

R E S I D E N C E JOURNAL

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Chicago, Illinois  
Permit No. 5398

# Journal

A publication for and by Chicago public housing residents February/March 2005 /Volume 8 Number 2



## A QUESTIONABLE CONNECTION

*Residents' Journal and Better Government Association Investigate CHA Contractor Donations*  
*Story Begins Page 4*

## **News Briefs**

### **Lawsuit Settled**

A federal class action lawsuit filed just over two years ago that condemned the relocation process in the Plan for Transformation is at an end, following agreement between the lawyers who filed it and the CHA on a new program that will provide "best and reasonable" relocation services.

The Enhanced Housing Opportunity Program provides relocating residents with caseworkers, assistance with security deposits and tours of low-poverty, diverse communities. These services are available to all residents who have been relocated into high-poverty, predominately African American communities.

"These residents are now being given a second chance," said Bill Wilen, attorney at the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law.

### **Section 8 Landlords Get Warning**

Landlords renting to Section 8 Voucher holders must meet ramped up selection criteria beginning immediately, according to a letter obtained by the *Residents' Journal* that was sent out to currently participating property owners in early March. The more than 14,000 owners participating in the program must address any public debts and other issues with the city and county, the letter said.

"[W]e have begun forwarding names of our property owners to the city of Chicago and to the Cook County Treasurer's Office to cross-check for outstanding code violations, unpaid tax bills, parking tickets, or water and sewer fees as well as any other pending violations," the letter states. Building code violations, pending cases in housing court or unpaid taxes could also land participants in hot water.

The new policy was later approved at the March 15 meeting of the CHA Board of Commissioners meeting.

### **EITC Outreach Results Doubted**

Despite efforts in recent years to alert families about the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a tax refund available to low-income parents, the percentage of recipients that know about EITC has edged downward in recent years, according to data published in a newly released study.

The Internal Revenue Service and community groups have increased their efforts to raise EITC awareness, according to Urban Institute researcher Elaine Maag in "Disparities in Knowledge of the EITC," yet the results published in the policy paper show decreases across education levels in awareness.

Low-income parents who have attended some college are, at 71.8 percent, almost twice as often aware of the program than those qualified parents with less than a high school education. (Just 39.8 percent of this group knows about EITC). In 2001, 79.9 percent of this group were aware of the program. Overall, awareness has dropped an average of nearly 6 ½ percent. Data for the study was derived from the 2001 National Survey of America's Families.

### **Middle-Income Housing Heavily Subsidized**

Mortgage interest deductions, capital gains exclusions on home sales, property tax deductions and other subsidies for homeowners dwarf the amount of money the federal government spends directly on public housing, Section 8s and housing for military families. So says "The Trend in Federal Housing Tax Expenditures," a new analysis from the Washington, D.C.-based Tax Policy Center. The analysis demonstrates that middle- to wealthy-income households are "paid" through federal subsidies to own their homes. Although these subsidies are growing, the analysis also showed that federal spending for poor and working class housing is expected to decline in coming years.

# **To All CHA relocated residents with Housing Vouchers or Those Residing in Temporary CHA Replacement Units!!!**

If you and your family have or do not have any relocation issues of concern (utility, unit or safety), ***Residents' Journal*** would like to know.

**We The People Media**, the publishers of **RJ**, are currently tracking where everyone is going to find out if they are living in a safe, affordable, and decent replacement unit as promised by the Chicago Housing Authority. Call Beauty Turner at 312-745-2686.

# **Haymarket House AD**

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*Residents' Journal is published by We The People Media, 4859 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, IL 60615. All Chicago Public Housing Residents are welcome to contribute to Residents' Journal©. Please call (312) 745-2682 or fax us at (773) 285-2853 with your ideas, comments and concerns.*

# Our Mission

This publication is committed to the journalistic principles of fair representation and free speech. Above all else, this publication will strive to fairly and accurately represent all sides of the issues that the editorial staff chooses to investigate. In maintaining an unwavering guarantee of editorial independence, this publication will contribute to the American media's mission of faithfully providing balanced, truthful accounts and information.

*Residents' Journal* strives to be accessible to all communities, regardless of income, ethnicity or disability.

We The People Media is committed to the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which protects the Freedom of the Press.

The views expressed in this publication do not reflect the views of We The People Media or its staff.

# Our Readership

In January 2001, Target Market News Service, national experts on African American media markets, conducted a readership study for *We The People Media* sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Below are findings of this study:

\* *Residents' Journal* is the unique source of critical information for Chicago public housing residents. Nearly every respondent (92 percent) said they wanted to see *Residents' Journal* printed more often.

\* *Residents' Journal* readers are actively involved in the transformation of their communities. Respondents ranked "Neighborhood News" (80 percent) and "CHA Stories" (75 percent) as their favorite sections, closely followed by "Citywide News" (61 percent) and "Health Stories" (52 percent).

\* *Residents' Journal*'s readers are

active citizens. 84 percent of the respondents voted in the last election while 67 percent attend religious services regularly.

\* *Residents' Journal*'s readers shop at large chain stores such as Walgreen's (73 percent), Jewel (70 percent) and Aldi's (67 percent). Readers also eat monthly at restaurants such as McDonald's (69 percent), Popeye's (39 percent), White Castle (34 percent) and KFC (39 percent).

\* Readers spend a large share of their income on groceries. Fifty-five (55) percent spend between \$100 and \$299 on groceries monthly; 22 percent spend between \$300 and \$499 on groceries monthly.

\* Readers are extremely interested in enhancing their skills: 52 percent are interested in computer training, 41 percent are interested in job training and 20 percent would like to receive nursing or health care training.

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*Residents' Journal and the Urban Youth International Journalism Program are supported by the Chicago Reader, the Open Society Institute, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Chicago Community Trust, the Albert Pick Fund, the Polk Brothers Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the law firm of Jenner and Block, and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Chicago.*

# A Questionable Connection

**A**n 8-month investigation by *Residents' Journal* and the Better Government Association has found that dozens of contractors for the Chicago Housing Authority have given hundreds of thousands of dollars to a political organization linked to CHA CEO Terry Peterson.

*Residents' Journal* and the Better Government Association found that many companies gave to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization – a political entity linked to Peterson – just before or just after they were awarded contracts from the CHA. One firm gave a \$2,500 donation to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization the same day the firm was awarded a construction contract worth \$3,292,095.

