CRT IN THE NEWS

A SELECTION OF MEDIA FROM JANUARY 2016 - MARCH 2016

2016

How Connecticut’s Support Systems Helped One Homeless Veteran

Senior Living: Volunteer drivers sought for Berlin and Southington

2016 National Arts Program Winners

CRT’s Weatherization Helps Large Properties Save Thousands

Community Renewal Team
Changing lives... Creating opportunity!
Services Saved One Vet’s Life

A previously homeless veteran talks about services he received from CRT and other organizations after he lost his job, home and marriage, and then tried to commit suicide.

WNPR
3/29/2016
A host of studies since 2001 show that homelessness costs exponentially more than housing, even if housing involves, as it often must for this population, support services. For example, a 2014 central Florida study said that it costs three times as much to leave people on the street than it does to provide them with supportive housing.

Recently, Governor Daniel Malloy announced $65 million in budget cuts, mostly in social services that directly impact the state’s homeless population. But people who are homeless spend more time in jail, more time in emergency departments, and more time in psychiatric wards – one study said the rate of psychiatric hospitalizations is 100 times higher – than people who are stably housed.

Without insurance or the means to pay out of pocket, the tab goes to taxpayers, and to insurance companies, who then pass that cost on to their customers.

There are still veterans who are homeless, but the state has managed to shrink their numbers to less than the average amount of months it takes to house them.

Advocates, activists and others are now shifting their focus to housing all of the state’s people who are chronically homeless by the end of this year. Alston Cunningham, executive director of New Haven’s Columbus House, said among her colleagues, “It feels like they embraced the mission all over again.”

“It’s all systems go to December 31,” she said.

As for King, he made it by train to West Haven, with the intention of walking the mile and a half from the station to the hospital — but he collapsed, and made it to the VA by ambulance.

“I never felt so alone in my life,” he said.

But he was immediately surrounded — by VA doctors, and a cadre of CNAs who never left the side of his bed.

King was introduced to people at Community Renewal Team, who worked hard to get him housed. He moved from transitional housing to a place of his own in East Hartford. He started an innovative aerospace job training program at Belcan in Windsor — a program they run with Journey Home — and he enrolled in classes at Goodwin College.

“It was hard to believe how much the system worked,” said King. “The VA worked; Belcan worked; Journey Home; Community Renewal Team. It worked.”

“Here’s the thing,” said Klein. “We will always have homeless individuals and families, and that’s not being negative. It’s a reality. When we talk about homelessness, we understand that every month there are about 60 to 70 veterans who are entering homelessness. But our goal is to touch everyone we can, and provide a plan and the support that they need for permanent housing.”

His experience gave King a new understanding of what it means to be homeless. In the new life he’s building, he’s thinking about spending time working with vets, like himself.

“For the first 47 years of my life, I had never been in the position I have been in for the past three years,” said King. “I look at homelessness in a whole new way. In the past, I might not have understood when I saw someone who was homeless. Now I do.”
Advocating for Homeless Youngsters

SCHOOLS/CHILD WELFARE

Expediting childcare for homeless kids is right for all of us
MARCH 3, 2016

Over 1,000 families and more than 2,000 children were homeless in Connecticut over the course of 2015. Nearly half of these children were under 5. Seventy percent of these families live in Fairfield, Hartford, and New Haven Counties — where our three organizations provide shelter, housing, and support services in an effort to end family homelessness.

Family homelessness is a stressful and traumatic experience — especially for the young minds of children. Research increasingly indicates that homelessness can have a detrimental impact on children’s development and ability to learn and thrive.

This creates damage in these young lives, and forces additional costs on our communities: homeless children are more likely than their peers to access medical care via emergency rooms, to require special services in schools, and to need similar, costly supports. In short — we save public funds when we help these families exit homelessness more quickly.

It is best for the health of these families — particularly for their children — and less costly for our communities to resolve family homelessness quickly by helping these families stabilize their lives. To do so requires streamlining access to quality childcare for these children to help them through a difficult period, while freeing their parents to find work or sign up for needed employment training, and secure permanent housing as quickly as possible.

Carla Miklos, Lena Rodriguez and Kellyann Day.

CT MIRROR OP-ED
3/3/2016
streamlining access to quality childcare for these children to help them through a difficult period, while freeing their parents to find work or sign up for needed employment training, and secure permanent housing as quickly as possible.

Gov. Dannel Malloy has proposed legislation (S.B. 10, an Act Increasing Access to Childcare for Children who are Homeless) to create immediate eligibility for childcare subsidies for these families. This would remove an important barrier that now stands in the way for homeless families to access needed childcare. Removing this barrier would create an environment that supports struggling parents in their effort to break the cycle of homelessness and obtain employment, so that they can take care of their families and experience stability.

