

# It's Homeless Out Tonight

by David Quammen, reproduced from  
NCH.NEWS... found at  
www.nationalhomeless.org

## Pittsburgh

I spend a lot of time thinking about the homeless in our country (USA). In fact, that's about all I think about these days. One reason is that's what I am - homeless. It's the second time I've been homeless in the last ten years.

A lot of people wouldn't agree with me that I'm homeless. I don't fit the definition some have created and others believe. I've got a roof over my head and they only count those who are on the street.

I fit the definition better the first time I was homeless. I lived in my van then. It was a van conversion, so some didn't look at me as being exactly homeless. I had a roof over my head.

LeRoy wouldn't agree that I'm homeless. He appreciated the cold shower, clean pants, shirt, socks & underwear I gave him. He also appreciated the job I got for him even though he didn't keep it long. He eats out of garbage cans a lot. He's homeless-on-the-street.

Quent doesn't think I'm homeless. I've got a regular place to stay. He goes from his folk's house to the street or a friend's place, mostly the streets. He comes around for cigarettes and keeps asking to cut the grass for a few bucks. He's thirty-one and would like a steady job, but he needs some nurturing to break a few old habits. He's homeless-with-a-roof-now-and-then.

Abraham probably would agree that I'm homeless. He's homeless like me - he's got a roof over his head. He's an elder in the Ministry of Help around the corner. He helps a lot of people spiritually and otherly. He and I moved Grace's boxes to a church basement when she was facing being homeless-on-the-street, rather than homeless-with-a-roof. Right now, she's homeless-with-

a-roof-for-awhile.

Karen made the arrangements with the church where we stored Grace's boxes. She's helping the church with the transition of integration. She's homeless-with-a-roof.

Most Americans don't look at people who are homeless-with-a-roof as being homeless at all. I mean, it's not like being homeless-on-the-street. But then, they count the homeless-in-a-shelter the same as they count the homeless-on-the-street. Or the homeless-in-a-tent. Or the homeless-on-a-bench.

Most of us who are homeless-with-a-roof exist there on the wings of prayer, subject to the whims of chance or the fancy or others. It's tenuous, at best. Yet even with this precarious hold on life, the homeless-with-a-roof fall in a crack that few even attempt to count. In fact, the latest census admittedly undercounted the homeless-on-the-street but the government has decided to let false information stand.

Websters' Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary doesn't even have a definition of homeless that fits any of the above. Mr. Stephen J. Perrault of Merriam-Webster Inc. told me in a letter that "... you have misunderstood our treatment of this term (homeless) ...". He went on to say "Derivative words whose meanings are considered self-explanatory are often treated as undefined run-ons in our dictionaries as a way of saving space."

Yet they took four lines in their ninth edition to define the derivative homeless-at home, using such words as relaxed and comfortable, at ease, in harmony with the surroundings and on familiar grounds. He tells me that the tenth edition published this past May now defines homeless as having no home or permanent place of residence. After taking four lines to discuss an archaic use of the word that isn't even close, I would have expected a word that defines such a major problem in our country to at least be given equal space in their book.

He closed the letter saying "I hope that this explanation has cleared up your confusion about our treatment of homeless."

I wasn't confused and told him so. "My point, however, deals more with Mr. Mish's (Editor in Chief) opening paragraph of the (ninth edition) Preface: 'This dictionary is meant to serve the general public as its chief source of information about the words of our language. The school or college student, the office worker, the home user - all will find this Collegiate a reliable guide to understanding the English of our day and communicating in it.'"

The opening paragraph on the inside front cover of the dust jacket cites the sale of more than 11,000,000 hardcover copies of the Eighth Edition while it was in print, and it had the same definition as the ninth. No wonder we misunderstand the problem if such a reliable source only recently defined it the way we speak of it using the English of our day. Even at that, the definition is hardly adequate, given the magnitude of the problem and the consequence to millions of America's homeless.

Mr. Perrault really didn't have to tell me "If you look again, I think it will be quite clear to you that the definitions you've cited (in the ninth edition) are not definitions of homeless." I know that, Stephen J. I know it very well.

