

Jan Hus Presbyterian Church & Neighborhood House
Homeless Outreach Advocacy Program
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June 29, 2010

Executive Summary

The Homeless Outreach and Advocacy Program of Jan Hus Presbyterian Church and Neighborhood House has a two-fold mission: service and advocacy. Since 1990, this program has provided a variety of direct services to people who are part of low-income and homeless populations in New York City. Our outreach staff works with affiliated organizations to mobilize and advocate for changes in public policy that affects those who truly have much less than most of us.

Five days a week, from 10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M., our staff and volunteers attend to the basic needs of more than sixty guests, including weekly and monthly provisions of food from our pantry. Relying on contributions and staffed by senior volunteers, we provide our guests with a full array of garments from our general and back-to-work clothing center, along with toiletries and other personal use items.

Conditions are such that many who come to us have no permanent address. To assist people in such situations, we receive mail for nearly six hundred individuals, assisting them with needs related to computer access, phones, fax machines, and photocopiers.

We also provide limited storage for individuals who need to carry around all their belongings. Adjacent to our food pantry, we have thirty-six bins to help people who are chronically homeless or in other situations that require such a service. A very popular accommodation, we are exploring ways to expand the facility to nearly double our current capacity.

Collaborating with other churches and centers who offer meals during the week, we meet the demand for dinner on Tuesday evenings from September through June. (St. James' Church has traditionally served meals on Tuesday during the summer months.) At each meal, we welcome more than one hundred people for a hot dinner and a place to join together in community and conversation. In a very real way, these meals support and build the relationships with our guests that helps to create the willingness and trust to work with us in transitions to housing, back-to-work, substance abuse treatment, and others of life's many bridges.

We know that this is the work of community. We partner with others to provide funds to individuals facing eviction, based on their specific situation. We continue to find ourselves in the position of being the "last chance" for some of those facing eviction, and we do all we can to prevent that from happening. Along with funds to stay evictions, we provide small grants to cover utilities and other household related expenses. We find this to be one of the fastest growing areas of demand in the services we offer and one of the most draining on resources.

We are privileged to have a skilled staff that assists our guests in retrieving all sorts of vital records and government-issued identification. We employ a full-time MSW, two full-time outreach workers, and several interns and volunteers throughout the year. We continue to be a site for students and seminarians from Union Theological Seminary, New York University, and several other colleges. Along with helping those among us who have less, we are intentional about helping others to prepare for this work as they journey toward their own careers in this or other related fields.

We are engaged with a growing number of sister and brother organizations who refer individuals to us for wardrobes that are appropriate for job interviews and employment. We have volunteers and staff who will spend the extra time needed to help folks select the right garments to “dress for success” when interviewing or showing up for work. We are experiencing an increased demand for this service and are working with others to create a mentoring program to help our guests in finding successful and long-term employment.

The closing of centers operated by New York City directly affects the number of people who come to us for services they formerly received elsewhere. In the last three years, we have seen a three-fold increase in almost every area of support and operation. There are strong indications that New York City will be closing an additional center on the West Side in the latter half of 2010, and we expect to feel the impact of that decision in the demand for our services. With the help of our supporters, we will do what we have always done: step up to meet the need.

In many ways, we are one of the key providers of daily support and relief to the neediest population in Manhattan. Were we not here, our guests would be required to travel two miles north or south of our location to receive many of the services we offer. This geographic reality, along with the requirement for travel to other locations for medical and human services, has increased our expenditures for MetroCards to a projected \$2500 in 2010, providing nearly 600 round-trips for such assistance.

Based on the latest available Census Summary (2000), there are close to 400,000 families living in poverty in New York City. Over 1.6 million people live below the poverty level. Our mission serves many of these individuals and families, sisters and brothers who face the possibility of going without food, being evicted, not having enough clothing or a basic supply of toiletries, clean socks, undergarments, and access to bathroom facilities.

Without the availability of services we offer to those in need, many would be denied the opportunity to have access to a mailing address, computers, telephones, and emergency financial assistance for retrieval of vital records such as birth certificates, government-issued identification, and marriage certificates (for family shelters).

The funding we request from anyone who is able to help us is very important in continuing all these programs by supporting our direct service expenses and operations.

Cutbacks in city, state, and federal funding continue to exacerbate the challenges we face. With you help and that of others, we will keep our doors open and to reach out with a genuine welcome and meaningful support to the most vulnerable of our neighbors, continuously impacted by cutbacks in government aid.

A great majority of the fifteen thousand individuals who will visit our program during the course of the year, will come for food and clothing. All too often, these visits include families and children of all ages. Funds provided our supporters directly makes a difference in the lives of these individuals and their families.

