

# HOW...WHEN...WHERE



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

FOOD PANTRIES IN MANHATTAN (PAGE 4)

NYC's Department of Homeless Services announced the end of the Advantage housing subsidy program in March. Despite lots of talk among shelter providers and advocates for the homeless, there is no evidence of a new housing subsidy for people leaving shelter. Asked by HWW about plans, Seth Diamond, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Homeless Services, told *How...When...Where* "There is not going to be another housing subsidy."

*Facing many other serious family problems, residents of NYC family shelters share their concerns about*

## NO HOUSING SUBSIDY



**T**onya Carter, age 40, staying in a family shelter with her son Deanddre Johnson, age 10, was shocked to hear her Advantage voucher was no good.

"I got me a part time home attendant job. I got my Advantage voucher Wednesday. I found an apartment Friday. I was just waiting for lease signing in Flatbush, and then they shut it all down. The housing person here said 'The Mayor shut the program down.'

"Last summer I was in a DV shelter cause my husband had got out of hand. When I was there, I got the Fixed Income Advantage voucher but they took it back cause my son is not the head of household. My son is disabled, autistic. He graduates 6th grade next month to go to junior high school. I kept him in the same school since we got homeless. #296 in Crown Heights. The part he goes to is for autistic kids.

*Continued on page 3*

## PICTURE THE HOMELESS

*by Ryan Gibbs, Kendall Jackman and Adrian Antonio Paling*

### Who We are:

Picture the Homeless (PTH) is an organization founded on the principle that in order to end homelessness, people who are homeless must become an organized, effective voice for systemic change. We were founded by two homeless men in the fall of 1999. They saw an urgent need to respond to Mayor Giuliani's police crackdown on homeless people, and to the public's misperception about homelessness.

In January 2000, PTH held its first organizing meeting. Since then, we have worked to develop an organization directed and run by homeless people that keeps decision-making in the hands of homeless people.

*Continued on page 2*



**Picture the Homeless Campaigns:**

*The Civil Rights Campaign* is currently engaged in a campaign against laws about Disorderly Conduct. Disorderly Conduct has been used as a tool to harass homeless people. We believe that the vagueness of Disorderly Conduct is unconstitutional, and that the laws should be required to specify one's alleged violation. We demand that Disorderly Conduct be clearly recognized in practice as a non-arrestable offense. We are currently gathering surveys and testimonies from homeless New Yorkers to build this campaign, while educating homeless people through Know Your Rights and CopWatch workshops. Our goal is to equip homeless New Yorkers with tools that they need to defend themselves and their community from harmful and unjust police abuses.

*The Homeless Organizing Academy* is a series of weekly two hour trainings to give homeless and formerly homeless people the skills and experience to be more effective in the fight for their self determination and to pursue employment in the field of community organizing! The weekly sessions focus on education, skill building, and leadership development workshops. PTH member Kendall Jackman states, "The Homeless Organizing Academy has allowed me to brush the rust off some skills and opened new ones to me. I have attended free training for radio journalism, website and radio broadcast, legislative advocacy, time management, and many other topics. The Academy enables you to develop your leadership skills and potential. Not only do you learn skills in a classroom setting but as a PTH member you participate in actions where the theoretical is put into practice."

*The PTH Housing Campaign* believes that it's not a homeless crisis – it's a housing crisis! The city's best hope for reducing and preventing homelessness is a commitment to address the skyrocketing rents and general housing shortage that plague New York. Yet at the same time as the homeless population continues to escalate, landlords and the city continue to keep buildings empty. In fact, the total volume of potential apartments in vacant buildings and lots in Manhattan alone could likely house all the homeless households in shelter!

**Vacant Property Count:**

Under our Housing Campaign, along with Hunter College, we are currently working on a citywide count of all of the vacant buildings and vacant lots in communities within the five boroughs. PTH members have drafted legislation (Intro 48) that would require the city to count all of the unused property in New York City that, if put in use, could alleviate the housing crisis. (In Boston, the Department of Neighborhood

Development coordinates an annual survey of buildings. Since that survey began in 1997, the total numbers of abandoned buildings have decreased by 67%.)