*Residents' Journal* and BGA found at least 63 companies who donated to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization and also received contracts from CHA. These donations are particularly surprising given that the 17th Ward contains no CHA family public housing developments, senior buildings or redevelopment sites.

Many of the companies are involved in CHA's 10-year, \$1.6 billion Plan for Transformation, including managers of public housing sites, relocation counselors, moving companies, developers and construction companies. One of the CHA contractors who contributed to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization was criticized repeatedly by public housing residents for providing poor service. At least one CHA contractor who also gave to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization was cited by the federal government for failing to document their contributions to residents, as required under federal law.

Two CHA contractors which are based out-of-state made their only political contributions inside Illinois to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization and related political candidates.

The 17th Ward Democratic Organization's political fund is heavily dependent on firms that do business with CHA. One-third of the income to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization came from CHA contractors from 2001 to 2004. In those years, the 17th Ward Democratic Organization took in a total of \$673,333.05, of which \$250,368.32 – 37.18 percent – came from contractors at the CHA. **RJ** and BGA computed these figures by comparing public filings of the contributions to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization with a list of CHA contractors.

It is not illegal for CHA contractors to give donations to political organizations. However, it is illegal for government officials to condition government action, such as the awarding or renewing of contracts, on the basis of political contributions. Any such actions could be considered bribery or extortion under state or federal law, according to a legal analysis by BGA.

Further, federal employees, as well as state and local employees funded by federal dollars, are at risk of being found in violation of the federal Hatch Act if they engage in overt political activity while on duty, using government resources for political activity or using their official titles when soliciting political contributions. Almost all of CHA's budget comes from the federal government, making CHA employees subject to the Hatch Act.

CHA states that its policy is that "Contracts with a value equal to or greater than \$100,000 must be led by an open competitive sealed bidding process, or competitive negotiation after public advertisement." Anyone who interferes with such an open and competitive process through the use of undue influence or interference could be found in violation of state or federal law, according to BGA's legal analysis.

## 15 Years of Political History

Peterson's political history with the 17th Ward dates back more than 15 years. The strong connections between Peterson and the 17th Ward are clear both in the public record and in the financial details of the 17th Ward's political committees.

Peterson was chief of staff to 17th Ward Ald. Alan Streeter from 1990 to 1994, according to a biography on the web site of the Millennial Housing Commission. In that year, he left Streeter's office to accept a post as Assistant Commissioner for the city's Department of Planning.

In April 1996, Streeter pled guilty to federal charges of extortion and filing a false income tax return under the Silver Shovel investigation. Shortly after Streeter's resignation, Mayor Richard M. Daley appointed Peterson to replace Streeter as 17th Ward Alderman.

Peterson won a special election in February 1997 to fill Streeter's term and then won his first full term in 1999. In March 2000, Peterson won a Democratic Party election to

**Research, interviews with residents, officials and contractors and reporting by Mary C. Johns, Beauty Turner, Gabriel Piemonte and Micah Maidenberge at the Residents' Journal. Legal analysis and research by Dan Sprehe and Jay Stewart at the Better Government Association. The article was written by Ethan Michaeli from Residents' Journal.**

become 17th Ward Committeeman, according to the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners. Ward committeemen are elected within their respective political parties to serve four-year terms as the chief political officers in their respective wards. They control party resources, including the Ward Democratic Organizations.

Because of Ald. Streeter's criminal prosecution, however, the 17th Ward Democratic Organization had been disbanded. To help with the costs of elections and political activity, Peterson had another political fund, "Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson," which was created August 29, 1996, according to forms filed with the state Board of Elections.

Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson was active for all three of Peterson's campaigns. During the first six months of 1997, Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson started off with \$12,195.31, raised an additional \$115,455 and spent \$123,976.72 to help Peterson win the special election to fill Streeter's term. For the February 1999 campaign for alderman, records show that Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson raised and spent substantial funds: In the last six months of 1998, Citizens for Terry Peterson started off with \$91,582.81, raised \$53,495 and spent \$49,971.74. In the first six months of 1999, Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson started off with \$95,106.07, raised an additional \$10,131.34 and spent \$64,685.29, much of it on campaign-related expenditures such as printing costs, transportation, food, publicity and mailings. For the 2000 campaign for 17th Ward Democratic committeeman, Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson started with \$78,407.92 in the bank and spent \$46,656.37 on palm cards, posters, billboards, mailings and other expenses.

In May 2000, Mayor Richard M. Daley appointed Peterson to replace Philip Jackson as CHA CEO. Daley subsequently appointed Latasha Thomas to replace Peterson as 17th Ward alderman.

Thomas, an attorney, served as Peterson's chief of staff from 1996 to 1997, according to her biography on the City of Chicago Web site. She then worked for the City Department of Human Services until Mayor Daley appointed her alderman.

Thomas also served as Treasurer of Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson after February 2000, according to the Illinois State Board of Elections. In June 2000, about the time Peterson took over at CHA, Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson had \$31,751.55.

Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson had minor activity after Peterson became head of the CHA. The fund did not take in new contributions but in September 2000, Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson donated \$10,000 to help launch Citizens to Elect Latasha Thomas.

With the help of her new political fund, Thomas won the February 2001 special election to fill the remainder of Peterson's term. Citizens to Elect Latasha Thomas started off 2001 with \$48,177.54, raised an additional \$92,248, and spent \$108,634.45 on buttons, political advertisements and other campaign items.

Peterson continues to appear prominently on Thomas' Web site. He is listed as her predecessor in her biography on the City of Chicago Web site and appears in a photograph and press release for the groundbreaking of a new restaurant in the 17th Ward.

The 17th Ward Democratic Organization was reestablished Sept. 24, 2001, with the same chairman and treasurer as Citizens to Elect Latasha Thomas, Albert Blanchard and Gary Watkins. That same month, Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson donated the remaining balance of its funds - \$218.40 – to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization and then shut down its operations. Both Citizens to Elect Latasha Thomas and the 17th Ward Democratic Organization remain active committees.

The new 17th Ward Democratic Organization provided tens of thousands of dollars for Thomas' 2003 campaign. In the second one-half of 2002, Citizens to Elect Latasha Thomas spent \$10,784.44. In contrast, the 17th Ward Democratic Organization spent more than seven times that amount –

\$74,732.48. In the first one-half of 2003, Citizens to Elect Latasha Thomas spent \$79,788.68. In that same period of time, the 17th Ward Democratic Organization spent \$39,010.28.

