



OUR HOME

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

OUR HOME

October 2003

We're Underway! McKinney-Vento across Illinois

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Congratulations to Deb Dempsey!

How Sad To Be Homeless	9	<p>Deb Dempsey recently got word from the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth that she has been named as recipient of one of the 2003 NAECHY Awards, in the category of Outstanding School-Based Educational Program. Deb has been the Project Access Homelessness Liaison for School District U-46 for the past eight years. Her becoming a McKinney program coordinator at Channing Memorial School in Elgin grew out of the fact that Deb was so involved in trying to help Channing families in homeless situations as a volunteer that Marge Fostiak, former principal, decided to apply for a local McKinney grant to help Deb accomplish her goal of advocating for such families and children.</p> <p>Congratulations, Deb, for this recognition of your passionate dedication to your work! We hope you have a wonderful time at the NAEHCY conference in Washington, D.C.!</p>
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Farewell and Welcome

<p>Hotline Assistance</p> <p>If you have questions or comments regarding the Opening Doors Project, or a homeless student, you may contact the ISBE Homeless Hotline at:</p> <p>800/215-6379 or contact : Rich Dehart, 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</p>	<p>In August, Gary Dickirson, Principal Consultant for the Illinois Homeless Education Program, at ISBE, left to assume the responsibilities of point person for the Illinois School Breakfast Programs stating, "I look forward to the challenge of increasing the participation of Illinois children in this most important program." Of his years with the Program Dickirson said, "The best eight years of my experiences in the work world</p>	<p>were spent as the State Coordinator of the Illinois Homeless Education Program. I had the opportunity to help the program grow and see more and more children get the services they needed to be successful students . . . (and) to work with some of the finest people I have ever met, in Illinois and throughout the country." Gary provided a strong leadership in Illinois, developing a cohesive program that has just recently</p>	<p>been expanded to cover all counties and districts.</p> <p>Now under Don Full's Accountability Division, Rich Dehart has assumed the leadership role for the Illinois Homeless Education Program. Rich has been working diligently to gain an understanding of the existing structure and is dedicated to continuing the Illinois McKinney-Vento program. Farewell and good luck, Gary - Welcome, Rich!</p>
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Editor's Notes

Illinois has a great little family – and they do big things! Our family of course is you -the liaisons, administrators, teachers, social workers, secretaries, and the countless school employees who are dedicated to improving the educational success of all children and youth, especially those who are experiencing the loss of their home. Without you these children would not only suffer the indignity of having little stability in their lives but they would be pressed to receive the education that they so richly deserve.

Through the years I have had the privilege of meeting and working with many members of our truly amazing family and been afforded their kindness, support and expertise. Each of you has contributed greatly to the success of the Illinois McKinney-Vento Programs and to the children they serve. Through your continued support our family will grow - step forward to share your knowledge and expertise with colleagues and staff, offer a helping hand to a student, share our story with your family, friends, and community. Stand by our children, helping them to stay in school where they belong-provide them with an education and a future. You can make a difference!

Eileen Worthington, Editor

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

Great Gumbo Event!

Faith Sanderson—Homeless Education Liaison-ROE #51 - Sangamon



The Springfield Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness hosted a free concert August 21, 2003, for our community. Bill Wharton, known on stage as the "Sauce Boss," sang and cooked gumbo in the parking lot of one of our homeless shelters. The crowd was a rich mosaic of socioeconomic, racial and ethnic attendees. The Sauce-Boss cooks between songs saying, "We're all gumbo. We're all different ingredients. Forget about our differences for a minute...Maybe we can work some of our problems out." Despite temperatures over 100 degrees, he created an inclusive atmosphere with everyone in the crowd clapping and singing. Hot blues and cold ice water were enjoyed by all.

This musician is dedicated to bringing attention to homeless issues and has a website devoted to this end, www.planetgumbo.org. Remarkably, Bill is out spreading his message of tolerance and advocating for the homeless despite his suffering a heart attack two months ago. An inspirational man who says he has "seen people without homes laughing...even caseworkers, some of the most jaded" because of his antics on stage. Maybe he'll return to Illinois. Perhaps you would like to e-mail him and see if he'd be able to 'stir the pot' in your community!

Observations from “Diane-o-Saur” Who Knew?! Homeless Ed Efforts Can Improve!