We have scheduled the Vacant Property Counts on Saturdays throughout the month of June. Community members are encouraged to volunteer for the Vacant Property Count and take part in a social justice movement that will alleviate the housing crisis in New York City. Homeless people need to step up and get involved in counting vacant spaces and fight to force the city to turn them into proper housing! Unless you're happy that the city spends \$3,500 a month on your shelter bed, but does nothing to get you real housing– we hope to see you participating with our count. To get involved in the count email Adrian Paling at [adrian@picturethehomeless.org](mailto:adrian@picturethehomeless.org), or call PTH at 646-314-6423. We are always available to meet and discuss possible collaborations, or to schedule presentations and teach-ins.

- Brooklyn Count: . . . . . Saturday June 11th
- Manhattan Count: . . . . . Saturday June 18th
- Bronx Count: . . . . . Saturday June 25th
- Staten Island &
- Queens Count: . . . . . Saturday July 9th

**Meetings:**

Our membership and weekly participation in meetings and actions are the reason why PTH is so successful as an organization. Co-chair of PTH Ryan Gibbs states, "I was first introduced to PTH back in 2006, when a friend told me about getting involved. The very first day I came to PTH I was involved in a Sleep Out where members demonstrated the impact of New York City's housing shortage by having a large group of members sleeping out in a public space. I maintained my active involvement with PTH because of its action-based strategies that change people's perception about the reasons why people experience homelessness. The weekly meetings allow members to constantly actively engage in the fight for a better society."

To be a member of PTH one must be experiencing homelessness, or have experienced homelessness in the past. Non-homeless people are encouraged to support ending homelessness by volunteering with our campaigns and actions, and supporting our work.

Meetings:

- Housing Campaign: . . . . . Thursdays at 6 pm
- Civil Rights Campaign: . . Tuesdays at 2 pm
- The Homeless
- Organizing Academy: . . . Tuesdays at 6 pm

Picture the Homeless  
2427 Morris Avenue, Bronx, NY 10468  
(646) 314-6423

My 13-year-old daughter is staying with her older sister cause she doesn't want to be in shelter.

"I've looked at a lot of apartments. I have an application in to NYCHA. I'm off work right now cause my boss's husband had a heart attack. Now I guess I'm just waiting to see what happens."

**Donna Hughes** had a job cleaning planes at JFK. In August 2009 she got sick, lost that job and moved in with a girlfriend who was then evicted. In October last year she arrived at a family shelter with two sons. The oldest, age 31, receives SSI. Her youngest, 21, is in a work program for public assistance.

Donna now has a pacemaker and is receiving chemotherapy every week for cancer that is spreading from her pelvis.

"I started looking for apartments the day I came here. I was on the verge of getting the Advantage voucher when they discontinued it.

"The doctor says I can't work again. I can't stay here too long. I'm 51 and all the noise and stress is not doing me any good at all. I'm approved for disability and I have to see the judge in June for the final OK."

Her hope is that disability will pay more than public assistance so she can find an apartment without that voucher.

**Gloria Loyal**, age 38, had been in the shelter system once before. When she moved out of shelter she had the old Housing Stability Plus (HSP) subsidy to help pay her rent for four years. Her problems began again when her husband became suddenly ill. Diagnosed with diabetes and medicated for that and other problems, he fell into depression. "I felt I was a full time nurse," she says.

She has three children, an 18 year old in college and two youngsters, 8 and 1. They lost their home and re-entered the shelter system in November 2009.

"It's not like I didn't pay my rent for four years. But there was filth and rats in the apartment. I just couldn't stay there."

"We started at HELP I in Brooklyn. We had had the Children's Advantage voucher and we had looked and looked for apartments but people were leery of taking it and then they told me it was no good. But then they 'next-stepped us' out of there into a nightmare at Catherine Street where we had to sleep in a sort of classroom full of bunk beds. Finally, they did realize my husband had real problems and they had to get us out of there and in September moved us to this place where we get real help."

