

# THE BEAM

## A Message From the President

### Greetings!

When I was a child, time seemed to pass ever so slowly. I couldn't wait until I turned six--ten--thirteen--sixteen--eighteen--all milestone birthdays for me. My mom used to laugh and say, "You're wishing your life away. When you get older, you'll wish time would slow down." I didn't understand what she meant then, but now I do, and I'm sure that most of you do, too.

It's hard to believe that the new McKinney-Vento provisions have already been in effect for nearly eight months at this writing, and what an encouraging eight months they have been! Across the country, great things are happening for children and youth in homeless and transitional situations. There is more awareness of the fact that yes, there ARE children and youth in this country that don't have a home. More districts have liaisons to advocate on behalf of children in homeless situations. More schools are realizing the gain by all when children are allowed to remain in their school of origin. More children and youth experiencing homelessness are receiving services from Title I programs. More schools are developing collaborations with community partners. Success stories abound across the nation!

While we've made much progress, we must realize that our work has just begun. We still face challenges: not every district throughout the country has appointed a homeless liaison; some districts still believe that they could not possibly have homeless children within their boundaries; some districts are not transporting children to their school of origin. Many school districts are confronting serious budget crises, making the allocation of scarce resources even more difficult.

Now, more than ever, we NAEHCY members must remain steadfast and continue our advocacy efforts on behalf of children and youth in homeless situations. We've struggled too hard and too long to lose ground now.

*Barbara James, President  
NAEHCY  
2002-2003*

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### FY 2003 Funding News

On January 9, Chairman Ralph Regula (R - OH) introduced the FY 2003 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies spending bill. The bill contains \$55 million for the McKinney - Vento Act's EHCY program, an increase of \$5 million from the FY 2002 level. For more information, please contact Barbara Duffield at the National Coalition for the Homeless, 202/737-6444, ext. 18 or e-mail [bduffield@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:bduffield@nationalhomeless.org)

Visit NAEHCY  
on the web at:  
<http://www.naehcy.org>



## Editor's Notes

Gary Dickirson, Senior Editor  
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The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) is the only national organization dedicated to improving the educational success of children and youth experiencing the loss of their homes and having little stability in their lives. Our organization has fought hard over the years and achieved many successes in this arena.

This is the first year that we have become a membership organization and the first time that the BEAM is issued only to members of the organization.

So, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all the members and thank you for your dedication to our causes. As our president says in her opening message, "We must realize that our work has just begun." I truly believe that over the next few years, with the help of the local homeless education liaisons and a growing membership in NAEHCY, our message will touch every school district in the nation. We will have thousands of liaisons helping us and that is a very good thing for all the children in America experiencing homelessness. I am truly excited!

### The BEAM

To submit an article for the BEAM  
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## Domestic Violence and Homelessness

Jodi Mincemoyer

When a woman flees a violent home, her immediate concerns revolve around safety for herself and her children. On the most basic level, that means finding shelter in a place where her batterer cannot locate her. Domestic violence programs in Virginia provided safe refuge for 3,756 women and 3,636 children in 1999. Despite these services, 4,706 families, or 56% of those seeking shelter, were denied assistance due to lack of space. Eventually, women and children may return to the abusive home due to deficient resources. Many more never leave a batterer because they see no hope for survival on their own.

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviors by one person in an intimate relationship who seeks to establish power and control over the other. It is a crime that affects almost one-third of American women (31%) at some point in their lives. Domestic violence affects every facet of the lives of women who experience it. The abuser often controls all of the family's funds and can withhold support or access to services, creating a web of insecurity in the survivor's life that may cloud her judgment of her ability to care for her children, hold a job, and make her own decisions. Thirty seven percent of domestic violence victims report that their situation affected their work performance by making them late or absent. It also caused them to miss promotions or to lose their jobs.

When the survivor finally does leave, what will she find? If unable to locate a shelter, she may stay with friends or family, possibly endangering others as the batterer tries to bring her back home. Her friends and family may be unwilling or unable to help, causing her to live in a motel or other unsupported environment. The survivor will try to work, to provide

the support her children need in this transition; but she is often caught in the cycle of poverty, including homelessness. The Urban Institute reports that 84% of homeless families are headed by women. Ultimately, the survivor may find herself back in the abusive home.

Women fleeing violence need more than just shelter. They need health-care, legal advocacy to fight for custody of their children, protection from abuse and financial support to move into a nonviolent home. They need counseling to overcome the emotional damage of physical, psychological and sexual battery. Domestic violence programs and some homeless programs have services to assist women and children through the difficult transition they face, but those who cannot find space in a program often remain in the poverty and abuse cycle. These aspects of domestic violence and homelessness will be addressed in future issues of the Project HOPE Newsletter.