Diane Nilan—Kane County ROE #31

What a difference 10 years makes! Way back in 1993, my then-colleagues and I were involved in an intense conflict with a local school district over the right of a homeless family to attend their previous year’s school of origin. We lost the argument because of gaps in the “pre-historic” McKinney law, but dramatic changes have occurred, including extraordinary cooperation from the district where our troubles occurred in ’93.

Following the struggle a decade ago, we “crusaders” decided that the major gaps in the federal McKinney law could impede educational opportunities for homeless students. We figured it would be “easier” to close those gaps by getting a state law passed than to improve the federal law. So we pursued the next-to-impossible—passage of a state law, called “Charlie’s Bill,” named after a homeless boy named Charlie whose photograph (p. 4) appeared on all the bill’s information, giving the legislation a face in the Springfield “Bill Factory,” a.k.a. the Illinois legislature.

Much to our surprise, and the amazement/envy of homeless student advocates across the nation, the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act (EHCA) passed in May 1994. Included in this much-heralded legislation were several elements to significantly improve homeless students’ educational rights, including:

- ~ Immediate enrollment. “Immediate” means without delay.
- ~ Choice of school—the student’s parents can opt for either the school of origin or

the school nearest where the child is staying

Definition of homelessness includes “doubled-up” due to loss of housing.

- ~ Schools became responsible for assisting students to attain documents from prior school.

- ~ Homeless students may stay enrolled in their school for length of homelessness, not just finish the school year.

- ~ Transportation assistance is available, if needed, including cross-district transportation.

- ~ Dispute enrollment process is now streamlined and clarified.

THAT WAS YESTERDAY...

Ten years later, although homelessness is burgeoning, homeless students’ educational rights have vastly improved. The federal McKinney Act has a new, Illinois-improved look. Thanks to Congresswoman Judy Biggert (R-DuPage), key provisions from the Illinois EHCA strengthened the federal law, now called the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act of 2001. Funding for the McKinney-Vento programs has increased to \$55 million, still inadequate but an improvement.

Many Illinois schools, once slow to acknowledge the existence of homelessness, are now painfully aware that homelessness is a reality in all types of communities—rich, poor; suburban, rural. They are making more meaningful provisions to assist homeless students. An encouraging sign—schools and social service

agencies are strengthening their bonds to better serve homeless students.

Local districts, required to appoint a local homeless student liaison to help district schools serve homeless students, find this point-person typically reduces barriers for enrollment and provides valuable input into local district policies so homeless students have opportunities to succeed just like non-homeless students. Yet work needs to be done with local liaisons. Despite the mandated liaison position, some districts still have not appointed an appropriate person or have named “Left Blank” as their representative. Other liaisons have not received updated training on legislative changes.

The Illinois State Board of Education, under dedicated, capable leadership of Gary Dickirson (now transferred to another position), figured that appointing six lead liaisons to cover the state would make the McKinney-Vento Act and the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act more effective. Since this summer, the Lead Liaison teams have focused on areas of high homelessness or poverty and/or high incidence of non-compliance with laws governing homeless students’ rights. They are now identifying and training local liaisons. The lead liaisons’ scrutiny significantly increases the schools’ awareness and compliance. New ISBE homeless education chief Rich Dehart will make sure progress continues.

My initial observation as the “Diane-o-saur” of Area One

– regional superintendents have made considerable efforts and impressive progress to raise awareness of homeless students and to increase compliance with existing laws and ISBE policies. This increased awareness can be largely attributed to Opening Doors, a statewide McKinney-Vento funded project to raise awareness of homelessness and ways to assist homeless children and youth. Regional superintendents continue to seek ways to increase awareness of homelessness in their region’s schools, one of the many services Lead Liaisons are willing and eager to provide.

FROM “PRE-HISTORIC” TO ULTRA-TECHNICAL

In addition to significant legislative improvements, some unique changes have occurred over the last 10 years that illustrate some noteworthy distinctions from “pre-historic” days...

- ~ Cell phones—many homeless families use cell phones as a means of communication. It makes it easier to contact them to get information or for schools to notify them of issues pertaining to their children.

- ~ Web pages—most schools, districts and regional offices have sites that even let you see what the superintendent looks like, plus allow review of school enrollment policies, finding email addresses and phone numbers, and more.

- ~ Email—communication becomes much easier for lead liaisons, educators

and administrators. Some homeless families have email addresses and use library computers to find information about shelters, services, and laws protecting their educational rights.

