

# Save the Date!

## Home for the Holidays

You are cordially invited  
to attend our Annual Dinner and Silent Auction  
Tuesday, December 9, 2003, 6:00pm  
Xavier University Schiff Family Conference Center  
Keynote Speaker: Attorney Jennifer Kinsley

For Tickets, please send \$15 to GCCH at 117 East 12th Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202  
make checks payable to GCCH and write "Annual Dinner" in the memo

Reserve a table for your church or company for \$150  
Sponsor dinner for a homeless individual for \$15  
Donate an item for our silent auction

Invitation to Follow

Greater  
Cincinnati  
Coalition For  
The Homeless



117 East 12th Street  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

513-421-7803

[www.homeless.cincy.com](http://www.homeless.cincy.com)

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## Since We Last Spoke...

There may have never been a busier period of time at the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless than the past three months. When city leaders decided that homeless people should not be allowed to stay under overpasses in Cincinnati, GCCH found itself organizing homeless individuals to fight for their civil rights, negotiating with police, city officials and lawyers in federal court and trying to keep up with the media frenzy that encircled the entire event. In just three short months, GCCH used to media to reach an estimated 2.2 million people to raise awareness of the real causes of and solutions to homelessness. A complete timeline of events of the bridge sweeps is included inside. In the meantime, we wanted to assure you that we have not neglected our many other programs that work to end homelessness. Below is an update of current programs.

In the middle of all this excitement, GCCH picked up and moved across Over-the-Rhine to our new location at 117 East 12th Street. The storefront on Elm Street that had been the Coalition's home for 20 years simply could no longer keep up with our growth. Our new home provides meeting space, private offices, air conditioning, hot water and functioning plumbing!



Civil Rights Workgroup meets in our new conference room

In September, GCCH added the position of Education Coordinator to our staff. Andy Erickson, our former Civil Rights VISTA volunteer, filled the position. Andy has been working to improve the quality and scope of our Homeless Speaker's Bureau and is also undertaking a project to get homelessness as part of the curriculum in area high schools.



Standdown, 2003

Throughout September, we conducted our Minimum Standards process. Minimum Standards is a bi-annual inspection conducted in cooperation with the Health Department and the City of Cincinnati. Agencies receive Minimum Standards certification by demonstrating their commitment to cleanliness, safety and client rights. Over 20 agencies received their certification this year and are eligible for city funding.

On September 26, GCCH held our annual Standdown event in Washington Park. Standdown is a military term for a day of rest and relaxation and the Standdown event is designed to target homeless veterans and provide them with services. Since its inception, the Cincinnati Standdown event has grown to include all homeless individuals. The event featured a wide range of services including information about treatment for chemical addiction, blood sugar screening, blood pressure checks, housing information, hair cuts, HIV screening, dental care, foot massages, Social Security and legal assistance. Over 500 people attended.

In October, the staff of GCCH headed to Washington D.C. for the annual National Coalition for the Homeless conference. This conference focused on the Bring America Home Act being promoted by the National Coalition, which would provide for 1.5 million units of housing by 2010, quality health care access for everyone, a universal living wage, and civil rights for people experiencing homelessness.

Finally, as promised, a lawsuit was filed in early October seeking to overturn the mandatory registration of panhandlers as unconstitutional. We are very hopeful that the registration will be overturned so that focus can shift from the punishment of panhandlers to the assistance of panhandlers.

# Cincinnati Bridge Sweeps: A Photo Timeline

**6/13/03**  
Meeting occurs between the City of Cincinnati, the Office of the Mayor, Police District 1, Downtown Cincinnati Inc., the Governor's Office and the Department of Transportation to discuss the removal of people from under visible downtown bridges "for their own safety". GCCH encouraged increased outreach to those living under bridges, however, the rest of the group opted for increased legal action and law enforcement

**7/8/03**  
Mayor Luken ordered the removal of the homeless camps, declaring the people there an "eyesore."

**7/10/03**  
Don Henry and Judy Newton, both residents of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street bridge attended a Civil Rights Group meeting at GCCH to begin to take action. A phone tree was initiated with Don as the starting point in case the police began the sweeps

**7/15/03**  
The police posted warnings giving everyone 72 hours to vacate the bridge

**7/17/03**  
Don organized a 24-hour demonstration and count-down against the impending sweeps which included about 30 homeless people from other bridges. The event received coverage from all local radio, television and print news. The theme of the event was "Don't Hide the Homeless, Help Them". Supporters visited those holding vigil all day and into the night.