It’s important to note that most of the families experiencing homelessness are unable to access the state childcare subsidy known as “Care 4 Kids,” immediately, but will eventually be eligible for this assistance. But this care can only occur after the parents meet the required conditions of being employed or enrolled in job training.

These current Care 4 Kids requirements create a Catch-22 for those facing homelessness: Families often become homeless due to the loss of a job, and the unpredictability of being homeless makes it nearly impossible for a parent to secure new employment or participate in job training.

Shelters and other service providers struggle to patch together the emergency resources that might enable parents to secure childcare so that they can get a job or gain employable skills -- and then meet the Care 4 Kids requirements to obtain the childcare subsidy that they desperately need.

Resolving this Catch-22 is critical if we are to help these families get back on their feet and housed quickly. Stabilizing these families helps relieve the unnecessary costs their homelessness will impose on our communities. That is why six other states (Arizona, Florida, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, and Washington) created prioritized eligibility for childcare subsidies based on homelessness.

This targeting can help to level the playing field for families who are systematically disadvantaged from obtaining the resources they need due to the nature and severity of their circumstances. These families’ needs may become more complex and expensive while their homelessness persists. This raises the costs of this problem to taxpayers and communities. Expediting access to childcare for these particularly vulnerable families is the right thing to do — for these families, for these children, and for our communities. Creating streamlined access to childcare subsidies for this population has a high return on investment: impacting young lives to the good, while saving precious public dollars.

Carlo Miklos is Executive Director, Operation Hope and Chair of the Board, CT Coalition to End Homelessness.

Lena Rodriguez is President and Chief Executive Officer, Community Renewal Team.

Kellyann Day, Chief Executive Officer, New Reach.
Haddam-Killingworth High School named School of Distinction; CRT provides free weatherization services; church plans women’s health conference

CRT PROVIDES FREE WEATHERIZATION SERVICES

MIDDLETOWN >> Community Renewal Team’s free weatherization can provide a way to make homes and apartments more comfortable and energy efficient while saving money. The program seals up leaks or drafts, provides energy-efficient light bulbs and installs water-saving measures. These services are free to qualifying households. In addition, a technician will see if the family qualifies for insulation, furnace cleaning and repair, new windows, or a voucher toward a new refrigerator or freezer. In 2015, CRT weatherized 3,806 homes and apartments throughout central Connecticut. The program is supported by Energize Connecticut.

To apply, call or email CRT for an application, or print it off of the CRT website. Fill it out completely. Renters must have their landlord sign. Mail, scan/email, fax or drop off the completed application. A weatherization contractor will be in touch within a few weeks.

Homeowners, tenants and landlords can get more information by emailing weatherization@crtcct.org or calling 860-360-5354. See details at www.crtcct.org.

Community Renewal Team is the Community Action Agency for Middlesex and Hartford Counties and one of the largest human service organizations in Connecticut. CRT’s programs include Head Start, Meals on Wheels, energy assistance, supportive housing and shelters, and many others, serving people in more than 60 cities and towns in both our core catchment area and throughout Connecticut. Visit www.crtct.org to learn more.

MIDDLETOWN PRESS
3/23/2016
CRT’s Weatherization Helps Large Properties Save Thousands

Community Renewal Team’s Weatherization Program (Home Energy Solutions) helps property owners and housing authorities save thousands of dollars, improve property value and increase the occupants’ comfort. In 2015, CRT weatherized 839 units of multi-family housing and an additional 3,134 single-family units throughout Connecticut.

CRT helps owners access free services, incentives and financing to improve the efficiency of their properties. Technicians seal leaks and install efficient light bulbs and water-saving devices. Energy auditors assess the property’s energy usage and the age/function of the heating system. They consider additional measures such as insulation; high-efficiency heating, cooling or water systems; Energy STAR appliances; and exterior or common area lighting.

Last year, CRT helped more than 100 private landlords like Rego Realty of Hartford. Nearly all of their 730 units include heat and hot water in the rent. “Clearly, it’s important to contain our utility costs, which holds down our overall costs,” said Margaret Retegui, one of the managers. Nearly two-thirds of Rego’s units have already been weatherized, and they continue to work with CRT.

In the coming months, two Rego buildings will have complete heating system replacements. “We’re taking those buildings from steam radiators to hot water baseboards in every apartment,” explained John Latour, the CRT Weatherization Director. “It’s unusual to get authorization for a project that large, but we’re happy to do this for a good partner like Rego.”

Another large project for this spring is an upgrade of all exterior and common area lighting at The Retreat, a 100-unit assisted living residence in Hartford. The total cost of $74,000 will be covered almost entirely by incentives from Eversource.