For further resources and information:

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence <http://www.ncadv.org/>

Virginians Against Domestic Violence <http://www.vadv.org/>

Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline 800-838-8238

National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-7233 <http://www.ndvh.org/>

1 In 92% of all domestic violence incidents, crimes are committed by men against women. Bureau of Justice Statistics. (January 1994). Violence Against Women. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

2 Virginia Department of Social Services. (2000). Richmond, VA.

3 Commonwealth Fund. (February 1998). Addressing Domestic Violence and Its Consequences. New York, NY.

4 EDK Associates. (1997). The Many Faces of Domestic Violence and its Impact on the Workplace. New York, NY.

5 The Urban Institute. (1999). Homeless Programs and The People They Serve. Washington, DC.



## 2003 NAEHCY Advocacy and Legislative Agenda

### *FY2004 Appropriations for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth program*

Children and youth in homeless situations are entitled to a free, appropriate public education. The McKinney-Vento Act's Education of Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program provides funding to state and local education agencies to help implement the educational provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act, including identification, enrollment assistance, transfer of school records, school supplies, transportation, and more. The need for these services is great and growing, yet most states are serving only a small portion of their estimated population of children experiencing homelessness. In fact, according to the most recent Report to Congress, states were able to provide direct services to only 28% of the children they identified as in homeless situations in FY2000. In 2001, Congress recognized the need to increase funding for the EHCY program by approving an authorized funding level of \$70 million. NAEHCY urges Congress and the Administration to leave no child behind by fully funding the EHCY program at its authorized funding level of \$70 million in the FY 2004 ED budget.

### *Reauthorization of the Head Start Act*

Preschool-age children experiencing homelessness often face unique barriers to enrolling and succeeding in preschool. In fact, in its 2000 Report to Congress on Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act, the U.S. Department of Education noted that only 15% of preschool children identified as homeless were enrolled in preschool programs. In comparison, 57% of low-income preschool children participated in preschool in 1999. These statistics are especially

troubling in light of the fact that over 40% of children living in shelters are under the age of five, and therefore at an age where early childhood education can have a significant positive impact on their development and future academic achievement. NAEHCY recommends revisions to the Head Start program that will remove barriers to the full participation of children experiencing homelessness and increase their access to appropriate services.

### *Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides students with disabilities with a wide array of substantive and procedural rights. IDEA has provided educational benefits to countless students, including students in homeless situations. However, children who are homeless are often unable to access IDEA's services and procedures. NAEHCY supports full implementation of existing provisions of IDEA, including ensuring access for homeless students and examining methods of monitoring and enforcement at the local, state and national levels. In the upcoming reauthorization of IDEA, NAEHCY recommends revisions that will ensure children in homeless situations are able to access the services and procedural rights that IDEA provides.

### *Reauthorization of the HUD Homeless Assistance Programs*

The McKinney-Vento Act assigns the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) responsibility for administering four programs—Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG), Supportive Housing (SHP), Shelter Plus Care (S+C), and Single Room Occupancy Dwellings for Homeless Individuals (SRO). Together these programs provide important emergency measures and necessary public policy responses to the immediate housing and service needs of people experiencing homelessness. The legislative authority for these four programs has expired. NAEHCY is concerned that current reauthorization proposals that would reduce the

access of families, children, and youth to needed shelter and services, and calls on Congress to ensure that the HUD homeless assistance programs appropriately serve all people who are in need of them.

## POLICY

### *Implementation of the McKinney- Vento Act and Title I Programs*

In January 2002, President Bush signed the "No Child Left Behind Act," which reauthorized the McKinney-Vento Act's Education of Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program. The reauthorized McKinney-Vento Act contains many new and far-reaching provisions aimed at increasing school stability, access, and support for children experiencing homelessness. NAEHCY supports full implementation of the EHCY program, and will be working with states, school districts, service providers, the U.S. Department of Education and other national organizations to provide technical assistance and information on the new legislation.

### *Interagency Homelessness Collaboration*

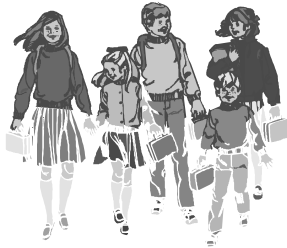
The Interagency Council on Homelessness is an independent federal working group created to coordinate the activities of 18 federal agencies. NAEHCY will be working to ensure that children's needs are addressed by the ICH, and in particular to urge federal agencies to adopt the McKinney-Vento education definition of homelessness. Restrictive definitions, particularly in HUD-administered programs, have created severe hardships for families, children, and unaccompanied youth and have hampered the efforts of public schools to collaborate with HUD-funded programs.

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## The Problems Of Homeless Students

Gretchen Lehmann



PORTLAND, OR 2002-11-20 (Oregon Considered) - When the state previewed its annual report on education last month, one statistic stood out: there are more than 38,000 homeless students in Oregon.

To put that into perspective, that's about the size of the Beaverton School District. With a shaky economy, the number of homeless students is expected to grow. State officials say they have successful programs in place to meet that need.

Many Portlanders know Chapman Elementary School as the place where every fall, vau's swifts descend into the depths of the school's large brick chimney for a night's sleep. But for people who work with homeless students, Chapman is an education success story.