For the March 2004 campaign, the 17th Ward Democratic Organization assisted Thomas with her successful effort to become committeeman of the 17th Ward and also helped Milton Patterson with his campaign to become state representative from the 32nd district.

Some time before he decided to run for state representative, Patterson, a former assistant deputy commissioner for the City Buildings Department, apparently succeeded Terry Peterson as 17th Ward Committeeman. Peterson won the February 2000 election to serve a four-year term as committeeman but records are not available at the state board of elections or at the Cook County clerk's office to indicate when Peterson resigned from the post or when Patterson became committeeman.

Citizens to Elect Milton Patterson was created Jan. 13, 2004 and has the same chairman as the 17th Ward Democratic Organization, Albert Blanchard. Funds from the 17th Ward Democratic Organization provided the decisive difference for Patterson over Charles G. Morrow III, an incumbent who had been in place since 1986.

Discrepancies exist between the reports filed with the state Board of Elections by the 17th Ward Democratic Organization and those filed by Citizens to Elect Milton Patterson. The 17th Ward Democratic Organization reported that it donated \$47,500 to Citizens to Elect Milton Patterson in 5 separate contributions from Jan. 10, 2004 to Feb. 28, 2004. The 17th Ward Democratic Organization also stated that they made two loans to Citizens to Elect Milton Patterson - \$20,000 on March 10, 2004 and \$10,000 on April 19, 2004.

Citizens to Elect Milton Patterson, however, stated that they received 4 donations from Jan. 10, 2004 to Feb. 24, 2004 totaling \$32,500. They also reported they incurred 4 loans from March 2, 2004 to May 24, 2004, totaling \$53,000.

Depending on which filing is correct, the 17th Ward Democratic Organization's contributions to Citizens to Elect Milton Patterson are approximately 40 percent of the total.

## Interviews With Ward Officials

Ald. Thomas confirmed that Peterson has an active relationship with the ward, though she denied that Peterson was steering CHA contractors to make donations to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization.

"We talk every day," Thomas said in an interview in late March. "We're friends. We talk about things like how my daughter is doing, and I ask him how his mother is doing."

Thomas said that Peterson resigned as 17th Ward Democratic Committeeman "when he became head of the CHA."

But she added that Peterson continues to serve on the Community Development Corporation Board, assists the alderman when individuals with Housing Choice Vouchers (formerly known as Section 8s) contact her, and remains active in additional ward activities.

"He attends CAPS meetings and talks to the police captain and attends 17th Ward fundraisers," Thomas said.

Thomas said that she did not remember if Peterson had donated funds to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization. State Board of Elections records show Peterson donated \$200 to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization on Oct. 8, 2003, \$150 on April 19, 2004 and another \$150 on June 16, 2004. Peterson also donated \$500 on March 2, 2004 to Citizens to Elect Milton Patterson and made separate donations to the campaigns of Mayor Richard M. Daley, Cook County Commissioner Jerry Butler and state Rep. Calvin Giles.

Thomas denied that Peterson helped the ward organization get donations from CHA contractors. She maintained that she devotes special effort to get African American contractors involved in the ward's activities.

**(Continued on Page 5)**

## (Continued from Page 4)

Albert Blanchard, the chairman of the 17th Ward Democratic Organization, Citizens to Elect Milton Patterson as well as Citizens to Elect Latasha Thomas, confirmed that Peterson is active in 17th Ward politics and community life, though he also denied that Peterson was influencing CHA contractors to give funds to the 17th Ward Democratic Organization.

In a telephone interview, Blanchard, a retired city employ-

ee, noted that Peterson was a resident of the ward.

"He still has an interest," Blanchard said. "He comes through the ward office occasionally, community meetings, meetings with the constituency, talking about the needs of the community."

Blanchard said that he is not involved in fundraising for the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization and focuses instead on the "day to day political operations." He explained that he did not know about donations from CHA contractors to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization.

"I'm not so deeply involved," Blanchard said. "I don't look at the D-2s [political contribution reports filed with state and county election officials]."

Blanchard said he did not know why CHA contractors would give to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization, but speculated that they may have learned of Peterson's history with the ward.

"I think much of it might be perception," Blanchard said. "Terry Peterson was previously the alderman. People perceive they might be able to gain an in-road. It's human nature to think, to try and leverage ourselves."

Gary Watkins, the treasurer of the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization, Citizens to Elect Latasha Thomas and Citizens to Elect Milton Patterson, said he did not want to comment on this story.

"I'm not in a leadership position," Watkins said. "I don't know anything."

State Rep. Milton Patterson did not return phone calls seeking comment for this article.

## CHA's Comments

CHA spokesperson Kim Johnson verified that Peterson was active in various 17<sup>th</sup> Ward activities, including service as a board member of the Community Development Corporation Board. But Johnson emphasized that Peterson was not involved in any fundraising activities for the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization or related organizations.

Johnson also emphasized that Peterson has no role in awarding of contracts at CHA. While Peterson regularly attends 17<sup>th</sup> Ward events including fundraisers and may have spoken to CHA contractors at those events, Johnson said he did not try and persuade CHA contractors to make donations to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization.

"Terry is not involved in the awarding of contracts," Johnson said. "Nobody can come up and say he said 'I want you to give money to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward.'"

Johnson said that Peterson did not host fundraising events for the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization, was not aware of any literature from the ward organization that listed his name and would not have allowed his name to be used on fundraising materials.

"He is not involved in fundraising activities," Johnson said.

Johnson said that Peterson is a 15-year resident of the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward and remains very active in ward activities. She said he attends various meetings, including CAPS meetings and events that have to do with development. She said Peterson is particularly concerned with bringing African American-owned businesses into the ward.

"There are times we [CHA staff] have tried to get him to go home and he is still out in the community."

"If he is not doing CHA business, he is doing something for his community," Johnson said.

"You are talking about someone who, on the one hand, is trying to do right with the Plan [for Transformation], and, on the other hand, really cares about his community."