~ Toll-free numbers—another communication boon for homeless families and those seeking information about rights of homeless students.

~ CDs—ISBE has produced a computer disc filled with information about homeless students' rights to be dispersed to school liaisons and others interested in helping homeless students.

Despite notable progress, many significant concerns remain:

~ Homelessness abounds, with families being the hardest hit. Economic challenges, increased domestic violence, uninsured health care expenses, untreated addictions, and greatly-diminished affordable housing stock perpetuate the American nightmare of homelessness.

~ School funding woes force schools to vigorously enforce residency requirements which often exclude homeless students legitimately trying to enroll or attend school. Residency "police" sometimes unfairly target homeless students whose irregular transportation arrangements call attention to them.

~ Denial and prejudice still exist—and these hostilities do harm to homeless and non-homeless students and their communities. No one knows how often a homeless family appears at a school office to be scared away by an intimidating secretary or principal wanting to avoid enrolling one of "those" families.

~ Resources to assist the

most vulnerable populations are being slashed to help Illinois balance its budget. Instead of strengthening the safety net to help homeless families and those at-risk of homelessness, skewed budget decisions eliminate vital services, greatly impairing their chances for survival and increasing the ranks of families without homes.

~ School performance standards jeopardize opportunities for homeless students who have not experienced a stable learning environment or a nurturing home life. The learning-challenged student—homeless or not—can become a pariah in schools concerned about school performance reports.

Illinois, like every state, faces myriad challenges in providing for 1.3 million homeless students nationwide. Education is an opportunity to escape poverty. Fortunately for homeless students across Illinois, dozens of dedicated, caring professionals in McKinney-Vento funded programs guide schools' efforts to enable homeless students to meet the same challenging standards to which non-homeless students are held.



**PAT VAN DOREN,
"CHARLIE"
PHOTOGRAPHER,
DOES ILLINOIS PROUD!**

Not only did Pat Van Doren capture the character-filled essence of Charlie (left), she has contributed immensely to advocacy efforts on behalf of homeless children nationwide for over a dozen years. In addition to being a gifted photojournalist (now retired) for a west suburban paper, she's tirelessly worked for years with shelter staff and advocates on projects to raise awareness of homelessness, especially as it affected children.

Among her accomplishments, she contributed to and/or created projects including:

~ "Spirit on the Streets," initially a poignant photo display which also produced inspiring calendars featuring homeless persons;

~ "Chicago Sum-Times," a parody newspaper to illustrate homelessness as the safety net began to be dismantled in 1996. The authentic replica of a well known Chicago paper was widely circulated in the Chicago suburbs and to every Congressional office in DC;

~ "Capitol Facts," another parody news brief on life in the Illinois Capitol following the draconian welfare law changes. The newsletter was hand delivered to every Illinois legislator's office in Springfield;

~ "Where Can I Build My Volcano?" a children's book depicting homelessness from a young girl's experiences which has sold thousands of copies despite being self-published and sold mostly by word-of-mouth;

~ "It's About the Children," Pat's non-profit entity as well as the title of her photo display of homeless children; which also includes...

~ a line of posters, key chains, and shirts bearing the heart-rending images of a girl's eyes and a baby's toes; and,

~ uncountable generous contributions of her photo images for newsletters, posters, and web sites.

Her contributions continue. She's now donating a collection of her most famous images to benefit the LeTendre Homeless Student Scholarship fund. A mounted, signed photo of "Charlie" and an original rendition of her "Volcano" book cover will be auctioned in October at the annual conference of the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, NAECHY, held in Washington, DC. Proceeds from the auction will enable homeless and/or formerly homeless scholars to attend college.

Pat, now mostly wheelchair bound, doesn't let a fatal, degenerative neurological disease slow her down. She's skilled at the computer, using the Internet to keep up with people and events dealing with homeless children. She still offers her photo display for awareness-building (some restrictions apply). Pat also sells her books and other items to groups across the nation. To contact Pat, email works best. She's at patvandoren@earthlink.com.