Kerry Tinterra: *I used to see these same children down on 2<sup>nd</sup> Burnside, standing outside after school little teeny guys with their parents . To see them happy and eating and having fun, it just truly brings tears to my eyes every time I see it. (laughs).*

Kerry Tinterra started this homeless program three years ago. She set up a classroom where children come after school for three hours to get help with homework, learn social skills and make friends. On this day, teacher Jenny Nordwall walks students through one of their favorite activities: honoring the student of the week.

Jenny: *I think I have room for six compliments here.*

Young boy: *She's a great artist.*  
Jenny: *What a great compliment.*  
Leon: *She's a good friend*  
Jenny Nordwall: *It's fabulous to see children that I had come last year that struggled and were a high concern, and in my classroom right now, independently reading and reading to other kids and feeling so secure with themselves.*

Nordwall has 12 students in her program right now. She's just started keeping track of their test scores, but she says many of the students have shown marked improvement in reading and math.

Nordwall says teachers at Chapman have worked hard not to single out homeless students. But she does keep close tabs on them. If she hears a kid is absent, she'll call the shelter and find a way to get the student them to class. And she checks in on them when they are with other teachers during the day.

Jenny Nordwall: *I don't just work solely with our students. When I go in a classroom I may work with their whole table group, so it's impossible to pick out exactly which students I'm working with. The students know I have a classroom here, they just call it an after-school program. I don't really believe any of the students know exactly what our program is here for.*

Chapman is an unexpected place for a homeless student program. The school is in the heart of an upscale Northwest Portland neighborhood. But the school's boundaries also include several domestic violence shelters and the Harbor Light Mission. Kerry Tinterra, who created the Chapman program, says the school wanted to be sure these students had a shot at success.

Kerry Tinterra: *Every time a child changes schools, it's been researched that they lose three months of education time, they're behind three months.*

Portland schools and many others across the state have set up outreach programs, homework clubs and training centers aimed at keep-

ing homeless students from falling behind. With this year's reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Act, it seems Congress wants to do its part, too. The original act, which passed in 1987, said school districts must provide homeless students with equal access to all school activities such as theater or fieldtrips.

But the reauthorization goes much further. It redefines which students are considered homeless. Dona Bolt oversees the state's Homeless Education Program.

Dona Bolt: *We are now counting kids that are doubled-up in housing-people that are sharing housing with family and friends can be considered homeless, if they're doing that for economic reasons; kids who are in hotels or motels instead of being in regular houses.*

The broader definition means the state will probably see a jump this year in the number of students considered homeless. To address that, the McKinney-Vento Act also requires that every school district have a liaison in charge of helping homeless students and their families. Bolt says schools also must now do whatever it takes to keep students in the same school all year, even if their family moves.

Dona Bolt: *Every school district is going to have to arrange for transportation for kids to their school of origin if that's in their best interest to remain at the school they were attending when they became homeless.*

Oregon has a long history of working with homeless students, Bolt says, so the new federal requirements won't be tough to meet. But she says what will be hard to handle is the uncertainty of the economy.

Dona Bolt: *There's a lot more people who are new to poverty and homelessness in this state. And it's happening not just in urban areas but out in rural Oregon where actually the economy has been doing worse than in the inner city in many cases. Some of the communities have never recovered from the recession in the 80s and here we are in another one.*

You're not gonna find any communities in Oregon that haven't experienced homelessness anymore.

For most of the students in the Chapman Elementary program, homelessness isn't a new experience, but feeling good about school is.

GL: *What do you like about school?*

Girl: *I like homework and learning to read. And all that stuff.*

Boy: *I read books a lot I like snake books and tarantula books.*

Girl: *I just hope my mom listens to this.*

GL: *(laughs) Why do you hope your mom listens to this?*

Girl: *Because I think it'll make her proud.*

The state plans to have teachers at Chapman visit other schools around Oregon to share what they've learned about working with homeless students and helping them succeed.

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## TRANSPORTATION: BARRIER OR KEY TO SUCCESS?

*Deb Dempsey, Project Access  
Jeanne Rowe, Opening Doors*

One of the fundamental principles on which McKinney-Vento legislation for children and youth experiencing homelessness rests is this: if they are able to attend their "home" school or school of origin, they will at least have that bit of stability during an otherwise chaotic part of their lives. Studies have found that each time a child changes schools, months of academic progress are lost. Any barrier preventing a child from attending the family's school of choice must be removed, and transportation often looms as a very major barrier.

When Illinois passed the "Education for Homeless Children Act" in 1995, it led the nation in many ways in the arena of homeless children's educational rights. One of the most significant was Section 1-15: Transportation to the school of origin. It spelled out clearly that the school district was responsible for providing such transportation, or in the case of a child at-

tending school in another district, the two districts were jointly responsible and needed to work out an equitable plan or share responsibility and costs equally.