Johnson said that Peterson continues to help Ald. Thomas with projects that were initiated during his tenure as alderman. She specifically mentioned the opening of B.J.'s Market, an African American-owned restaurant, and the Martin Luther King Center, a new community facility. Peterson appears on Thomas' official Web site in a photographed ground-breaking for B.J.'s Market and is mentioned in Thomas' press releases for the openings of both the King Center and B.J.'s Market.

"There's no CHA money in B.J.'s Market," she said. "We didn't build it."

"You have to go out into the community to make these things happen."

Johnson added that Peterson was applying his experience in planning and development both as head of CHA and as an active 17<sup>th</sup> Ward resident. As a board member of the community development corporation, he has made particular effort to bring new businesses into the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward.

"It would seem odd if someone who was so actively involved in rebuilding so many other communities would not be involved in rebuilding his own," Johnson said.

"He enjoys being a part of neighborhood building."

## The Contractor Connection

The new 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization saw a rapid increase in fundraising since it was re-constituted in September 2001. Much of the increase was due to contributions from CHA contractors. Many contractors made donations about the time they received contracts from CHA. Though some contractors have extensive records of political contributions, some CHA contractors made their only political donations to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization.

By the end of 2001, the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization had brought in \$47,791.40 – of that figure, \$14,650 came from CHA contractors, according to an analysis from Residents' Journal and the Better Government Association. In 2002, the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization brought in \$172,668.32 in itemized contributions, of which \$60,493.32 came from CHA contractors. In 2003, the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization brought in \$202,355, of which \$82,300 came from CHA contractors. In 2004, the fund brought in \$250,518.33, of which \$92,925 came from CHA contractors.

Some CHA contractors gave to multiple candidates in Illinois but gave a large share of their political contributions to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization and related candidates – Latasha Thomas and Milton Patterson.

**Residents' Journal** and the Better Government Association compared the amounts and dates of CHA contracts with political donations reported to the state Board of Elections. A list of CHA contracts obtained from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development under the Freedom of Information Act, however, does not match precisely the list of contractors and the contract amounts on CHA's web site. HUD officials were unable to explain the differences between their records and CHA's. Where there are discrepancies, **Residents' Journal** and the Better Government Association have cited both sources.

From 2001 to 2004, H.J. Russell, a real estate development firm based in Atlanta, Ga., made \$19,050 in contributions to a number of political campaigns in Illinois, including the campaigns of Mayor Richard M. Daley, former U.S. Rep. William Lipinski (D-3) and Ald. William Beavers (7), according to the state Board of Elections.

But H.J. Russell gave more than 68 percent of its total political contributions to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization and related candidates. H.J. Russell gave the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization a total of \$13,000 in 9 separate contributions from October 4, 2002 to September 23, 2004. The \$13,000 in contributions to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization represented 68.2 percent of the total the company gave to political organizations in Illinois from 2001 to 2004.

H.J. Russell made its two largest contributions to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization shortly before it won two contracts from CHA. H.J. Russell gave the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization \$5,000 on October 4, 2002, approximately three months before it was awarded its first contract with CHA. That contract began February 1, 2003 and ended January 31, 2005, and was for \$9,423,032 for management services at ABLA Homes and Loomis Courts on the West Side, according to a list of CHA contractors obtained from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. CHA's web site indicates that the same contract was worth \$8,073,834.

H.J. Russell gave Citizens to Elect Latasha Thomas \$500 on February 25, just after it won its first contract and approximately two months before it was awarded its second contract with CHA. The second contract was for \$489,540 for additional property management services, according to HUD. CHA's web site indicates that the contract was worth \$2,657,625.

H.J. Russell did not return telephone calls asking for comment on this story.

The list of CHA contractors who also gave to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization also includes local firms with extensive records of political involvement. According to its Web site, d'Escoto Inc. is one of Illinois' largest Latino-owned construction firms and has worked for Chicago's departments of Aviation, Sewers, and Transportation as well as Cook County Hospital, the CTA, Chicago Public Schools and Metra. The company garnered previous press attention because it is run by the father of Miguel d'Escoto, commissioner of the City of Chicago Department of Transportation.

According to a list of CHA contractors obtained from HUD by **Residents' Journal** under the Freedom of information Act, d'Escoto received one contract from CHA worth \$1,463,408 that lasted from August 2002 to August 2004. CHA lists two contracts for d'Escoto: a \$1,175,000 contract lasting from August 2002 to August 2004, and a second contract for \$1,311,132.67 lasting from Nov. 1, 2004 to Oct. 31, 2006.

In 1997, before Peterson became head of CHA, d'Escoto

made two \$200 donations to Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson. After Peterson became head of the CHA in 2000, d'Escoto made much larger contributions to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization. The company donated \$2,000 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization in November 2002, two months and two days after their contract with CHA began. In 2003, the firm donated \$7,500 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization, including a \$5,000 donation in November 2003. The following year, d'Escoto gave \$4,000 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization in two separate contributions - June 28 and Oct. 14. The last donation was less than one month before d'Escoto won its second contract from CHA. In all, the firm gave \$13,500 - 14.2 percent - of all its political donations to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization.

Frederico d'Escoto, president of d'Escoto, said in a telephone interview that his company gave to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization because of their commitment to developing minority leadership. He said that he first got to know Thomas in City Hall.

"She seemed to be a person with spirit and vitality. She walks the walk and talks the talk," d'Escoto said. "We were speaking about different projects in her ward. She seemed to be at the forefront of a transformation in her community."

"The goal we have personally and civically and corporately identified is identifying young leadership and helping them."

Another firm that won contracts with CHA lost a previous contract with the City of Chicago after a media investigation revealed that it overcharged for its services. G.F. Structures lost a contract in 2000 to provide wrought iron fences to the City. The media reports mentioned that G.F. Structures' owner, Richard Crandall, was a reliable contributor to the political campaigns of Mayor Richard M. Daley and an insurance client of Cook County Commissioner John Daley, the mayor's brother.

The media reports prompted the City to bring in an outside auditor and re-bid the wrought-iron fencing contract. The reports also led to the resignation of Alexander Grzyb, acting purchasing agent for the City. G.F. Structures received more than \$10 million for the fencing work. The outside auditor eventually found that G.F. Structures was overpaid \$7,994.