The various people who do such things estimate our homeless at anywhere from 600,000 to 3,000,000. I think it's more like seven to ten million, but then I look at homelessness differently. I count the homeless-with-a-roof with all the other undefined run-on's that may or may not be part of the English of our day.

However you define it, however you count it, it's homeless-out-tonight for millions of Americans. Until we change how we think of it and what we do about it, tomorrow night won't be any better.

## Mike Savage, Liberal

*Continued from page 7*  
housing crisis by helping to provide for 30,000 new social housing units, and refurbishing another 30,000 existing units to make them more liveable. As part of this commitment, we will look to expand subsidies for dedicated units for low-income Canadians in federally funded co-operative housing. We will renew the Residential Rehabilitation Program and the Homelessness Partnering Initiative.

We will help Canadians who lose their

jobs get back into the job market by making

EI work better for those who need it most. We will build a new partnership with Aboriginal Canadians, starting with a return to the commitments of the Kelowna Accord.

I hope this has answered your questions. If you need any more information, please feel free to contact me.

Regards,  
Mike Savage  
Liberal Candidate for  
Dartmouth-Cole Harbour

## Canadian Mental Health Association Recognizes Local Health Care Centre

On Saturday, August 23, the North End Community Health Centre (NECHC) received the national Marjorie Hiscott Keyes Award from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA).

The Marjorie Hiscott Keyes award is chosen by the Association's Annual Conference host division, which this year was the Nova Scotia Division of the CMHA. Named to honour the first psychiatric nurse, the Marjorie Hiscott Keyes Award is presented to a health care provider who has, "exhibited interest, compassion and understanding in his/her work with persons with mental health problems," as described on the national Association's website.

The NECHC was nominated by Carol Tooton, Executive

Director of the Nova Scotia Division for their mental health programs and services. The NECHC offers counseling with mental health nursing staff, social work, and psychiatric services for patients of the Centre. "I nominated the Clinic because we wanted to recognize the tremendous contribution to mental health services made by the individuals at the Centre," said Tooton. "We have a framework of support, and the clinic really supports that. Not just with core mental health services, but also with their efforts in low income housing and different programs and activities they organize."

Dr. John Fraser, Family Physician at the NECHC played an intricate role in the development and delivery of the shared care


program, a program connected with mental health services within CDHA. "We are a bit different than the other shared care sites because we work with marginalized groups and people who have different obstacles such as adequate housing and addiction," he explains. The team at the NECHC is a compilation of health care providers who deliver health services at the clinic. "I am just one small cog in the wheel," he says. "This award might traditionally be given to an individual, but in our case, the entire Centre is the recipient of the Marjorie Hiscott Keyes Award," says Fraser. "We have made great strides in the delivery of mental health care to our patients, and I am proud to be a part of our team."

"We are delighted to be receiving this award from the Canadian Mental Health Association," says Dr. Margaret Casey, Chair, NECHC Board. "Marjorie Hiscott Keyes was a pioneer in mental health services, and it is our hope to emulate her dedication with our services and

programs at the North End Community Health Centre. I am so proud of the work that is done here, and the health professionals that work with our clients each day, and it is wonderful to have it acknowledged with a national award."

The awards will be handed out during the annual conference dinner, held at the Holiday Inn Harbourview in Dartmouth on Saturday evening. The CMHA National Conference is hosted in different division centers each year, and reviews current practices and methods in the mental health care community.

The NECHC is an independent health care provider for the residents of North End Halifax, and is funded by the Provincial Department of Health managed through the Capital District Health Authority, MSI and various grants and charitable donations. The Centre partners with many local community organizations and service providers to support community health.



**Pet Portraits from Photographs**  
Excellent, reasonable rates  
**Call 455-6712**  
Leave Message for Sheila

**VSG VEITH  
CSE STREET  
PPG GALLERY**

Featuring the artworks of **Creative Spirit East** members at **Veith Street Gallery** in Halifax and the **Pedway Picture Gallery** in Dartmouth.  
(902) 446 - 6010 [veithgallery@yahoo.ca](mailto:veithgallery@yahoo.ca)  
[www.veithstreetgallery.org](http://www.veithstreetgallery.org)