The law did, however, state that first "the parents or guardians shall make a good faith effort to provide or arrange for transportation to and from the school of origin...." In McKinney-Vento, no such prior requirement exists; since federal law supersedes state law, the McKinney-Vento provision on transportation must be followed. This means that if a parent or guardian (or the liaison in the case of unaccompanied youth) requests transportation, it must be provided by the district(s) to and from the school of origin. Putting law into practice can still be a challenge. It is important for school district liaisons to develop good working relationships with the transportation director and other key people. Deb Dempsey, coordinator of a McKinney program for District U46 called Project Access, shares the following helpful information:

*Project Access has been most fortunate to have a transportation department that knows the law, understands the law, and is very compassionate when complying with the law. In this, our seventh year of providing services to our homeless students, many lessons have been learned that have led to a successful collaboration between U46 Transportation and Project Access. The duty of the liaison has always been to inform school personnel about the rights and plight of our homeless students. An in-service was held for Transportation in which materials (including videos supplied by Opening Doors) offered very concise information to the staff. Telling personal stories about the difference they make seemed to make a big difference in the way they perceive our homeless students.*

At U46 Transportation, one staff member is assigned to work with Project Access. This makes for the very efficient and timely arrangement of transportation for our students. Usually our students start bussing the next day after they have been registered. Through the in-services,

staff members are instructed to call the liaison to arrange transportation. Having only two people involved results in less confusion and efficient arrangement of transportation. Should the liaison be absent, a backup plan is in place.

One last but most important piece of this successful partnership is the nurturing of relationships. Every year Project Access staff, along with representatives from the Community Crisis Center, present the transportation staff with a certificate and sheet cake in the shape of a school bus to show how much we appreciate and value them and their services that often go beyond the call of duty. When you inform people and respect them as partners in your cause, the goodness in those individuals will prevail and everyone benefits.

Along these lines, I would like to share a transportation story. A bus driver who was familiar with a particular student became concerned one Monday morning when the student was running a little late and from a different direction than other days. She notified her supervisor and commented that perhaps the student was homeless. The supervisor called me minutes later to inquire. As it turned out, with it being a Monday morning, the shelter staff had not yet notified me that this student had moved in over the weekend and that I needed to arrange transportation. I did so, and the student was picked up at the shelter the next day.

As a postscript to this I would like to let you know that the U46 Transportation Department was awarded the Community Crisis Center "Partners in Peace Award" in mid-October. A very well deserved award indeed!



## Locating Basic Needs Assistance for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness and Their Families

Beth Hartness

National Center for Homeless Education

The National Center for Homeless Education provides and publicizes a toll-free HelpLine (800-308-2145). The HelpLine's main goal is to provide assistance to parents, school personnel, shelter providers, community organizations and individuals with contact information in their area concerning school enrollment, transportation and other school related issues. Frequently the HelpLine receives calls from school personnel or from people experiencing homelessness requesting direct help in locating assistance for basic needs in their city or state. Questions include financial assistance, locating shelters, and availability of assistance through social services and health departments, and other community services. The NCHE has developed a search strategy to assist school personnel as well as homeless individuals in finding local resources. We recommend contacting the following resources in the order we have suggested to locate available assistance as quickly as possible.

### Local Contacts

- City and/or County Department of Social Services
- United Way
- Salvation Army
- Red Cross
- Chamber of Commerce
- Church Ministries

### State Contacts

- Homeless Coalitions (local, state and The National Coalition for the Homeless)
- HUD (US Housing and Urban Development)

School personnel may choose to find the contact information in the local telephone book or by

searching the Internet. Information can be found on the Internet by using a search engine such as Google ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com)). The searcher would input the term "homeless" or "homelessness" and combine this term with the name of the locality to search for resources in that area. For example: "Homeless and Los Angeles" or "Homelessness and Fulton County"

Performing this type of search will often return both the links for the organizations recommended above and for additional local resources. This can be a good way to locate local "Emergency Hotlines."



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



**The Beam**

### -Our Partners-

**National Coalition for the Homeless**

<http://www.nationalhomeless.org>

**National Law Center on Homeless and Poverty**

<http://www.nlchp.org>

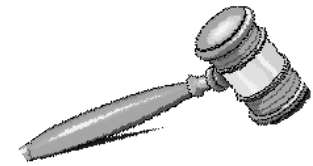
**National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE**

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

## "Zero Tolerance" Rejected by the Circuit Court of Cook County

Rene Heybach

*The Law Project  
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless*



In a ruling that embraces the American Bar Association's Report and Recommendation opposing school "zero tolerance" policies, the Honorable Aaron Jaffe issued a twelve-page opinion ordering a suburban school district to return a 9 year old to school. *E.S. v. Community Consolidated School District 168, Sauk Village, 02 CH 10967, August 15, 2002.* The boy, named E.S. in court filings, was expelled from fourth grade for one year after he discovered box cutters in the side zipper pocket of his aunt's lunch bag which he had taken to school. The Court held that the application of an inflexible one year expulsion in this case violated Illinois expulsion law, 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 as well as the substantive due process protections of the Illinois and federal constitutions. In addition, the Court found gross procedural due process errors based on the collective record of the expulsion hearing, use of the misleading term "meeting" when notifying the parents of the expulsion hearing, failure to advise the parents (who speak only Spanish) of the right to engage counsel, failure of the hearing officer to ask necessary questions while not allowing the parent the opportunity to question the school representative and a failure to make full inquiry into the interests of the child in favor of adherence to a strict policy. The child was represented by the Law Project of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless in conjunction with the firm of Jenner & Block.