G.F. Structures started receiving contracts from CHA beginning in September 2001, more than one-and-one-half years after the firm was cited in media reports. The list provided to **Residents' Journal** by HUD indicates that G.F. Structures received 8 contracts from CHA worth more than \$63 million. CHA's web site, however, lists 13 contracts for G.F. Structures valued at nearly \$70 million. Both lists show one contract for \$407,563 from Sept. 27, 2002 to Sept. 26, 2003 required G.F. Structures to fix CHA's roof at the agency's downtown location.

G.F. Structures donated \$900 in 2 separate donations to Citizens to Elect Terry Peterson in 1998 and 1999. In November 2001, G.F. Structures donated \$200 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization. Just one month later, the company received two contracts from the CHA valued at \$689,465 and \$2,246,444, according to CHA's Web site.

G.F. Structures donated increasing amounts to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization in subsequent years. The value of their contracts also increased.

On February 8, 2002, G.F. Structures received a CHA contract worth \$24,712,027.03 for construction services. In September 2002, G.F. Structures donated \$1,000 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization.

On June 7, 2003, G.F. Structures gave \$600 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization, followed by a contribution of \$1,900 later that same month. On October 27, 2003, they gave another \$2,500.

G.F. Structures won five contracts from CHA that fall,

**(Continued on Page 6)**

**(Continued from Page 5)**

according to both CHA and HUD. On Sept. 1, 2003, they received a contract for \$2,000,000. On Oct. 7, they received a contract for construction services valued at \$14,478,413.89. On Oct. 15, the company received two additional construction contracts for \$8,960,010 and \$7,131,042. On October 27, 2003 - the same day they made a \$2,500 donation to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization – the company received a construction contract worth \$3,292,095.

Michael Lusk, who identified himself as an employee of G.F. Structures' owner, Richard Crandall, said that G.F. Structures "would rather not participate" in the article.

The list of CHA contractors who made political donations also includes a number of firms who gave exclusively to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization.

Done Rite Construction made a contribution of \$500 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization on November 3, 2003, two months after it was awarded a \$2,000,000 contract with the

CHA, according to both CHA and HUD. Done Rite did not make any other political contributions to any other political fund from 2001 through the end of 2004.

Done Right Construction did not return phone calls seeking comment for this story.

HUD and CHA list differing numbers of contracts with differing amounts for Kutak Rock, a law firm based in Omaha, Neb. According to HUD, Kutak Rock won a \$10,000,000 contract for legal services that lasted from July 16, 2002 to July 16, 2004. CHA's list indicates that Kutak Rock had three contracts: a \$110,000 contract for legal services from Jan. 2, 2001, to Jan. 1, 2003; a \$200,000 contract from July 16, 2002 to July 16, 2004; and a third contract for \$250,000 awarded on Jan. 2, 2004.

Kutak Rock made its only donations to political organizations in Illinois to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization, according to the state Board of Elections. Kutak Rock donated \$2,500 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization on June 27, 2003 and donated \$1,500 on June 16, 2004 – the final day of a contract which appears with different amounts on the CHA and HUD lists.

Bob Starr, an attorney at Kutak Rock who works on CHA projects for the firm, declined to comment, citing a long-standing "client confidentiality policy."

## Legum and Norman

One out-of-state company that won contracts with CHA has been criticized by public housing residents as well as the federal agency which oversees the nation's public housing system. Legum and Norman, a Virginia-based private property management firm, currently manages two CHA family developments, a scattered site development and several senior properties.

Legum and Norman made its only political contributions in Illinois to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization and to Citizens to Elect Milton Patterson. The company made its first donation of \$500 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization on November 22, 2002. Three months later, Legum and Norman won two contracts - a \$2,104,441 contract to manage Armour Square and Shields Apartments from Feb. 1, 2003 to Jan. 31, 2005; and a contract worth \$1,420,748 to manage Lawndale Complex and Bridgeport Homes from Feb. 1, 2003-Jan. 31, 2005, according to a list of CHA contracts obtained by *Residents' Journal* from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. CHA's web site lists the same two contracts but with differing amounts: \$1,436,317 to manage Armour Square and Shields Apartments from Feb. 1, 2003 to Jan. 31, 2005, and \$1,242,741 to manage Lawndale Complex and Bridgeport Homes from Feb. 1, 2003-Jan. 31, 2005.

Legum and Norman won two additional contracts three months later. The company was awarded \$343,505 to manage the Lincoln Sheffield Apartments, Clark & Webster and Briton Bud Apartments from May 1, 2003 to April 30, 2005. Legum and Norman also was awarded \$65,730 to manage the Southwest Scattered Sites from May 1, 2003 to April 30, 2005. CHA lists these contracts with differing amounts as well: \$265,395 to manage the Lincoln Sheffield Apartments, Clark & Webster and Briton Bud Apartments from May 1, 2003 to April 30, 2005, and \$705,706 to manage the Southwest Scattered Sites from May 1, 2003 to April 30, 2005.

Legum and Norman made four political contributions during the term of those contracts. They contributed \$1,000 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization on November 10, 2003. On February 7, 2004, they contributed \$1,000 to Citizens to Elect Milton Patterson. In 2004, they contributed three more times to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization: \$275 on May 24; \$1,000 on June 28; and \$500 on Oct. 14.

Some residents expressed satisfaction with Legum and Norman's management at the Bridgeport Homes on the South Side. But many other tenants showed a visiting *RJ* reporter problems that had not been addressed by management staff.

One Bridgeport Homes resident who asked to remain anonymous said that she has had long-standing problems with work orders that have not been completed. In particular, this resident said her doors need weatherization that requires her to use excessive heat. The resident added that her apartment has a consistent presence of mildew which management officials addressed only partially.

"You can set a candle in my front door and the wind will blow it out," the resident said. "My downstairs feels like outside."

"They're dragging their feet on the work orders and they call themselves done."

Emily Cano, a lifetime resident of Bridgeport Homes and area vice president, said that roofing work done in the middle of winter left a number of residents – including seniors and persons with disabilities - in freezing conditions.

"In the dead of winter, they took our insulation," Cano said. "We didn't get electric heaters until a couple of weeks later. We weren't informed of [the removal of the roof]. We had to figure it out on our own."

Cano said that Legum and Norman fires or otherwise replaces managers at a rapid clip, often after a scandal or a clear demonstration of incompetence.