"My husband just won an SSI appeal. At first, they didn't consider his psychiatric problems and they said he could work but he's won a second hearing.

"My sister has a beauty salon. She's been giving me jobs part time for almost a year. I had everything in place to get the Advantage voucher.

"My son works hard in school. He says 'I'm going to get an education so I won't have to do this again.'"

**"The Mayor shut the program down."**

**Melinda Lopez**, 28, came into the NYC shelter system seven months ago with her daughter, age 5. After five months she received the Advantage subsidy.

"I have a parttime job as a bartender," she says. I had found the apartment on Decatur. They did the inspection and it didn't pass. Then everything that had to be done was done and it was supposed to be inspected Friday. That's the day they suspended the voucher.

"The apartment rent is \$962. I could pay maybe \$500 now. I'm a single parent. I'm going to try to get a full time job so I can afford rent on my own. Will that apartment be available if I do? I don't know. It's not that close to my job. But it is close to my child's school so I hope so."

## **FAMILIES ALREADY IN APARTMENTS LOSE THE ADVANTAGE SUBSIDY**

While residents of shelters wonder how they'll find a home without a subsidy, what happens to thousands of New Yorkers already living in apartments with the Advantage subsidy?

In an e mail to this newsletter, Judith Alviola writes that on March 22nd, she received a letter saying the NYC Department of Homeless Services and the NYC Human Resources Administration "regretfully inform you that New York State has withdrawn all state and federal funding for the Advantage program ((and)) the city is no longer authorized to continue the program. As a result, no further Advantage rental assistance supplement payments will be provided to your landlord on your behalf."

Judith was certified by the Advantage program in December 2009 and moved into her new apartment in February 2010. In January of this year, she was given an one year extension of her Advantage voucher. Only a few months later, she faced the possibility of being homeless again.

"I know my family can not afford a rent in the amount of \$1,550 monthly."

Families like Judith's were given a short reprieve by the court which ordered the city to pay April and May rents for people in apartments with the Advantage subsidy.

# HOW...WHEN...WHERE GUIDE TO FOOD PANTRIES IN MANHATTAN

If you're going to a pantry far from your residence, call ahead. Some pantries only serve people in their own part of town. It's always wise to take ID with your address (like a phone bill with your name on it), and proof of family size (if you're picking up food for the whole family).

## St. Bartholomew

109 E. 50 St.  
(212) 378-0234  
Tuesday and Friday, 10:30 am to 12:45 pm.  
By appointment only, so call ahead. Serves unemployed, seniors, people on PA or HIV positive. Need ID and proof of address.

## Canaan Senior Service Center

10 Lenox Ave.  
(212) 876-2638  
Most weekdays, 2:30 to 5 pm.  
Call ahead for days and bring written referral and photo ID.

## 72nd St. Food Pantry of the Council Senior Center

241 W. 72 St.  
(212) 799-7205  
Monday, 12 noon to 2 pm  
Tickets handed out from 10 to 11 am, arrive by 1:30 pm  
Need ID and proof of address for all household members.

## Emmaus House

160 W. 120 St.  
(212) 749-9404  
Tuesday, 10:30 to noon; Saturday 10:30 to noon.  
Call ahead to confirm availability. ID preferred.

## Good Shepherd Church

108 Cooper St. (between 207 St and Isham St.)  
(212) 567-1300  
Saturday 7:30 to 9:30 am.  
Need ID.

## Holy Name of Jesus Christ

207 W. 96 St.  
(212) 749-0276  
Need written referral with family size faxed on  
Monday to (212) 749-2045 for Tuesday pickup between 2:30 to 3:30 pm.  
Need photo ID.

## Holy Trinity Church/Helping Hands Pantry

20 Cumming St., Washington Heights (between Broadway & Seaman)  
(212) 781-1113  
2nd and 4th Friday of each month from 3 to 6 pm.  
Need photo ID.