The Homeless Outreach Advocacy Program of Jan Hus Church and Neighborhood House welcomes our guests with the care and compassion that may be lacking in their experiences with other agencies. For some of the people who are chronically homeless, we are their last resort. We do our best to meet our guests where they are – emotionally, spiritually, physically, and economically. We encourage our guests to meet with staff for an assessment of their situation, a discussion of their goals and needs, and offer referrals to more comprehensive services and housing, in addition to ongoing supportive counseling.

Our program is faith-based and it is self-sustaining. Services that the Homeless Outreach Advocacy Program provides are not contingent upon any guest's religious affiliation. All are welcome here. We do not proselytize, striving only to meet our guests with the dignity, respect, and care to which all human beings are entitled. We believe this is what we are called to do. In the final analysis, our mission and work is about how we treat others. We invite you to continue to join with us in any of the ways you are able.

Programs and Services

For more than two decades, our primary community service program at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church and Neighborhood House continues to be the Homeless Outreach Advocacy Program. This program was begun in response to the growing needs of people who were homeless in our neighborhood. Since then, we have served sixty-one thousand hot meals and the nearly seventy thousand people who have visited our outreach offices. Jan Hus Presbyterian Church and Neighborhood House relies upon the generosity of others. We continue to expand services to meet the growing needs for career development, self-sufficiency opportunities, and educational programs for the women and men we call guests. Our range of services is highlighted below.

- **Tuesday Dinner Program:** This program provides a hot meal in our Pisek Hall for an average of one hundred people every Tuesday evening during the months of September through June. In 2009, we expanded our dinner program, responding to a void created when a partner church was unable to meet its commitment for the summer months. Our dinner is a part of a concerted effort of five churches on the Upper East Side, all providing dinner on a particular night of the week. A neighboring Church, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, helps to prepare the meals and supports our program with volunteers, as well.
- **Assessment, referrals and resource search assistance:** The Homeless Outreach Advocacy Program's office is open for walk-ins Monday through Friday from 10 A.M. – 2 P.M. We provide a qualified staff, interns, and volunteers to provide the services we offer, as well as assist in assessment and referrals to other services. We have contacts with more than 15,000 individuals each year (a 300% increase since March 2008). We meet with our guests to help them in setting goals to improve their lives, as well as the basics to get through the day. Some guests seek relief from drug or alcohol abuse; others need job readiness assistance, while many seek permanent shelter.

- Mail and office services: The Homeless Outreach Advocacy Program of Jan Hus Presbyterian Church and Neighborhood House offers free use of telephones and fax and copy machines. Additionally, we provide a permanent mailing address at the church as an address of record for those with no or temporary housing. Through this service, nearly six hundred people (an increase of one hundred fifty people in the last two years) receive their mail at the church. One of our most important programs, this service enables guests to receive their benefit checks, navigate the welfare system, obtain Section 8 apartments, enroll in job training courses, set up job interviews, or help in providing entry into full-fledged vocational, rehabilitation, and detoxification programs.
- Job Placement Support: Our staff assists our guests who are seeking work with the preparation of résumés, following-up on job leads, using all our mail, phone, computers and Internet access to achieve gainful employment.
- Clothing donations: Clothing donated by neighbors, congregants, building users, and other organizations is provided free of charge Monday through Friday to many without enough to wear. We assist those on their way to job interviews or work with appropriate garments.
- Emergency assistance: Through our food pantry, we provide food to people who need it: those with low-income, immigrants, and senior citizens. Our pantry service reaches an estimated 400 people a week. Additionally, we provide hygiene kits, medical supplies (band aids and other over-the-counter products) to those who live on the streets, in the shelters, or in their own housing and are struggling financially. Transportation assistance is available to guests of the Homeless Outreach Advocacy Program with MetroCards for those we refer to other agencies or who have pressing needs for travel.
- Anti-eviction assistance: We collaborate through our Emergency Assistance Program with neighboring faith-based communities and other agencies through contributions or mutual funding. Most of those who benefit from this program are people who, being at risk of eviction, need matching funds to qualify for the support of other agencies. We do our best to help individuals and families avoid missing out on support. We streamline our efforts to help as many as we can remain in their own homes.
- Volunteerism: We are in a unique position to offer those who seek to help others a chance to do so. In 2010, we expanded our volunteer program to provide community, religious, and youth organizations the opportunity to “give back.” We also are available to help other groups create outreach programs in their own organization. In 2010, the people we serve will benefit from more than 5,000 volunteer hours. Those volunteers will benefit, as well. We see this clearly as part of our mission.
- Circle of the Arts: In 2010, we have reprised one of the most popular programs of our past: Circle of the Arts. This popular outreach, invites our guests to express themselves through the arts in many variety of ways. We have high expectations for this exciting offering as we go forward.

An Invitation:

We invite you to visit any time for a full view of our organization and operations.