"Legum and Norman need to go. We need better private managers. We've been trying for a while to get Legum and Norman out. Why? Because they don't really care and they don't choose to do things for our tenants."

Lema Rubio said she has had problems with leaks in her roof for 15 years. Rubio pointed out mold on her walls as well as water collecting in a light bulb.

"A long time ago, I made a complaint and they said they would come and fix the roof but they never came," Rubio said. "One manager comes in and then another manager comes in. About six managers have come in and I told them the same thing."

Sherry Guzman, area president of Bridgeport Homes, said that Legum and Norman was not doing a good job overall. Guzman alleged that one of Legum and Norman's managers defrauded CHA by steering funds into a bank account for a bogus company.

Guzman said another manager made arrangements for a felon to live in the development – a violation of federal rules which say that tenants who house ex-felons can be evicted. Guzman showed an *RJ* reporter a copy of a letter allegedly sent by this Legum and Norman manager to an official at the Pontiac Correctional Center granting an inmate at the prison permission to live with his sister, a Bridgeport Homes resident.

Guzman's daughter, Sherry Cruz, had a litany of complaints against Legum and Norman that ranged from their failure to fix problems in her apartment as well as issues with their management of the development's public spaces. Cruz said that water collects along the base of the walls in her living room near electrical sockets.

"That can be a fire hazard," Cruz said.

Cruz added that Bridgeport Homes' security gates are regularly locked at the end of the work day, preventing nighttime access by emergency vehicles. Cruz recounted one violent incident in which police were unable to access the development because of the locked security gates. The delay left the resident who was the victim of the attack at risk.

"If (residents) need an ambulance and the fire department, those gates are locked up. That hampers the ability of them coming in," Cruz said.

"To Legum and Norman, that is not an important issue – until somebody has a heart attack and dies."

Residents are not the only ones with complaints about Legum and Norman. On July 18, 2003, the Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development published its audit of CHA's private management contracts in family and senior developments. The audit's objectives were to evaluate CHA's controls over its private managers and determine whether the private managers were complying with HUD rules and the terms of the contracts. The audit was conducted in the wake of CHA's decision in 2000 to privatize all its property management.

The auditors reviewed 11 randomly selected management contracts during CHA's Fiscal Year 2001. They examined related financial information and work orders as well as other documentation related to the contractors' compliance with rules for Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises. Several firms did not subject their maintenance and management staff for required screenings for criminal backgrounds and drug testing, the auditors found.

The auditors also paid special attention to the contractors' compliance with Section 3 rules, which require contractors with public housing authorities across the nation to hire low-income residents or otherwise contribute financially to the welfare of low-income families.

The auditors found that "the housing authority failed to properly monitor and administer its management agreements with nine private management firms and two resident management corporations. The housing authority did not properly monitor its contractors' compliance with requirements of Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises and Section 3 programs. The management contractors also failed to adhere to their management agreements and other requirements for maintenance, work orders, unit inspections and tenant reclassification."

The HUD auditors found problems with 11 of the 15 contracts they checked for Section 3 compliance: "HUD lacks assurance that (1) Minority contractors had the opportunity to compete for, or perform contracts financed in whole or in part by federal funds; and (2) low- and very low-income persons

were provided employment and other economic opportunities afforded by federal financial assistance for housing and community development programs."

The HUD auditors specifically mentioned that Legum and Norman was the only company which "had not submitted any supporting documentation for the Section 3 program."

CHA officials responded to the HUD audit with a letter detailing remedial action they were taking to address the issues raised by the audit. CHA indicated they had increased their contract compliance staff and their training programs for private managers. CHA stated they were researching the 11 contracts which the auditors found did not comply with rules for documenting the companies' Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise status. CHA did not, however, specifically challenge HUD's assertion that Legum and Norman failed completely to document its compliance with Section 3 rules.

## Legum and Norman Responds

Marvin Price, Executive Vice President of Legum and Norman, said his company made donations to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization because they were asked. Price said he did not remember who made the request but was "sure" that it was made by either a CHA official or an official of the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward.

"We were asked to make a contribution and so we did," Price said. "I'm sure it was somebody from the ward or from CHA. I can't imagine who else would have called us."

"I think sometimes they sent a letter, and I may have had a call or [company president] Mr. [Michael] Shehadi may have received a call."

"It was a request. I can assure you of that. Because other than that, we wouldn't have known about it at all to begin with."

Price maintained that the donations were for awards or dinners rather than election costs. Though the donations to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization are Legum and Norman's only political contributions in Illinois, Price noted that the company receives many similar requests in Washington, D.C., and that their relationship with CHA predates their donations to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization and Peterson's tenure at CHA.

"We get asked here in the Washington area where our offices are all the time. But it had nothing to do with the contract [with CHA]. We already had the contract. I'm sure that we aren't the only ones that have contributed to things," Price said.

When a reporter pointed out that Legum and Norman's donations occurred at approximately the same time as the company was up for renewal or its contracts, Price said that the timing of the contributions had nothing to do with the contracts at CHA.

"If that's the case," Price explained, "that's coincidence."

Price also said that he was not aware of Legum and Norman's contributions to Citizens to Elect Milton Patterson.

"It may have been the decision made by one of the owners of the company," he said.

With respect to the complaints of the Bridgeport Homes residents, Price characterized the residents' complaints as chronic. He said the company had frequently changed managers at Bridgeport Homes because of the residents' recalcitrance.

"Bridgeport complains about everything," Price said. "I can turn myself blue in the face and they'll still be complaining. That's the nature of the beast. We don't charge people that'll

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coddle them and be their friends. We charge professionals.

"One of my best managers quit because she was sick and tired of these residents. And they made her life so miserable. So it's a two-way street here."

## Plan for Transformation

Many of the CHA contractors who also gave money to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward are playing important roles in the agency's ambitious \$1.6 billion Plan for Transformation, an effort to relocate tens of thousands of public housing families, demolish CHA buildings and build new mixed-income communities.

The Habitat Company, which oversees the development of all new public housing units in Chicago, made four separate donations to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward. They donated \$2,000 on October 1, 2002, \$1,500 on Nov. 10, 2003, \$600 on June 21, 2004 and \$5,000 on Sept. 23, 2004, according to the state Board of Elections.

The Habitat Company did not return phone calls from *Residents' Journal* seeking comment on this story.