RESOURCES

National Coalition for the Homeless

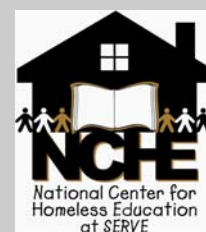
<http://www.nationalhomeless.org>

National Law Center on Homeless and Poverty

<http://www.nlchp.org>

National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE

<http://www.serve.org/nche/>





ORDER FORM – Free Materials

Name: _____ Date: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____ Fax: (____) _____ E-mail: _____

Indicate quantity of each item on the blank line to the left. UP TO TEN COPIES OF ANY ITEM MAY BE ORDERED. If you wish more than ten, we will send a camera-ready master for additional copies.

General Information

- ____ (A1) **What This Project is About**, the goals of and partners in **Opening Doors**.
 ____ (A2) **Fact Sheet: Homeless Children – Who Are They?**
 ____ (A3) **Best Practices Tip Sheet** – available soon.
 ____ (A4) **Lunch Box News**, a booklet about schools' responsibilities to identify and assist homeless children. Vol. 2 available soon.
 ____ (A5) **Why Are People Homeless?** Fact Sheet #1 from the National Coalition for the Homeless.
 ____ (A6) **Education of Homeless Children & Youth**, Fact Sheet #10 from NCH.

Law and Policy

- ____ (B1) **Department of Education School Enrollment Guidelines: Federal Register, 3-8-02**
 ____ (B2) **The Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act**
 ____ (B3) **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**
 ____ (B4) **The Policy of the Illinois State Board of Education on the Education of Homeless Children and Youth**
 ____ (B5-a) **The Educational Rights of Illinois' Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness**, a tri-fold brochure
 ____ (B5-b) **Educational Rights** brochure in low-level-reader format.
 ____ (B5-c) **Educational Rights** brochure in “ “ “ “ . *Spanish*
 ____ (B5-d) **Educational Rights** brochure in “ “ “ “ . *Polish*
 ____ (B5-e) **Educational Rights** brochure in “ “ “ “ . *Arabic*
 ____ (B6) **Dispute Resolution Guidelines**

Information for School Personnel

- ____ (C1) **Tips for Identifying Homeless Children and Youth (“School Office Notes”)**
 ____ (C2) **Tip Sheet for Principals**, helpful hints for working with homeless children.
 ____ (C3) **Tip Sheet for Teachers**, helpful hints
 ____ (C4) **Tip Sheet for Secretaries and Enrolling Staff**, helpful hints

(continued on page 8)

(continued from page 7)

- _____ (C5) **Do You Have Homeless Children in Your Classroom?** a guide to help teachers recognize behaviors of homeless students and assist homeless students in class.
- _____ (C6) **What a School Nurse Can Do to Help Homeless Children**, hints for nurses.
- _____ (C7) **What Student Support Services Staff Can Do to Help Homeless Students**

- _____ (C8) **Suggested Activities for Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week**
- _____ (C9) **Locating Community Resources for Homeless Students**
- _____ (C10) **Problems and Solutions in Educating Homeless Children and Youth**
- _____ (C11) **Recognizing Homeless Children and Youth: Common Characteristics**

Information for Shelter Staff

- _____ (D1) **How to Help Homeless Children in School: Information for Shelter Staff**
- _____ (D2) **School Notification Form**, an enrollment form that shelters may fax to schools

Posters

- _____ (E1-a) **Getting Your Child in School**, 8 ½" x 11" poster for homeless families and agencies which advocate for homeless families.
- _____ (E1-b) **Getting Your Child in School**, 11" x 17" poster, as above.
- _____ (E1-c) **Inscribiendo a Su Hijo(a) en la Escuela**, 8 ½" x 11" poster, as above. *Spanish*
- _____ (E1-d) **Getting Your Child in School**, 8 ½" x 11" poster, as above. *Polish*
- _____ (E1-e) **Getting Your Child in School**, 8 ½" x 11" poster, as above. *Arabic*
- _____ (E2-a) **Homeless Children Have The Right**, poster for school personnel, outlining the legal responsibilities of schools. 8 ½"x 11" *English*
- _____ (E2-b) **Niños Desamparados Tienen el Derecho a Una Educación Pública Gratis y Adecuada**, poster, as above. 11" x 17" *Spanish*
- _____ (E3-a) **For Unaccompanied Youth: get UP & go to school**, 11"x17" *English with tear-off information*
- _____ (E3-b) **For Unaccompanied Youth: Levantate y VE a la escuela**, 11"x17" *Spanish* " "

Other

- _____ (F1) **Opening Doors Videotape Order Form** (videotapes may also be borrowed from your Regional Offices of Education for copying.)
- _____ (F2-a) **Should My Child Change Schools if We Become Homeless?** tri-fold brochure. *English*.
- _____ (F2-b) **¿Deberé cambiar a mi hijo de escuela si nos quedamos sin vivienda?** tri-fold brochure, as above. *Spanish*.
- _____ (F2-c) **Should My Child Change Schools...?** tri-fold brochure, as above. *Polish*
- _____ (F2-d) **Should My Child Change Schools...?** tri-fold brochure, as above. *Arabic*
- _____ (F3) **Magnet: Statewide Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth** has *Opening Doors* contact information such as phone and fax numbers and web address.