## School Districts Set Example for Successful Transportation of Students in Homeless Situations

Estella Garza  
San Antonio Independent School District

Changing schools greatly impedes students' academic and social growth. It may take a child as long as six months to recover academically after changing schools. Children who are in homeless and highly mobile situations often have lower test scores and achieve at a lower overall performance level than their permanently housed peers. When children perform at levels below their expected rates based on their age and educational experience, the results are also damaging for their schools.

One proven strategy that helps overcome the diminished performance of highly mobile students is to make sure they have the opportunity to attend the same school throughout their homelessness. This simple strategy is itself often jeopardized by the lack of transportation services within a given community the children and their families need in order to make it a reality. The McKinney—Vento Act stipulates that:

- School districts must provide students experiencing homelessness with transportation to and from their school of origin, at a parent or guardian's request.
- For unaccompanied youth, school districts must provide transportation to and from the school of origin at the district's homeless liaison's request.
- "School of origin" is defined as the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.
- If the student's temporary residence and the school of origin are in the same district, that district must provide or arrange transportation. If the student is living outside the school of origin's district, the district where the student is living and the school of origin's district must de-

termine how to divide the responsibility and cost of providing transportation, or they must share the responsibility and cost equally.

- In addition to providing transportation to the school of origin, districts must provide students in homeless situations with transportation services comparable to those provided to other students.

Many school districts in Texas have witnessed how the resulting educational stability enhances students' academic and social growth, while also allowing them to benefit from the increased test scores and achievement resulting from student continuity. Two such school districts are the Amarillo Independent School District (AISD) and the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD).

Cathy Galloway, the homeless liaison for AISD, says, "I have never met a more caring and conscientious group of people than our transportation workers. They work tirelessly for our students and exhibit behavior which exemplifies our district motto - Doing What's Best For Kids!" The AISD is made up of 38 elementary schools, eight middle schools and four high schools, and a student body of 29,000, of which approximately 1/3 use school bus service during the year. In Amarillo, as in other districts, there is a two-mile limit on school bus services—students living within two miles of their school must generally provide their own transportation. Unfortunately, all of the local homeless shelters fall within the two-mile attendance and transportation zones, so children in these facilities are not eligible for school bus pick-up. On several occasions, though, a call from Cathy to the transportation office has resulted in the children at the shelters being picked up from an existing bus route and they have been provided with a ride to and from school. This service has helped many kids attend school who would otherwise have been left out of the system. Cathy says, "This demonstrates the cohesion our district has shown in assisting students in homeless situations with their on-going academic well-being. It seems to be the rule, rather than the exception, that our students experiencing homelessness move

often, with little notice, and are not sure of their housing status at any given time. Yet, our transportation office has consistently offered services, and exhibited flexibility in their day-to-day operations. Good communication and consistent paperwork has been a key factor in our smooth operation and friendly relationship."

San Antonio has also met with success in transporting children experiencing homelessness to their schools of origin. As required by federal law, the new transportation provisions were implemented with the start of the 2002-2003 school year. Through the efforts of the Transitions Program staff and the Transportation Department, more than 160 children have been transported to date. The SAISD has created and implemented a transportation request form that works well within the district. This effort has reduced the waiting period for transportation services among children in homeless situations from three or four days to only ½ day in many instances. The San Antonio metropolitan area is composed of 17 different school districts, with SAISD located at the "hub" of the metroplex wheel. All of the districts are working together to support transportation to students' school of origin—the concerted effort of all the school districts made it possible for 94 students living in SAISD boundaries to remain in their schools of origin outside of SAISD in other surrounding districts throughout San Antonio.

Have the efforts of the San Antonio school districts gone without notice? Not at all! Estella Garza, the SAISD homeless liaison and Transitions Program director, has many anecdotes to tell. An elementary school child being transported to another school district from the one where the family was currently living was overwhelmed: "Look mom, they are sending a big bus for me by myself!" Mom's response: "That's because you are very special to the school district." An unaccompanied high-school-age youth living in one of the shelters exclaimed, "You mean I can go to my same school and not have to change, for real?" A middle school counselor notes that "since the bus picks up the kids [at the shelter] to bring them to

school, their attendance has gone up drastically." The principal at one of the elementary schools confided, "Since [the Transitions Program] has transported the kids here to my school (school of origin), they have moved three times and the kids have not missed school."

