

November 22, 2006: National Housing Day



by **Claudia Jahn-Community Liaison, Community Action on Homelessness**

Each year on November 22, Canadian municipalities and increasing numbers of Canadians unite to send a strong message to the federal government: Canada needs a national housing program that will end homelessness in one of the wealthiest countries.

From Halifax to Vancouver, events will

bring concerned individuals and organizations together to raise loud voices in a call for federal action on a National Housing Strategy.

Housing advocates, low-income renters, people who are homeless, municipal politicians, government officials and others will be gathering in communities across Canada on Wednesday,

November 22, 2006 to mark the annual National Housing Day. The event marks the anniversary of the declaration by the Big City Mayors' Caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities that homelessness is a national disaster.

The mayors of Canada's largest municipalities called on the senior levels of govern-

ment to take action.

This year, Community Action on Homelessness (CAH) is once again sponsoring a Community Breakfast at St. Matthews Church Hall, 1479 Barrington Street, in Halifax from 8:00 am to 9:30 am.

Included on the agenda for the morning is the presentation of a position

paper, titled "Blueprint for Change" that outlines the community perspective on how housing funding should be spent in Nova Scotia.

This paper reflects the input from community members, agencies and faith groups during two workshops that took place during CAH's Housing Week in October 2006.

The Holidays Are Here Again!

Well, it seems to come as quick as it goes each year. The good ol' holidays. The summer warmth is gone, the trees are changing their colours, with the leaves falling and the winds blowing. So many pretty colours for all of us to enjoy. Then Mr. Winter comes next, the blankets of white snow covering everything outside, which can be most delightful to experience and enjoy. But then there are homeless people outside, who are not as delighted as the rest of us who have a home, with the advent of the snow and the cold.

The homeless have a real kerfluffle in juggling survival issues, like having enough to eat and also enough warm clothing. A real magilla. In the HRM the seasons can change in a matter of seconds, it seems at times. And when these whimsical caprices of weather intervene, in a poor person's life, whether street youth, or other impoverished adults, the

world of life outside becomes a problem to deal with. The homeless poor traipse from soup kitchen to soup kitchen and from food bank to food bank, all the time hoping and praying that there be enough to go around.

For those in need, it must be difficult for any helping organization not to assist them. No one chooses to ask for help, for another day's survival or for the rest of one's life . . . and whatever agency is assisting, they must have blinders on. Meaning, not to be biased, or be prejudiced in favour of, or in disfavour towards anyone in need. Red tape and feelings of "put downs" by the powers that be do not help a poor person's self esteem. There must not be any choosing favourites. Many street people including Street Feat vendors often experience rude treatment and "put downs" and "bad vibes" by those "superior" beings who think that their poop doesn't smelly poop!

Shame!

It feels good to help those who are total strangers, and not simply look for your friends to help, when one is working in a community agency that assists the poor and down and out. Especially strangers, you never know who or where they were before they hit Povertyville or the streets. You must not judge a person if you are a worker in a helping organization. You never know.

(For all of you who remember Street Feat vendor and writer Bill Krampe, his father told him a story about how you never know who you are stumbling upon when confronting a poor person. Once Bill's Dad took him to the Bowery, a desultory and blighted place in downtown Manhattan, in New York City where Bill was born and raised. (Not in the Bowery but a different neighbourhood in the city). He took Bill to meet a man that was a mess. He was living in a caved in cardboard box, in

an abandoned storefront. He was soaked in urine and stinking as one would expect. But Bill's father, much to Bill's confusion spoke to the man as if he were a great man, as if he were an emperor, something like that. Later, Bill's Dad told him the story of the man in the abandoned storefront. The New York Stock Exchange is divided into two unequal, yet two mighty wealthy halves. The New York Bond Market, and the New York Stock Exchange. This man gave his daughter, upon her 21st birthday, the New York Bond market. You never know, right?).

