

HOW...WHEN...WHERE



Information for homeless and relocated families in New York City
December 2011

BUDGETING WORKSHEET (page 4)

NEW YORKERS GO FOR GED

If you didn't finish high school, GED is a second chance. GED (which stands for General Educational Development) is a diploma that's considered about the same as a high school diploma. To get into most training programs and college and finally to make good money, you need one or the other.

To earn a GED, you need to pass a GED test that for most people requires some study and preparation. Many New Yorkers are doing that right now in many places around the city. (See below to locate a GED program.)

For example, at 269 W 35th Street in Manhattan, men and women 21 and older take GED prep classes on one floor and on the floor below 17 to 21 year



Mohammed

olds do their studying at the GED Plus program. They come from all over to earn the degree they missed out on earlier. Leonardo, age 18, was born here, sent to the Dominican Republic at 11 and returned here last year. "I always wanted to be a baseball player or a lawyer," he says. His plan now is Buffalo for college, law school, and then a practice in criminal law.

Mohammed, age 19, immigrated from Yemen early this year and within a few months started working for his GED. "I had a bad life over there," he says. "Here I have lots of nice friends. This country it gives me and I have to give back."



Zixin

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NEW YORK CARES' GIFTS OF TIME AND TALENT TO SHELTER RESIDENTS

by Elizabeth John, Director of Education Programs, New York Cares

Each week, volunteers from New York Cares work with children and adults in transitional housing facilities across the city to provide quality educational and recreational programming. New York Cares is the city's largest volunteer organization, and its mission is to meet pressing community needs by mobilizing caring New Yorkers in volunteer service. Below are some examples of how volunteers are making a difference in the lives of those in the city's shelters:

Through the Urban Adventures program, children at Theresa's Haven are exploring all that the city has to offer with volunteers to guide them on their journeys. Each month, they have a different fun activity planned, such as visiting museums and zoos, bowling, pumpkin picking, and ice skating.

Children from Tilden Hall are collaborating with vol-

unteers to create published works through the Young Authors program. The students get to hone their creative writing skills by writing poetry, prose, short stories, songs and memoirs. At the end of the program, they will receive a printed compilation of their best pieces.

Young adults at Covenant House are practicing their interview skills with volunteers to prepare for entry or re-entry into the workforce as a part of the Mock Interview program. Volunteers give valuable feedback and aid the participants as they search for jobs.

Through the Read to Me program, volunteers are taking children from Jennie A. Clark Residence to the public library, helping them obtain library cards and showing them how to select and check out books. They then get to read their favorites together in the quiet of the library.

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Zixin, age 20, came from China last spring. "I want to be a social worker," she says. "I want to go to college at Borough of Manhattan Community College. While I'm in college, I'll get a job as a teacher's assistant."

Even grappling with the problems of homelessness isn't keeping some folks from getting their GED. Junius Family Residence, a large Women in Need family shelter in Brooklyn, makes it easy by offering residents a six week series of GED prep classes that meet three days a week on site. The students are all ages with a wide variety of interests.

Brooklyn born Tiara McRaven had trouble in school from 8th grade on. Now at 24 with a husband and three children, she's starting over. "I realized in order to become something I had to go for the GED," she says. "I want to go to Syracuse for the 10 week course to get a CNA (Certificate of Nursing Assistant)."



Tiara McRaven

Her cousin Nakena Murray, age 23, quit high school after the 11th grade. "My grandfather died and I was depressed," she says now. She's homeless because she lost her apartment when the city discontinued the Advantage housing subsidy and she couldn't pay the rent. "I want to go to college for occupational therapy," she says. "I started the GED class in October and took the practice test last week. Though I didn't pass, my scores are high enough so they thought I should try again next time."

Andre Bugett, age 32, dropped out in his last year of high school and continued to get into trouble, hanging out with the wrong friends. "I've always had a job – supermarkets, construction, security, airports – now I'm doing security at bars and parties. But I wanted to go back to school and didn't know how or where to go." His worker at Junius suggested the GED program on site.



Andre Bugett

"I need a GED so I can get a degree in business management security in order to open up my own company."

HOW TO FIND FREE GED PREP

If you are 21 or older, call the NYC Department of Education "Office of Adult and Continuing Education" nearest you.

Bronx Adult Learning Center, 3450 East Tremont Ave, Room 323, Bronx (718) 863-4057.

Alternative Education Complex, 269 West 35th Street at 8th Avenue, 7th Floor, Manhattan (212) 868-1650.

Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center, 212 West 120th Street, Manhattan (212) 666-1919 or (212) 666-1920.

Brooklyn Adult Learning Center, 475 Nostrand Ave, Brooklyn (718) 622-3000 and (718) 638-2635.

Queens Adult Learning Center, 42-15 Crescent Street, 7th Floor, Long Island City (718) 361-9480. Also 90-01 Sutphin Blvd, Jamaica (718) 557-2567.

If you are between 17 and 20 years old, call the Department of Education Referral Center in your borough.

Bronx Referral Center, 1010 Rev. James A. Polite Ave. (718) 842-9200

Manhattan Referral Center, 269 West 35th Street at 35th Street (212) 244-1274

Brooklyn Referral Center, 832 Marcy Avenue (718) 636-5770.

Queens Referral Center, 162-02 Hillside Avenue, Jamaica (718) 739-2100.

Staten Island Referral Center, 450 St. Marks Place (718) 273-3225

PARENTS: NOW IS THE TIME TO PLAN FOR SUMMER CAMP

**RCSN Annual Special Camp Fair:
Saturday, January 28, 2012**

Parents of children and teens with special needs, now's the time to think about summer camp. Camps open registration in the winter, and space and financial assistance is limited. Parents can meet experts from over 60 summer programs serving children and teens with special needs at the FREE 27th Annual Special Camp Fair on **Saturday, January 28, 2012 from 11 AM to 3 PM** at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle, (entrance on Columbus Ave./W. 60th St.) Manhattan. The Fair is presented by **Resources for Children with Special Needs, (212) 677-4650 ext. 34, www.resourcecnyc.org.**

The Fair will feature both day camps (New York City) and sleepaway camps (Tri-State area). The Fair will also offer information on travel programs, remedial education programs, volunteer and job opportunities, and early childhood programs. Spanish and sign language interpreters will be available.

Visitors to the Fair will receive a free copy of RCSN's **Camps 2011-12 Directory**. Parents can register for the Special Camp Fair prize drawing at www.resourcecnyc.org.

WEP Workers! Know Your Rights

by Jennifer Hadlock, Community Voices Heard

Community Voices Heard (CVH) is a membership organization fighting to end the Work Experience Program (WEP) and create transitional jobs as an alternative in New York City.

In October, CVH held a Town Hall with the U.S. Department of Labor and confirmed this important fact: WEP workers are covered by the national Fair Labor Standards Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

So if you are a WEP worker...

- 1) You are protected by federal employment laws just like other workers. Your rights include protection from discrimination, harassment, and hazardous conditions.
- 2) You are entitled to minimum wage. The City can only require WEP hours equal to the total of your cash, plus food stamps for the month divided by \$7.25.
- 3) You are protected by the state's occupational safety and health laws. You are guaranteed a safe and healthy workplace, which includes adequate equipment, education, and training.
- 4) You are entitled to workers' compensation. You can receive money if you are hurt while doing your job by filing a claim with the Workers' Compensation Board.
- 5) You are protected from discrimination by federal, state, and city laws. This includes discrimination based on: race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, mental or physical disability, age, marital status, criminal record, or veteran status.
- 6) You have the right to organize! The First Amendment of the US Constitution gives you the right to: a) discuss your opinion about welfare laws and policies, b) wear

political buttons or clothing, c) sign petitions, d) inform co-workers about organizing meetings, and e) distribute information – as long as these activities do not interfere with normal business activities at your WEP site.

WHAT CAN I DO IF MY RIGHTS ARE BEING VIOLATED?

- 1) Call Community Voices Heard (212) 860-6001. CVH is tracking complaints to be able to use to challenge the whole system.
- 2) File for a fair hearing (800) 342-3334
- 3) Call the US Department of Labor (212) 264-8185

Examples of violations:

- You are sanctioned and the amount of cash you receive goes down and HRA does not lower the number of WEP hours you are doing.
- You have limitations, but the WEP site is making you do tasks that you are not supposed to do based on your limitations.
- You are not being given the same equipment as the permanent workers to do the same work (ie. boots at MTA).
- Women at the site are being told to do one kind of job, men are being told to do a different job.

Community Voices Heard is planning a follow-up meeting with the Department of Labor. If you want to get involved, please contact Jennifer Hadlock at (212) 860-6001 x26 or jennifer@cvhaction.org.