Cathy has plenty of stories to tell about the successes in AISD, too. "We had a case of two students who lost their home and plunged from enjoying a middle-class lifestyle to living in a tent beside a severely dilapidated mobile home. Family violence, chemical dependency, and being victimized by criminal activity has plagued this family and the children, especially, have felt the impact of the move." Because of the McKinney-Vento transportation provisions, the children were able to continue attending their school of origin, located completely across town from their temporary housing. As it turned out, the students attended school for a semester and did well in school. These students' mother remarked, "Practically the only factor in my kids lives that has not been turned up-side down is their school. What a blessing it has been to have this program in our schools so we can get on with our lives and try to pull ourselves out of this mess. I believe my daughter would have quit school if she had not been able to stay at the middle school she had been attending and where all her friends were attending."

Later in the year, this same family found housing in a school district that is adjacent to AISD. Again, the children were subjected to more change. Cathy goes on to explain, "However, they were able to stay in their schools of origin as we quickly worked out arrangements with the school districts where they resided and the students hardly missed any school-despite moving through three counties, three school attendance zones, and two school districts!"

The SAISD has also taken the lead role in working with Trans-Finder (a software company supporting computerized transportation services) to develop and pilot a computerized transportation system that will facilitate the transportation referral process in the San Antonio metropolitan

area. It is hoped that this pilot project will be ready to be tested during the 2003-2004 school year.

Another resource for the homeless liaisons in San Antonio is the San Antonio Area Homeless Education Council (SAAHEC). The homeless liaisons of the school districts in Bexar County make up the Executive Board of SAAHEC. The Executive Board members meet monthly to support awareness of the McKinney-Vento Law, logistics of implementing the law, and to discuss other issues they all face in common. This informal setting has also allowed the members to establish positive working relationships with each other that enhance services to children experiencing homelessness throughout the metropolitan area. Transportation is a hot topic during these meetings. The opportunity to network and learn from each other during the monthly meetings has proven to be priceless.

School districts may choose to provide transportation services to the families experiencing homelessness through a reimbursement process, as well. Several families in AISD have opted for this method. "For those with cars and a desire to handle their children's transportation themselves, this has worked well," Cathy says. "Many families seem able to handle the responsibility of having a cash reimbursement and working with the counselor to establish a good routine and a more structured case management type of transportation arrangement." One single mom said, "I am grateful for the opportunity to be trusted with money and I will not abuse it. So many people seem to expect me to fail, just because I'm poor-that is not the case. I like being trusted. I am grateful for this McKinney-Vento program and I like being able to take my kids myself and not have to get them out the door on a bus at 6:30 a.m.!"

For more information on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act please contact:

**Texas Homeless Education Office**  
800-446-3142

or visit the THEO website at:  
[www.utdanacenter.org/theo](http://www.utdanacenter.org/theo)

## A Desk for Billy

Dr. Frances Karanovich, Supt.  
Macomb CUSD #185  
Macomb, IL



Billy, a ten-year-old boy who can't remember having a place to call home, doesn't wish for new running shoes, a Nintendo game, or even a C.D. Billy can't fathom sleeping a full school year in the same bed, but he does yearn for a desk...his own desk. His own space in a place we call school. As superintendent of schools I may not be able to give Billy a home, but I can provide him a desk.

There is no real homeless boy named Billy attending classes in the Macomb Schools where I serve as superintendent of schools. He doesn't even live in Macomb. Well, he sorta lives here, as he lives in my memories, a virtual student, who remains in my heart and calls to me from the depths of my being. He goes to work with me every day. You see, Billy is a ten-year-old child who lived and worked with his parents, transient migrant workers moving whenever to wherever they found work. When I was ten years old, my teacher showed the 16-mm movie, "A Desk for Billy," to the entire class. She wanted to impress upon us about how fortunate we were to have a home and a school we called our own. I have never forgotten that movie. Billy lives in my mind and his memory influences my decisions as superintendent of a unit school district in west central Illinois. He reminds me of the homeless children who come to our schools every day. They move in and out of our community, sometimes unnoticed, until one day their desk is empty. As superintendent of

schools I can (and so can you) make a difference in how our children experiencing homelessness feel about themselves, their school, and their lives. We can make a difference and here is how!

The superintendent of any school district has many responsibilities for providing the homeless "Billys" with a desk, support, encouragement and success. Our district motto is "Preparing Students for Success." It is the superintendent's responsibility, my responsibility in Macomb, to provide the educational leadership that insists on knowledge, implementation, and enforcement of the law. The 2001 McKinney-Vento legislation for children and youth experiencing homelessness continues to open doors for homeless children, but it is the superintendent of each district that determines how wide and with what ease the doors will be open. Laws can be written by legislators and interpreted into administrative procedures by state boards of education officials, but local district superintendents and educators who directly serve the children make the laws real. The superintendent must "walk the talk" of the McKinney-Vento federal legislation by doing the following:

- Personally knowing the contents of the law.
- Informing the local board of education and recommending local school district policies to the board of education that comply with the law.
- Ensuring that mandatory district-wide professional development opportunities are provided to all district leadership, faculty, and support staff.
- Appointing a district liaison to work closely with Regional Office of Education and/or state personnel with responsibilities for working with the families of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The appointed liaison person must have a passionate concern, a willingness, and time to devote to the support of families with children and youth deter-

mined to be homeless and in need of help.