Opening Doors is an Illinois State Board of Education 100% grant-funded project under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Program. The goal of this project is to disseminate information about the educational rights and needs of homeless children and youth. **Please feel free to copy and distribute these materials as needed.**

Return this form to:

Jeanne Rowe
Opening Doors
 1855 Mt. Prospect Road
 Des Plaines, IL 60018

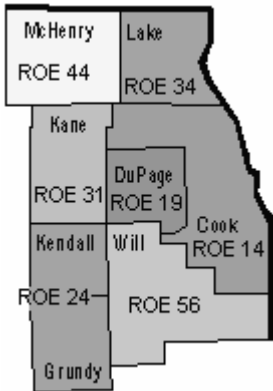
Phone: (847) 803-3535, ext. 355
Fax: (847) 803-3231
E-mail: jrowe@thecenterweb.org
Web Address: <http://homelessed.net>

8/03

* Videotapes may be purchased through CPC, at Western Illinois University, by calling 800-322-3905

Illinois McKinney Programs

Area 1 Lead Liaison Program Kane County Regional Office of Education #31



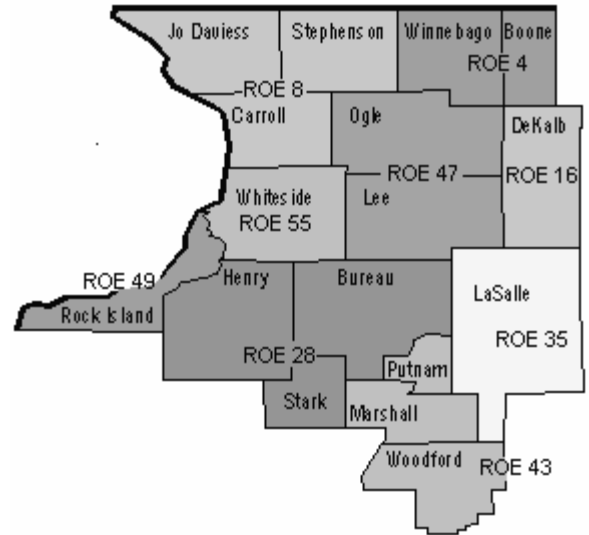
Administrative Agency: Regional Office of Education #31
 Clem Mejia, Regional Superintendent - cmejia@kane.k12.il.us
 210 South 6th Street
 Geneva, IL 60134
 Phone: (630) 232-5955
 Fax: (630) 208-5115
 Web Site: www.roe31.k12.il.us/index.asp

Program Director: Diane Nilan - dnilan@kane.k12.il.us
 Associate Director: Karen Turk - kturk@kane.k12.il.us
 210 South 6th Street
 Geneva, IL 60134
 Phone: (630) 208-3142
 Fax: (630) 208-5100
 Web Site: www.reach4school.org

Area 2 Lead Liaison Program Lee/Ogle Regional Office of Education #47

Administrative Agency: Regional Office of Education #47
 Delight Pitman, Regional Superintendent - dpitman@leeogle.org
 7772 Clinton Street
 Dixon, IL 61021
 Phone: (815) 652-2054
 Fax: (815) 652-2053
 Web Site: www.leeogle.lth2.k12.il.us/

Program Director: Linda Delimata - ldelimata@leeogle.org
 7772 Clinton Street
 Dixon, IL 61021
 Phone: (815) 652-2054 ext. 234
 Fax: (815) 652-2053