NEW YORK CARES' GIFTS OF TIME AND TALENT *Continued from page 1*

Children at St. John's Family Place are discovering their inner actors by participating in Theater Explorers. Volunteers lead role-playing, improvisation and movement games to help the students gain confidence, develop public speaking skills, and have fun.

At Briarwood Family Residence, volunteers are reading to children through the Bedtime Stories program. They then engage in a craft activity related to the book they read, helping children develop a love of literacy.

Volunteers are encouraging children at Jamaica Family Residence to express themselves artistically through the Art Explorers program. Children get the opportunity to channel their creativity and create their own masterpieces.

In the Resume Preparation program, adults at the LIFE Center are receiving volunteer assistance as they develop their resumes and prepare to start their job search. While focusing on enhancing their resumes, volunteers also help participants set up email accounts and develop basic computer skills.

The programs above represent a fraction of what volunteers are able to accomplish through their work with New York Cares. For more information about New York Cares programs, or to volunteer, please visit www.newyorkcares.org.

If you would like to start a New York Cares project at your agency, please email to:
community.partners@newyorkcares.org

DO YOU NEED A COAT?

The New York Cares Coat Drive has been providing donated coats to New Yorkers that need them since 1989. Individuals who need a coat can request a Coat Voucher that will direct them to a nearby agency which will redeem the voucher for a coat. Coats cannot be distributed at collection sites. To receive a voucher email info@newyorkcares.org, call 212-402-1173 or visit the coat collection sites in Penn Station and Port Authority Bus weekdays, between 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. through December 31st.

This Worksheet was prepared by Legal Aid's Homeless Rights Project. If you don't have income other than public assistance, it will help you figure out if you're receiving the correct amount of benefits. If you receive less than what you are owed, ask for a fair hearing. If you receive too much, you may have to pay it back later.

BUDGETING WORKSHEET

for Homeless Families on Public Assistance

BASIC GRANT (Personal Needs Allowance, Special Needs Allowance or Food & Other)

NUMBER IN HOUSEHOLD	1	2	3	4	5	6
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For homeless persons living in a **singles shelter**, in a **shelter for homeless pregnant women** or in a **domestic violence shelter serving three meals per day**, the basic grant is a Personal Needs Allowance of \$22.50 per person semi-monthly.

	\$22.50	45.00	67.50	90.00	11.50	135.00
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In a **Tier II shelter serving three meals per day**, the basic grant is a Special Needs Allowance of \$31.50 per person semi-monthly.

	31.50	63.00	94.50	126.00	157.50	189.00
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In **any other type of emergency housing** (or permanent housing), the basic grant is the Food & Other Allowance.

	83.05	132.25	176.50	227.35	280.85	324.00
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A. Find the **BASIC GRANT** for your household above and enter it here. \$ _____

B. Every homeless family is entitled to an **APARTMENT SEARCH GRANT**. \$ 29.25

If you already receive WEP carfare for an unlimited weekly or monthly Metrocard, you are not entitled to this grant.

If you are sent to a place without meals and without cooking facilities OR to a place that serves meals but cannot provide food that meets your medical needs, you are entitled to a **RESTAURANT ALLOWANCE**. Give proof of your medical needs to your caseworker.

C. Number of pregnant women & children in your household: _____ x \$50 = \$ _____

D. Number of adults in your household who are not pregnant: _____ x \$32 = \$ _____

If you are in your fourth or later month of pregnancy, you are entitled to a **PREGNANCY ALLOWANCE**. Give proof of pregnancy to your caseworker.

E. Number of women in your household in their fourth or later month of pregnancy. _____ x \$25 = \$ _____

TOTAL: A + B + C + D + E = \$ _____

If this total is not the amount that you receive twice each month, see your caseworker at your center immediately. If your worker does not correct your budget and issue any back amounts owed to you, request a fair hearing by going to the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance at 14 Boerum Place, Ground Floor (corner of Livingston), Brooklyn (2, 3, 4, 5 to Borough Hall; N, R to Court Street). You may also request a hearing online, www.otda.state.ny.us/oah/forms.asp, or by fax, (518) 473-6735 (or ask your shelter worker to do it for you). Be sure to keep your confirmation paper.

NOTE: If anyone in your family is an undocumented immigrant or receives Social Security, SSI, wages, unemployment benefits, or other income, this worksheet might not apply to you.

RECOUPMENTS: If you are receiving 10% less than what you think you are owed, the City may be "recouping" you for a utility or shelter arrears grant or some other reason. You can challenge the recoupment in a fair hearing if you think it is wrong or if you didn't get a proper notice.

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