- Working with district administrators, the appointed homeless liaison, building secretaries, and staff to develop administrative procedures to implement the policies adopted by the Board of Education.
- Communicating or designating someone to communicate with local civic and service organizations about the number and needs of known homeless children and youth in the schools. Finding the contacts and networks within the community willing to work with the school to provide services and support to the homeless children and youth is imperative.
- Finding a way to let homeless students and their families know of their rights and resources available to them throughout the community for support.
- Working willingly with other school districts and tearing down road blocks that may exist when a homeless child requests to "stay put" or move to the new district where he may temporarily reside.
- Monitoring and evaluating the district's compliance and implementation of the McKinney-Vento legislation.
- Showing empathy and personal, as well as professional, concern for the success of every homeless student, who walks through the open doors of the school district, i.e. walk the talk.

My Billy, and the hundreds of Billys experiencing homelessness in any school district, doesn't know who or what a homeless liaison is. He isn't privy to transportation rights and the school district requirements mandated in the McKinney-Vento legislation. He just wants "to belong" and be like the other students.

The superintendent's responsibility in Illinois and throughout our nation's public schools is to be a proactive, involved model for all those whose lives he/she touches. Every superintendent is obligated to

search his/her soul and acknowledge that what they know, say, and do will be emulated throughout the District they serve. Superintendents send powerful messages: Sometimes through voice; Sometimes through silence; But always through actions. What message(s) about homeless children and youth are you sending?

It is the superintendent's responsibility to know, implement, and monitor the law. It is important that we do it in such a way that every "Billy," i.e. every homeless child, who enters our doors finds the school doors open wide and a desk waiting for him/her on the first day he/she arrives in the place we call school. Make it happen!

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### Join the ZOOMteam!



Everybody needs food to eat and a place to sleep. But some people don't have them. How can you help? In lots of ways! Just check out what these ZOOMers are doing:

- Every week, Annie and her classmates in Washington make sandwiches for people living at homeless shelters.
- Chris of Florida volunteered for Habitat for Humanity, a group that builds houses for families who need them. He built a bench and gave drinks to other volunteers.
- Ben of Iowa baked a ZOOM Butterfly Cake and gave it to a homeless shelter.
- Julia of Massachusetts asked her friends to bring food instead of presents to her birthday party. Then she gave the food to a food pantry.
- Christian of Arizona collected 14 old coats from friends and family members and donated them to a homeless shelter.
- Students from four elementary schools in California hold a canned food drive every April to keep the food banks filled for the summer.

To find out more go to:  
<http://www.opb.org/kids/zoomintoaction>

## The Men for Whom The McKinney-Vento Act Was Named

### Stewart B. McKinney: The Man

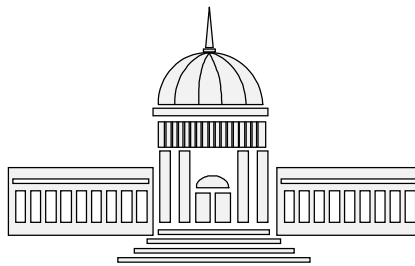
By  
Carol Lundin

*Biography from the 2001 Spring/Summer  
Project HOPE Newsletter*

In 1987 President Ronald Reagan signed the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, authorizing federal funds for all emergency food and shelter programs. Revised in 1990 and again in 1994, the Act now ensures that homeless children have access to an appropriate education. BUT, WHO WAS STEWART B. MCKINNEY?

Stewart Brett McKinney was born of wealth in 1931 in Pittsburgh, but raised in Connecticut. His educational background included Princeton University and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University. He also served in the U.S. Air Force from 1951 to 1955. McKinney was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1970. He represented his home state of Connecticut in Congress for nine terms.

Contrary to being the wealthiest congressmen during his terms, McKinney was regarded by his peers as a fighter for the causes of the forgotten. An independent-minded, liberal republican, McKinney worked tirelessly for urban aid and social welfare programs. He supported the availability of low and moderate income housing. In the 97th Congress, he spearheaded the passage of the Amerasian Immigration Act, which gave children of military servicemen in Asia the right to obtain visas. However, McKinney was most outspoken of the plight of the homeless, especially those with mental illness, left on the street. Stewart B. McKinney was a heavy smoker and plagued with heart disease. He died at the age of 56 on May 7, 1987 from pneumonia brought on by acquired immune deficiency syndrome. In his eulogy



Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.) said of McKinney, "From alleviating wretchedness in housing...to loving the unwanted children of Americans in Vietnam, this was a working patriot..."