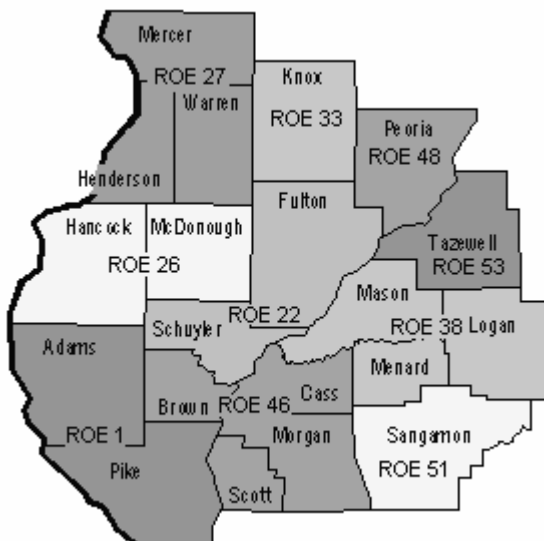


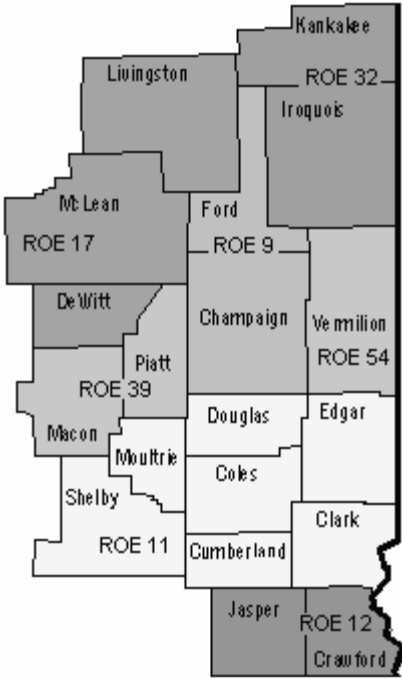
Area 3 Lead Liaison Program Hancock/McDonough Regional Office of Education #26

Administrative Agency: Regional Office of Education #26
 Robert Baumann, Regional Superintendent - rbaumann@roe26.k12.il.us
 130 South Lafayette Street
 Macomb, IL 61455
 Phone: (309) 837-4821
 Fax: (309) 837-2887
 Web Site: www.mcdonough.k12.il.us/roe26

Program Administrator: Dr. Louis Battin - lbattin@roe26.k12.il.us
 Director: Eileen Worthington - mworthin@roe26.k12.il.us
 130 South Lafayette Street
 Macomb, IL 61455
 Phone: (309) 837-4821
 Fax: (309) 837-2887

Program Partner: Regional Office of Education #51
 Faith Sanderson, ROE Liaison, fsanders@roe51.k12.il.us
 200 South 9th Street - Room 303
 Springfield, IL 62701-1629
 Phone: (217) 535-3281
 Fax: (217) 535-3166
 Web Site: www.roe51.org/





**Area 4 Lead Liaison Program
Iroquois/Kankakee Regional Office of Education #32**

Administrative Agency: Regional Office of Education #32
 Kay Pangle, Regional Superintendent - kpangle@i-kan.org
 189 East Court Street - Suite 600
 Kankakee, IL 60901
 Phone: (815) 937-2950
 Fax: (815) 937-2921
 Web Site: www.ikan.k12.il.us/frconten.htm

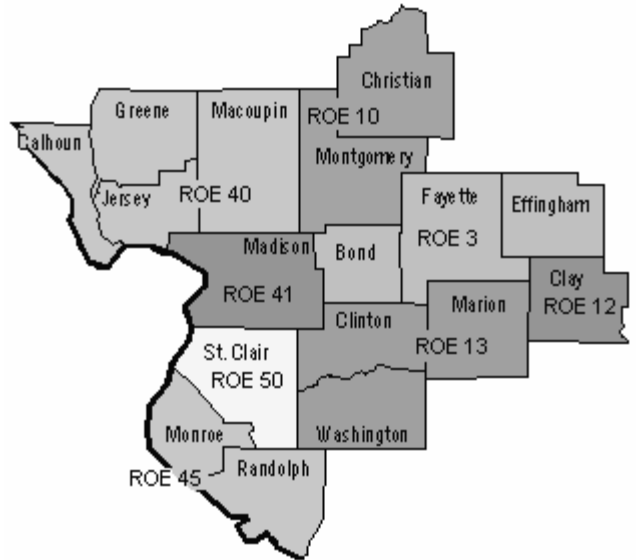
Program Director: Marie Cardosi - mcardosi@i-kan.org
 Program Coordinator: Jim Moberly - jmoberly@i-kan.org
 189 East Court Street - Suite 600
 Kankakee, IL 60901
 Phone: (815) 937-2950
 Fax: (815) 937-2921