There are all walks of life out there that want to exist and survive from day to day. And especially, for these down and out people, when considering the poor, regardless of where they come from, want what we all want: to get by without hassles. Thus it is unacceptable for community organizations to judge others or show personal feelings of bias

or prejudice toward any others. A poor client in an agency should be addressed properly, and respectfully at all times, just like "normal" people. There is too much poor bashing out there. It's like some middle class people look down on the poor; part of this could be they feel that the down and out and poor and vulnerable people in society are fair game to pick on. Spouse is too close to home, and too risky to jazz and hassle. So are kids, or, if the circumstances merit, nor are parents good targets for kids. So, look what happens: "Let's pick on this scruffy looking old guy, or this uncool looking young woman or grotty young dude!" Shame! The clothing and food get donated to these organizations, so why the attitude that it's your own stuff bought out of your own wallet? Shame! When these poor people go out and obtain clothes and food that they need-- this could be a life and death situation, who is to

by **Judy Deal, Vendor and Editorial Contributor**



say? Who is to judge? This God-like attitude on the part of some of the workers, whether in a government agency or a church organization, or some other service has to go. It is so wrong to think and feel that way, when they are helping the less fortunate.

I was thinking the other day, that if the government returned to the social housing construction of days gone by (beyond 1993 when Paul Martin, then Liberal Government Finance Minister ruled that there be NO more housing for poor seniors and none for the poor in general made available) maybe there is a win-win idea hiding out here, wishing and wanting to emerge? My whimsical daydreaming mind movie

Continued on page 7

Microloans Championed By Nobel Laureate Top 110 Million

Continued from page 5

"Bangladesh has already reached the Millennium Development Goal on gender parity at the primary and secondary educational levels," continued Daley-Harris, "11 years ahead of schedule."

The most exhaustive research on microfinance was done by Shahidur Khandker for the World Bank. Khandker studied three Bangladeshi MFIs (Grameen Bank, BRAC, and RD-12) and found that microcredit accounted for 40 percent of the entire reduction of moderate poverty in rural Bangladesh.

"We've been waiting for the researchers to document the positive impact of millions of microloans in Bangladesh's economic growth at the national level, and now we have it with the latest Khandker study," said Alex Counts, President of Grameen Foundation, which supports microfinance partners in 22 countries. "The rest of the world is catching up, but not quickly

enough. Innovative technology, links with local capital markets, and social performance measurement are needed to advance this bold social movement that is changing the world, one woman at a time."

In less than two weeks, Muhammad Yunus will join 2,000 delegates in Halifax, Canada for the Global Microcredit Summit's launch of Phase II of the Campaign with two new goals for 2015: 1) reaching 175 million of the world's poorest families with microcredit, affecting 875 million family members and 2) ensuring 100 million families rise above the US\$1 a day threshold, lifting 500 million people out of extreme

poverty.

On December 10 and 11 the Nobel Peace Prize will be presented in Oslo, Norway and a concert will be held in honor of the winners.

"Supporters are exploring the possibility of organizing Nobel Peace Prize viewing parties around the world," said Daley-Harris.

Information of the Nobel Peace Prize viewing parties will be available on the following websites:

- www.microcreditsummit.org ;
- www.grameenfoundation.org; and
- www.grameen.com.

Safe Harbour
Metropolitan
Community Church
All are welcome
**We worship at Bloomfield Centre,
Suite 108, 2786 Agricola St, Halifax,
every Sunday at 7:00pm**

**FAIR TRADE
BENEFITS
EVERYONE!**
Look for
just us! coffee
wherever you buy
coffee and tea!
1888-NOT-THEM

MacDougall's Insurance Agency Ltd.
HOME . AUTO . COMMERCIAL . LIABILITY . LIFE
. MOBILE HOMES . BLUE CROSS REP.
Fraser Ave., PO Box 159, Sydney Mines, NS B1V 2Y5
902-736-6208