**7/18/03**  
**7:00 am:** The bridge by the stadium was swept, but many people camping there had been relocated by GCCH to under the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street bridge  
**9:00 am:** Numerous social service agencies met under the bridge to help people into appropriate services. Around 10 people were so directed, but Don decided to stay under the bridge in order to make his point  
**5:00 pm:** Attorney Jennifer Kinsley who saw Don and GCCH on the news filed a temporary restraining order to prevent the sweeps. Amid a media flurry, she arrived with the papers for Don to sign

**7/21/03**  
Don got his day in federal court. Judge Dlott expanded the temporary restraining order to 30 days, stating that Don had more of a right to be there than the city had to ask him to leave. She asked the city and Don to begin working on a settlement

**8/11/03**  
Don and Judy and their two kittens moved out from under the bridge into an apartment

**8/14/03 - 8/29/03**  
Settlement meetings occurred with police representation. Verbally, it was agreed that the police would give 72 hours before conducting sweeps, that they would contact GCCH when warnings were given so that we could activate outreach to people under bridges and that camp resident's belongings would be treated with respect

**9/13/03**  
The outreach workers of Cincinnati formed the Homeless Outreach Group (HOG) to better address the needs of those living on the streets. Together, the members of HOG do outreach to homeless kids, people with disabilities, people with HIV, people with mental illness, panhandlers and veterans

**9/17/03**  
Councilmember Monzel passed a resolution that stated the city could immediately sweep all homeless camps without 72 hours notice. GCCH mobilized homeless people to testify against the resolution in City Hall.

**9/03**  
The Cincinnati police worked the 72 hour notice and notification into their official protocol

**Today**  
GCCH continues to work to ensure the civil rights of the homeless. Currently, a public awareness event is being organized as well as an ordinance with the city that will nullify Monzel's resolution and echo the facts laid out in the settlement

## I am the Face of Homelessness

The following is an excerpt taken from *Through Our Eyes: Reflections on Homelessness*. This newly published book, a collaboration between Mother of Mercy High School and GCCH is now available from GCCH.

... Mark took up residence on the Ohio River Bank near the Covington Wall. For the first year he had only a piece of plastic black tarp for covering. After this first year, Mark had a two-man tent to pitch. This was his home year round—winter included. Mark's first winter was very difficult. The cartilage in both his knees had frozen, which was painful and made daily life difficult. His body then started to become immune to the cold, and he could handle almost everything.

While living in homelessness, Mark worked everyday at what he calls "slave labor." Mark drove forklifts and worked on assembly lines. His co-workers were not aware of Mark's homelessness. Mark kept his state from everyone he knew except one or two of his closest friends who allowed him to shower at their house every now and then. Mark carried a razor and a bar of soap with him every morning and went to a little store where he bought a cup of coffee, then went into the bathroom to wash up and shave.

His group of about 10 friends who lived on the Covington Wall supported one another and helped each other through every day. Mark began to realize he wanted to become a part of society again; his pride pushed him. He started working with Civil Rights For the Homeless and Welcome House to bring himself out of homelessness...

## Cincinnati Ranks 6<sup>th</sup> "Meanest City"

In its August 2003 report "Illegal to be Homeless: the Criminalization of Homelessness in the United States," the National Coalition for the Homeless ranks the 20 "meanest" cities for those who are homeless to live in. Our city of Cincinnati has the distinction of being number six on that list.

The "meanest" cities are those that have a record of passing laws making it illegal to perform life-sustaining activities in public. In Cincinnati, laws have been passed to restrict the activities of panhandlers and to force them to register for a permit for verbal solicitation. Since July of this year, the city has made it a priority to remove individuals who live under highway overpass bridges. The rankings also include the general public sentiment of a city towards the homeless.

The National Coalition recommends actions such as grassroots organizing, education, legal remedies, and policy advocacy to fight this criminalization. They also support the Bring America Home Act, which would increase the amount of affordable housing available in this country. To read this report in its entirety and to find more information about the civil rights of those who are homeless, go to the civil rights section of the National Coalition for the Homeless website (<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/civilrights/index.html>).

*Timeline photos courtesy of Jimmy Heath*

If you would like to hear more about our legal strategies to ensuring the civil rights of homeless individuals, please join us at our Annual Dinner (see back page) on December 9, 2003. Attorney Jennifer Kinsley will be the Keynote Speaker and will provide an update on the lawsuits filed by homeless individuals.

## Contact Us

You may reach our staff at (513) 421-7803 at the following extensions and emails

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