Program Partner: Regional Office of Education #9
 Stephanie Record, ROE Liaison, ross@marshall.k12.il.us
 200 South Fredrick Street
 Rantoul, IL 61866
 Phone: (217) 893-1399
 Fax: (309) 893-0024
 Web Site: www.roe9.k12.il.us

**Area 5 Lead Liaison Program
Bond/Fayette/Effingham Regional Office of Education #3**

Administrative Agency: Regional Office of Education #3
 Delbert Maroon, Regional Superintendent - dmaroon@fayette.k12.il.us
 300 South Seventh Street
 Vandalia IL 62471
 Phone: (618) 283-5011
 Fax: (618) 283-5013
 Web Site: www.fayette.k12.il.us

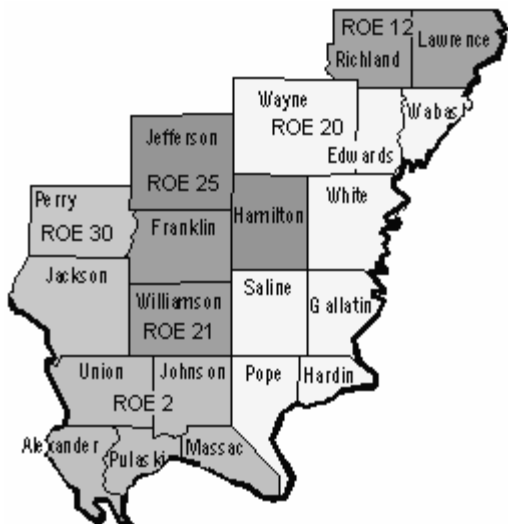
Program Director: Bob Bowen - bbowen@fayette.k12.il.us
 1805 W. Fletcher St.
 Vandalia IL 62471
 Phone: (618) 283-1763
 Fax: (618) 283-9833



**Area 6 Lead Liaison Program
Franklin/Williamson Regional Office of Education #21**

Administrative Agency: Regional Office of Education #21
 Barry Kohl, Regional Superintendent - bkohl@roe21.k12.il.us
 202 W. Main St.
 Benton, IL 62812
 Phone: (618) 438-9711
 Fax: (618) 435-2861
 Web Site: www.roe21.k12.il.us

Program Director: Mickey Sullivan - jschullian@roe21.k12.il.us
 1006-C North Carbon
 Marion, IL 62959
 Phone: (618) 998-1283 or 800-455-5843
 Fax: (618) 998-9226
 Program Coordinator: Becky Malkovich - bmalkovich@roe21.k12.il.us
 202 W. Main St.
 Benton, IL 62812
 Phone: (618) 438-9711 or 888-873-9566
 Fax: (618) 435-2861



Iroquois - Kankakee Back - to - School Fairs

*Jim Moberly
Area 4 Co - Lead Liaison*

Back-to-School Fairs were sponsored by Catholic Charities in Watseka and Kankakee in August. These fairs were held at Watseka High School on August 7, and at Kankakee's Lisieux Pastoral Center on August 14. Several hundred children and their parents attended at both locations.

At Watseka High School twenty-one agencies provided information about a variety of programs and services available to families. This number increased to twenty-seven agencies at the Kankakee fair. Four hundred children in Iroquois County and twelve hundred children in Kankakee County benefited from these fairs. All sixteen hundred children received free bags of standard school supplies.

Homeless families, including those living in local shelters, motels, and doubled-up with relatives or friends, were able to attend. Thus, these families also received necessary supplies and knowledge of programs and services available to them in the two counties.

The Back-to-School Fairs have been held in Iroquois County for the past four years, and in Kankakee County for the past seven years. Once again the joint efforts of the two counties and all the participating agencies made these events a success. Thanks to those who were involved in these events. May we continue to promote the education and welfare of all the children in our area through future endeavors.

How Sad To Be Homeless

*Linda Varis
Area 6 Local District Liaison
West Frankfort Jr. High, Principal*

How sad to be homeless with no place to stay
How sad to be lonely and not find your way
But life has a way of turning things around
And putting a smile where there was a frown

No bed for his head nor shoes for his feet
No laughter and smiles nor blanket for heat
But schools have a way of turning things around
Providing with love the keys to the town

We feed them and clothe them and teach them all day
We show them the ropes and help find the way
To future, success and life's greatest secrets
To help them to grow and become future leaders.