The Quadel Company, the parent company of CHAC, which manages all of CHA's Housing Choice Vouchers (for-

# Transforming CHA

# There's H.O.P.E. for Gary Residents

by Beauty Turner  
Assistant Editor

**R**J recently learned about a \$19 million H.O.P.E. VI grant our neighbors to the south at the Gary Indiana Housing Authority received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1999. The housing authority is using the grant to replace the Duneland Village public housing development with a new mixed income community.

So one day in late January, we drove over the slushy, potholed streets of Chicago to Gary, in hot pursuit of a story about housing being built that might be beneficial to the poor.

In case you are wondering what H.O.P.E. VI is, let me enlighten you. It is a HUD-funded program to turn old, dilapidated public housing units into mixed-income developments. This means that public housing units in H.O.P.E. VI developments will be mixed and stirred into the community with unsubsidized units and non-public housing subsidized units, like a baked cake with three different favors.

On the way to Gary, we couldn't help but smell the old, familiar odors that accumulated during the years when Gary housed many steel mill plants. Plus we couldn't help but notice the electric power lines that towered over the toll road.

Gary, a poor, largely African American city, has buildings, stores, and private dwellings alike that have been abandoned and are decaying. One church close to downtown even had trees sprouting out from where the pews used to hold Sunday worshippers. A tall hotel that looked like once it was thriving now stands empty in the heart of downtown.

Joseph Shuldiner, of Shuldiner and Associates, was our host and tour guide on the dreary, gray day we visited Gary. Shuldiner and Associates had been contracted by HUD to build and oversee the H.O.P.E. VI project in Gary.

You might remember Joseph Shuldiner from the days when he was the CEO of Chicago Housing Authority when the federal government had control over CHA.

Shuldiner came down out of his warm office to greet us at the front door, which was a welcome and sunny sight to see. Once upstairs, Joseph explained to **RJ** what his job as a Program Manager consists of.

"What I do as a program manager is I act as a technical

merly known as Section 8s), made its only political donations in Illinois to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization. Quadel donated \$2,500 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization on June 28, 2004, and then made another \$2,500 donation less than one month later on July 20. Both donations were made several months before their \$52 million contract to manage CHA's Housing Choice Vouchers expired, on Dec. 31, 2004.

**Residents' Journal** called CHAC officials to request comment on Quadel's contributions to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization. Neither CHAC officials nor Quadel employees returned these phone calls.

Another donor to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization was Holsten Real Estate, which is building new mixed-income housing at the Cabrini-Green development and overseeing the rehabilitation of the Hilliard Homes on the South Side. Holsten gave \$2,000 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization on Sept. 30, 2002, \$100 on April 19, 2004, \$600 on May 24, 2004, and \$1,500 on October 14, 2004.

Peter Holsten, the owner of Holsten Real Estate, said he donated to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization because his fiancée has known Ald. Latasha Thomas most of her life. Holsten noted that he supports many political candidates and said he had never been asked to make a contribution to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization in exchange for a CHA contract.

"No one has twisted my arm," Holsten said. "There was no quid pro quo."

Big "O" Moving and Storage won a \$400,000 contract on April 1, 2003, to help relocate families displaced by the demolition of public housing buildings. Big "O" Movers donated a total of \$2,000 to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization in two separate payments in 2001 and 2002. Big "O" Movers also donated to Citizens to Elect Latasha Thomas, giving a total of

consultant to the authority and a facilitator," Shuldiner said.

**RJ** asked him if the Gary Housing Authority is similar to the Chicago Housing Authority.

"No, Gary has no family high rises, the only high rises are for seniors. Plus Chicago is a lot larger," Shuldiner said. "Chicago has distressed housing in a thriving city."

Shuldiner talked about the Duneland Village. "The Duneland is the first mixed-income, mixed-finance rental phase of the Duneland Village/Horace Mann H.O.P.E. VI redevelopment project," he said.

"The new housing is located on the land where the original public housing sites were located," Shuldiner went on to say. "The new housing is in the Miller community of Gary. It is comprised of 131 rental units, 49 of which are public housing tax credit units, 49 are only tax credit, and 33 are market rate. There is a mixture of one, two, three and four bedrooms units."

And in October 2004, occupancy began and is projected to be completed and rented up by February 2005.

**RJ** asked Karen Morgan, one of the first residents from public housing who relocated back into the new housing in Duneland Village what she thought of her new home.

"I'm very satisfied with my new housing," Morgan said.

"We have all the amenities, such as a washing machine and a dryer and plenty of cabinet space. I'm very pleased, plus I want to give a shout out to everybody that made it possible for me to have this new place. It's like having my own house. Thank you all!" Morgan added.

H.O.P.E. VI Coordinator Denise Eligan, who is also a resident of Gary told **RJ** that residents received great benefits from the HOPE VI project.

"Many of our residents received their GED, jobs and training and housing through the Gary H.O.P.E. VI project," Eligan said.

"I feel that our residents should benefit from these programs economically as well as professionally. They may not have the skills but they do have the ingenuity," Eligan added.

Eligan pointed to a young woman who came into the office.

"This is Patricia Rimey who is a public housing resident that benefited from the HOPE VI project. We trained her and now she works for the Gary Housing Authority as my assistant," Eligan went on to say, thereby letting **RJ** know that

\$2,200 in four payments – two in November 2000, and one each in February 2001 and May 2003.

An individual who identified himself to a **Residents' Journal** reporter only as "Big 'O'" said he contributed to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization because he lives in the ward.

"That's where I live," he explained, before declining to comment further.

Heneghan Demolition won a \$2,125,547 contract to demolish public housing buildings in the ABLA Homes, according to CHA records and the company's own web site. Heneghan made three contributions to the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization, \$600 on June 21, 2004, \$250 on June 25, 2004, and \$1,500 on Oct. 14, 2004.

An individual who identified herself as a receptionist for Heneghan quipped that the company makes donations to many political campaigns, and then said she would pass a reporter's questions on to a spokesperson. No spokesperson for Heneghan, however, returned the reporter's call before **Residents' Journal** press deadline.