Housing Authorities Benefit

Over the years, CRT Weatherization has worked with more than 34 housing authorities, with East Windsor being among the most recent. Executive Director Linda Collins says that her 84 units were built between 1968 and 1989. The apartments were drafty and residents complained to management about their utility bills. “Last July CRT came in and weatherized each of the apartments, they worked fast and completed all the work in a two-week period,” Collins said.

Her complex also qualified for new floodlights, and an unexpected benefit: Having completed weatherization, East Windsor was eligible for a matching program through the State of Connecticut. They will install new front and back door lights with photo cells – turning on automatically at sundown. The work is valued at $46,000 according to Eversource. “These are improvements we could never afford out of our budgets,” Collins said.

For more information email weatherization@crtct.org, call (860) 560-5354, or visit www.crtct.org

Dan Yagmin of CRT sets up a blower door test to detect leaks and drafts at a property on Allen Place. Below, he explains to a tenant how new light bulbs will save them money.
Sharing Art With the Community

CRT’s 25th annual National Arts exhibit attracted more than 250 entries and brought hundreds to the reception and award ceremony which featured jazz, poetry and more.

HARTFORD COURANT
2/3/2016

REACH 2,334
POST CLICKS 4,495
LIKES, SHARES & COMMENTS 375
Middletown art students garner ribbons at National Arts Program show

Shelby Burger's blue ribbon owl was a winner. (courtesy press)

By Special to The Press

MIDDLETOWN — Eight Middletown High School students, plus a 2015 graduate, had art exhibited at the National Arts Program show at Capital Community College in Hartford recently.

Middletown residents walked away with more ribbons than those living in any other town in Connecticut, according to the Community Renewal Team.

Students Angela Miszajewski and Victoria Domziewski received awards for their work, as did alumna Olivia Hunter, senior Sabrina Gardell and juniors Sarah Pickering and Shelby Burger for their photography.

Other MHS students who earned ribbons were Geonna Kline, 19, took a top prize for the third year in a row, for a paper sculpture of an owl. This year, she competed as an adult and chose to enter as an intermediate. Nathaniel Roseblatt won a third prize in the teen category for his drawing “Spilled Milk.” Honorable mentions were also awarded to Meghan Gervity (adult amateur) and Ashley Clow and Juliana Pickett, both in the youth category.

Miszajewski received an honorable mention for her photograph and Domziewski also earned an honorable mention in the competition for her work in sculpture, according to a press release.

“Angela has been a dedicated art student pursuing a variety of disciplines ranging from clay to drawing and painting to photography,” teacher Nicole London said in the release. “She captures her interest in the arts outside of school, seeking out special locations to conceptualize for her work.”

Art teacher Charlotte McColl praised Domziewski in the release. “She is in her third year of pottery and sculpture. Her artwork always exhibits a well-crafted excellence. The award-winning clay sculpture is a great example of her personal style and strong work ethic.”

The awards were presented at a reception held at Capital Community College on Jan. 50.

For a slide show of the event, see erlot.org/en/events/national-arts.
Gus Keach-Longo, CRT’s Vice President for Senior Services, testified to preserve funding for affordable assisted living before the Human Services Sub-Committee of the Appropriations Committee (above); explained The Retreat’s unique funding model on WTIC-AM radio; and participated in a Legislative Forum on the future of senior services with Rep. Peggy Sayers.
Celebrating Our Employees

At this year’s Employee Recognition Luncheon, Janie Aiken of Middletown was honored for 45 years of service to the community, and Nancy Shapiro for 25!
How to Avoid Eviction

Facing Eviction or Foreclosure?

Attend an informative workshop and learn how CRT can help!

$55 for “Qualified” Applicants—This program can help catch up on a portion of your missed payments.

In this workshop, you can:
- Book an appointment to start your application process
- Get started by bringing any of the following documents as you can:
  1. Income verification and ID for all adult household members
  2. Birth certificates & social security cards for all household members
  3. Documentation to support hardship (reason you fell behind)
  4. Proof of missed rent or mortgage payments
  5. Name, address, and phone number of your landlord or bank

WHO
- Tenants and homeowners who may lose their homes

WHAT
- Workshop explores how to avoid eviction or foreclosure

WHEN
- Thursday, March 17, 5-7 pm

WHERE
- Russell Library, 123 Broad Street, Middletown (Hubbard Room)

WHY
- CRT can help preserve your housing!

Refreshments provided

For more information, call (860) 347-4465 or foreclosurehelp@crtct.org

Keep Calm Book Appointment And Save Your Home!!

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3/14/2016

HARTFORD COURANT
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