Housing Is Out of Reach

*Matt Hanafee, Executive Director
Illinois Coalition to End Homelessness*

"How can they be homeless, they work full time?" This recent quote from a school administrator who was skeptical of a family claim of homelessness shows the growing trend of working families living on the edge. The stereotype of "the homeless" does not include working families.

The answer to the question is of course the high cost of housing. Study after study shows that the lack of affordable housing is the major cause of homelessness. Housing is affordable if it is less than 30% of the family's budget. Since the 1980's housing costs have been rising faster than wages.

For the last five years the National Low-Income Housing Coalition has produced a report on the cost of housing. This year's edition, *Out of Reach 2003: America's Housing Wage Climbs*, can be accessed at www.nlihc.org/oor2003. The report documents the growing gap between wages and the cost of housing. In order to compare housing costs across the nation it uses the concept of the housing wage.

The housing wage is what a family must earn to afford a two-bedroom home. In Illinois, the average housing wage is \$15.83 per hour. That means at the current minimum wage, \$5.15, a family would have to work 123 hours a week to afford a home. So not only do Mom and Dad have to have full-time jobs; one of the children needs to get a job just to scrape by.

According to the 2000 census, more than one million households in Illinois paid more than 30% of their income for housing. That is 1 in 4 of us that are at risk of homelessness.

Unfortunately, until we realize that housing needs to be affordable to everyone, we will all find out just like that school administrator that homelessness is here to stay.



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 Rich Dehart, Principal Consultant, 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
1855 Mt. Prospect Road
Des Plaines, IL 60018
Phone 847/803-3535
Fax 847/803-3231

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
127 North Marion Street
Suite 7
Oak Park, IL 60301
Phone 708/848-0503
Fax 708/848-0530

*Be sure and visit us on the world wide web at:
<http://homelessed.net>*



Opening Doors

Statewide Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth

ROE #26 Hancock/McDonough
130 S. Lafayette - Suite 200
Macomb, IL 61455
Phone: (309) 837-4821
Fax: (309) 837-2887
Email: mworthin@roe26.k12.il.us

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

OUR HOUSE was supported 100% through a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education funded by the United States Department of Education under the Stewart B. McKinney Education for the Homeless Children & Youth Program for an approximate cost of \$300,00.

Make A Difference . . .

Get Your Students Involved

*Hunger & Homeless Awareness Week
November 16 – 22, 2003*

Every year during the first full week before Thanksgiving, the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness and the National Coalition for the Homeless co-sponsor National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. This week is designated as a time for local communities across the country to engage in awareness-raising events.

Why? This question may seem obvious but it is important to ask. Organizing events will not be as meaningful if you do not stop yourself to ask "Why is Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week so important?" Nationally, the Week promotes thought and action on an issue that many might not otherwise recognize. Collective efforts from each state and community strengthen this movement. You might discover further reasons for the importance of Hunger

and Homelessness Awareness Week in your school or in your community. Talk about hunger and homelessness with your staff and students for the Week. Remember, before you can raise awareness in school or in your community about hunger and homelessness, it is important to think and talk about the issue and what impact the Week should have on your community, your school, and on you.

Student activities for the week could include: The Grate American Sleep Out; A Fast For World Hunger; a Hunger Banquet; or an Offering of Letters. (*All of these activities are described in a student manual available from NCH*). Additional project might include: hosting educational forums; designating one day for students and/or community members to "Skip-a-Meal, donating the money that they would have spent to hungry persons in their community; organizing a drive to collect non-perishable items (such as certain foods, hygiene prod-

ucts, clothing, blankets, books and toys); or sponsoring a benefit concert with local musicians, donating collected money to a local shelter.

All of these ideas leave a great deal of room for ingenuity. Take one of these ideas and change it around some -- brainstorm tactics which will add to the events you select for Hunger Homelessness Awareness Week.

A complete manual for these events can be downloaded from the National Coalition for the Homeless at: <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/awareness.html> or by contacting:

Michael Stoops
National Coalition for the Homeless
1612 K Street, NW #1004
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: 202-775-1322
Fax: 202-775-1316
HN0055@handsnet.org