### Bruce Vento

By  
Joyce Austin

*Biography from the 2002 Winter  
Project HOPE Newsletter*

Now that the law has been reauthorized as The McKinney-Vento Act, it seems fitting to add to the biographical archives. Vento, refers to Bruce F. Vento; but, who you may ask, was Bruce F. Vento?

Bruce F. Vento was born October 7, 1940 in St. Paul, Minnesota. The second of eight children, Bruce took great pride in calling himself a life-long resident of St. Paul's East Side. He was educated at Thomas College, Wisconsin State University, and the University of Minnesota.

Elected to the Minnesota State Legislature in 1970, Vento served three consecutive terms. In 1977, he was elected by the Fourth District for the

state of Minnesota to the U.S. House of Representatives. Committed to improving the welfare of his fellow men and protecting natural resources and the environment, his work on behalf of the environment earned him the 1994 Ansel Adams Conservation Award from the Wilderness Society, honors from the Sierra Club, and the National Parks Conservation Association's Conservationist of the Year Award for 1987.

In June of 2000, Vento received special recognition from President Clinton for his years of work on behalf of America's homeless population. Bruce F. Vento worked alongside Stewart B. McKinney and was co-author of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, which created federal funding for support services, transitional housing, and emergency shelter grants for the nation's homeless. He was an honored member of the National Alliance to End Homelessness and earned a host of awards for his leadership and legislative contributions to improving the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness.

After being diagnosed with lung cancer, brought on by asbestos exposure during his early work as a laborer, Congressman Vento decided not to seek another term. In a released statement, he stressed that many of the best ideas were the "can do attitudes" and the expectations that the government and I could make a difference in the quality of life." He further quoted Hubert Humphrey in his closing statements: "The moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped." Congressman Vento died at his home on October 10, 2000, three days after his 60th birthday.

## Sauk Village Public Schools Pay Damages and Revamp Policies to Rectify Racial and "Housing Status" Discrimination

*Rene Heybach*

*The Law Project  
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless*

Four homeless children and their parents sued the Sauk Village public schools under the Cook County Human Rights Ordinance after the children were excluded from Rickover Junior High in October 2000. The children, who are African American, were forced to leave school in violation of the Illinois School Code when the school administration learned they were homeless. An employee of the Illinois State Board of Education whose job is to oversee Illinois schools' implementation of the educational rights of homeless children intervened to assist. He reported that the District Superintendent would not comply with the law and the superintendent, Thomas E. Ryan, instead remarked that "If we let scum like these into our schools, pretty soon the whole area will be a ghetto." The Junior High school had experienced an increase in the enrollment of African American students that Fall. After nine days of exclusion, the children were returned to school after they obtained legal assistance from the Law Project of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and threatened the school with seeking an injunction. The Board of Education wholly failed to investigate the Superintendent's conduct. In settling the later-filed Human Rights complaint, the District paid \$50,000.00 in damages and agreed to broad-based policy and enrollment changes, including revision of all practices that discriminate against students based on their housing status and the formation of a committee to review policies and practices that may have a disparate racial impact. *Burgin v. Community Consolidated School District 168, Case No. 2000 PA 010, Cook County Commission on Human Rights, July 30, 2002.*

## Giving Something Back

Eileen Worthington  
ROE #26 - Hancock/McDonough

Imagine receiving a phone call where the person on the other end of the line is asking if you take cash donations! This is exactly what happened to me just before Christmas. At the other end of the line was a member of Alpha Phi Omega, a co-ed fraternity at Western Illinois University in Macomb.

It seems that our web site not only imparts information to administrators and educators, but to students as well. While 'surfing the net' these students not only found our web but they were surprised to find that here, in west central Illinois, we have homeless children and youth. Each November the fraternity sponsors a fund-raiser and donates the dollars collected to a local charity. Their request? Would we be interested in receiving the dollars collected from their project this year? My answer? A resounding YES!

It would appear that this group of young men and women are not the only ones interested in giving a little back to the community. As a result of a recent presentation to our local Rotary Club a wave of compassion has spread throughout the county. Rotarians, Lions Clubs, churches, dorm floors, and high school students are all anxious to know what they can do to help provide for our area homeless children and youth. The response has been overwhelming!

Much has been said through the years about the successive generations of uninspired and self-centered youth of our country, but I for one am here to tell a different tale. In McDonough County, Illinois, those young men and women have shown that they have not only a strong sense of compassion but an abundance of community spirit as well. THANK YOU!!

### **Become a NAEHCY Member**

*To become a NAEHCY  
member please send  
\$40.00 annual dues:*

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National Association for the Education  
of  
Homeless Children and Youth  
c/o Gary Dickirson  
Illinois State Board of Education  
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## **The Beam**

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Visit our Illinois McKinney Program  
Website, Opening Doors  
<http://homelessed.net>

*Send address changes to:*  
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Request for Proposals and registration information available on Project HOPE'S website:  
<http://www.wm.edu/education/HOPE/homeless.php>