## Manhattan Bible Church/Manhattan Love Kitchen

3816 9th Avenue  
(212) 567-2276, 942-4204  
Thursday 2 to 4 pm.  
Need photo ID. Come early to receive ticket.

## Metro Baptist Church

410 W. 40th St.  
(212) 594-4464  
First four Saturdays of the month, 11 to 11:30 am.  
Serves only 23rd-57th Street, West Side residents.

## Middle Collegiate Church

50 E. 7 St.  
(212) 477-0666  
Wednesday, 8 am.  
First come, first served. Need ID.

## Riverside Church

91 Claremont Ave. (between 120 St. & 122 St.)  
(212) 870-6700  
Tuesday to Friday, 10 am to 1 pm.  
Serves first 60 arrivals. Need written referral, photo ID, budget letter.

## Salvation Army

175 E. 125 St.  
(212) 860-3200  
Monday to Friday, 10 am to 2 pm.  
Serves certain zip codes only.  
Call for appointment.

## St. Cecilia's Church

125 E. 105 St.  
(212) 348-0488 (StS)  
Thursday and Friday, 9:30 to 11 am.  
East Harlem residents only. Need photo ID.

## St. Gregory's Church

144 W. 90 St.  
(212) 724-9766  
Tuesday, 3:45 pm.  
Need written referral.

## St. Johns the Baptist Bread of Life

210 W. 30 St. (between 7th and 8th Ave.)  
(212) 564-9070  
Wednesday, 1 pm to 3 pm.  
Need picture ID. Serves those living between 14th and 59th Street, river to river

## St Joseph of the Holy Family

405 W. 125 St.  
(212) 662-9125  
Saturday 10 am to 12 noon.  
Serves neighborhood residents only.

## St. Peter's Episcopal Church

346 W. 20 St.  
(212) 929-2390  
Wednesday and Friday, 10 am to 12 noon.  
Referral requested/walk-ins accepted.  
Saturday 11 to 11:30 am. No referral needed.

## West Side Campaign Against Hunger

263 W. 86 St.  
(212) 362-3662  
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 8 am to 12 noon and 1 to 3 pm  
Monday evening 3 to 6:30 pm.  
Need photo ID, proof of household size and income. (StS)

## Yorkville Common Pantry

8 East 109 St.  
(212) 410-2264  
Monday to Saturday 9 am to 8 pm, Sunday 4 to 8 pm.  
Need ID for all and proof of address.

**For referrals to food pantries all over the city and also to soup kitchens, call the NYC Hunger Hotline at 1-866-888-8777.**

## MOVING ON? ASK ABOUT HOMEBASE

Homebase is a city program to help low-income New Yorkers deal with problems that can lead to homelessness. You can find Homebase offices offering services in all five boroughs at thirteen different locations.

Services can include rental assistance, job training and placement, money management, debt counseling and help getting benefits like child care and food stamps.

Maria Passadino, director of the Homebase in Queens run by Catholic Charities, explains: "The main reasons clients come to us are eviction, loss of employment, landlord discord, and benefit problems like a welfare case closed incorrectly. We now have 500 households as clients – all families."

Her clients come to Homebase in three different ways:

1. Clients who have been in shelter who should be told when they sign their leases that they can receive after-care services from Homebase.

2. Community clients who are already in apartments and find themselves at risk of homelessness.
3. Families in hotels where Homebase helps them find apartments and handle issues like public assistance and finding job information.

There are four Homebase units in the Bronx, six in Brooklyn, one in Manhattan, one in Staten Island, and one in Queens. Homebase units serve people in their own area. To find help, call 311, give your address, and ask for the address and phone number of a Homebase office close to you.

Published by:  
**Information for Families, Inc.**  
PMB E5,  
332 Bleecker Street  
New York, NY 10014-2980

Publisher:  
Joan McAllister  
(212) 645-6940 (voice or fax)