foster care, and those children referred by child welfare agencies.

Now is the time to connect with the Head Start Programs in your local area to initiate communication, share this information, and develop a strategy for working together on these new requirements. This effort will ease the transition as Illinois Homeless Education provides technical assistance, coordinates program efforts with Head Start, and offers referral and guidance to Head Start providers. These services will be like those we provide to schools and districts currently with training, materials, brochures, and assistance with children, youth, and parents.

Plan to meet with your Head Start providers/agencies/organizations at the beginning of the new year to assist them in meeting the requirements of the reauthorized Head Start Act. Homeless Liaisons, as a part of the coordinated service delivery of Early Head Start and Head Start services for homeless young children, need to be at the forefront of these efforts with local Head Start agencies and be ready to assist them as this reauthorization goes into effect. This will help to ensure that homeless infants, toddlers, and pre-school children will be prioritized applicants for Head Start.

ILLINOIS HEAD START ASSOCIATION

<http://www.ilheadstart.org/>

HEAD START LOCATOR

To find a Head Start Program in your area:

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices>



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 are:

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 St.
 Suite 200
 Macomb, IL 61455
 Phone 309/837-4821
 Fax 309/837-2887

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/>



Opening Doors

Statewide Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth

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

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LIVING IN THEIR SHOES **Domestic Violence & Homelessness** April 15, 2008 Kaskaskia College, Centralia, Illinois

Too often, domestic violence and homelessness are linked and while those experiencing either or both are served by our communities' social service agencies and the educational system, the professionals who work as part of these systems may have backgrounds in only one of the areas. In an effort to close the gap of understanding on both issues, the Area V McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Program has teamed with the 4th Judicial Circuit's Family Violence Coordinating Council to bring a day-long training program to southwestern Illinois.

"Living in Their Shoes – Domestic Violence and Homelessness" is a training featuring experts in domestic violence and homeless issues. The training program, scheduled from 9:00 AM until 3:00 PM on April 15, 2008 on the Kaskaskia College campus at 27210 College Road, Centralia, Illinois, will feature the executive director of SWAN and the state coordinator for homeless education from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Linda Bookwalter, Executive Director for Stopping Woman Abuse Now (SWAN) will provide a session on understanding domestic violence issues and will facilitate the "In Her Shoes" activity. Peggy Dunn, Principal Consultant at ISBE will conduct a session on understanding homelessness and will collaborate on the discussion of the connection between domestic violence and homelessness. She will conclude the day's training with information on how all participants can help meet the educational needs of children and youth who are experiencing homelessness.

In an attempt to reach both interest groups, the target audience includes a broad cross-section of both educators and agency professionals. Those who should attend include local homeless education liaisons, educators, shelter providers, judges, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, probation officers, attorneys, victim advocates, parents, legal advocates, counselors, social workers, clergy, housing providers and interested citizens.

CPDUs, CEUs, MCLEs (free of charge) and CEUS for ICDVPs (\$5.00 additional fee) will be provided, recognizing that this is a legitimate continuing professional development activity for all participants.

For more information or to register, contact the Educational Services Division, ROE #3, 1805 W. Fletcher Street, Suite B, Vandalia, IL 62471; 618-283-1763 or email Brenda Benton at bbenton@fayette.k12.il.us or Kim Gehrke at kgehrke@fayette.k12.il.us. Pre-registration is required and a small fee of \$20 is being charged to cover the costs of materials and food. Registration is limited and will be accepted on a first come, first served basis.