Changing Patterns for Families won contracts to provide transitional counseling and other supportive services to families displaced under the Plan for Transformation. According to HUD, Changing Patterns won three contracts: The first two contracts had a combined value of \$996,200 and began Jan. 1, 2003. The last contract was for \$995,150 and was to last from Feb. 1, 2004 to March 31, 2005. According to CHA, Changing Patterns also won three contracts, but two of those differ significantly from HUD's list.

Changing Patterns for Families gave the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization a total of \$600 in two installments on June 28, 2004, and July 20, 2004. These were the only political contributions made by Changing Patterns for Families listed by

Gary respected Section 3 laws that stipulate public housing residents must be hired when new construction comes to their communities.

Shuldiner took us on a little tour of Gary where we saw with our own eyes the beautifully constructed housing that had been built. Duneland Village is made of two-flats homes with one family above and one below. There are new playgrounds for the children and sidewalks being built where there used to just be mud.

We all know that in Chicago to receive replacement housing or keep the apartments that many residents occupy in the developments, CHA has very strict criteria, including urinalysis and mandatory volunteer work for 30 hours a week.

**RJ** wanted to know if Gary had the same type of criteria for their public housing residents in order for them to return to the original sites and into the new housing.

"No, all we are asking is that the resident that had been displaced be in good standing with Gary Housing Authority," Shuldiner said.



Duneland Village, pictured above, is located in the Miller neighborhood of Gary, Ind. The development is a H.O.P.E. VI project made up of 131 rental units, 49 of which are funded by public housing and low-income tax credits.

Photo by Micah Maidenberg

the state Board of Elections.

Renee Max, a spokesperson for Changing Patterns for Families, said she would not talk to a journalist unless she had received prior approval from CHA.

"Anything with the media, journalists, CHA told us to get the OK with them, first with the housing authority," Max said.

# Transforming CHA

## Utility Problems Persist for Residents

by Beauty Turner  
Assistant Editor

The living situation many relocated CHA residents are facing is like an Easter egg without the yolk – pretty on the outside but with nothing on the inside. They are living in an extremely fragile housing situation that could leave them homeless if their problems are left unaddressed.

Fontain Fleming, a young, single mother of nine, relocated from the Robert Taylor Homes to Englewood in 2002. One of her children is 16 years old and disabled. This young lady is also the mother of a one year old child, who lives within the Fleming household, bringing the total number of people in the household to 11.

The Flemings were one of the large families from Robert Taylor Homes to be relocated into the private market through the Chicago Housing Authority's Transformation Plan.

Fleming relocated with a Housing Choice Voucher, also known as Section 8. But if you ask her, she will tell you that her relocation into the private market has been like climbing uphill without hiking boots.

"It's been hard trying to make ends meet," Fleming said.

Fleming came to my place of employment only because she remembered me helping people in the development.

"I have been without gas or lights for over five months now," Fleming said.

Why is that, I asked?

Fleming showed me an electric bill totaling \$13,497.75. She also had two denial letters from utility assistance programs, one from the Community and Economic Development Association and one from the Low Income Energy Assistance Program.

These high electric bills stem from the time that many of the low-income residents were living in public housing. The bills continue to plague the people, to follow them everywhere they move.

Bills like that threaten their credit, their vouchers and their chance to replacement housing in the private



**Beauty Turner**

market. Once they do get private market housing, it threatens their chance of keeping housing.

Fleming is proof that high utilities bills catches up with you once you have been relocated into the private market.

"I thought that I could handle these problems myself," Fleming explained. "I tried everything that I could think of, and when I couldn't do anything else, I thought about the way you use to help people in the development. So that is why I'm here asking you to help me please," Fleming added.

I asked her if she had an income.

"No, I do not have an income," Fleming answered.

"DCFS has threatened to take my children away if I can't get gas and lights back on, plus I going to lose my Section 8 voucher," Fleming said, holding back tears.

I went to view Fleming's home in the heart of Englewood, a high poverty, predominately African American community. She lives close to a lot of the relocated CHA residents.

The house was lovely on the outside, a beautiful cranberry red with white aluminum siding and a grayish stair case leading up to a snow white door sporting coal black burglar bars. There was a window on the second floor and one porch window that had plastic on it.

After looking at the house from the outside, one would get the illusion that the house was well heated. One would be wrong.

I called CHA and asked them what type of program did they have set up concerning problems like Fleming's.

"That is a big problem," CHA spokesman Derek Hill said.

Hill talked about the Service Connectors, and the CHANCE program that is no longer in progress.

CHANCE was a collaboration to help residents pay their electric bills between the housing authority and Commonwealth Edison. They created the program after I published articles in *Residents' Journal* about the ongoing utility bill dilemma.

Under CHANCE, both of the entities would pay 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the bill, with the residents paying the remaining 1/3<sup>rd</sup>. But the program wasn't designed to help residents with high bills like Fleming.

Many of the residents' bills that I have seen are \$1000 to \$22,000 and sometimes more.

Hill referred me to CHA communication official Kim Johnson. I asked Johnson if the CHANCE program to help low-income residents pay their utility bills was still in existence.

"I don't think so. I do believe that it has expired. After all, there was a window to that program. I couldn't really tell you offhand for sure if it is over with, but I will check and see," Johnson said.

CHA spokesman Derek Hill told me that CHA had started a new program to help the residents pay their utilities. I asked Johnson if she knew about the program Hill was talking about.

"I'm not familiar with that. So I could also check and see about that, but right now I can say I don't know," Johnson said.

I told Johnson about Fleming's situation, and after much communication between Johnson and CHAC, the company that is contracted by CHA to run the voucher program, and Rayne Martin, CHA Relocation



**Rochelle Williams, a mother of four and a former resident of the Robert Taylor Homes, is at risk of losing housing for her family because of paperwork problems.**

Photo by Beauty Turner

Specialist, Fleming's voucher was not taken away plus her utilities were reinstalled.

But she is on the hook for an almost \$14,000 light bill. She still worries she will end up homeless because of it.

"Sometime I still wish that I was back in the projects, I didn't have all these problems," Fleming told me.

### Problems Unresolved

Even though Fleming and her family have utilities again, there are countless other families going through similar situations who don't know where to turn.

I recently received a letter from a young lady who

**S**ometimes I still wish that I was back in the projects; I didn't have all these problems.

*Fontain Fleming, former Robert Taylor Homes resident*

didn't want to use her name. She has been without gas or lights for about the same amount of time as Fleming. She burns candles in order to keep light in her house.

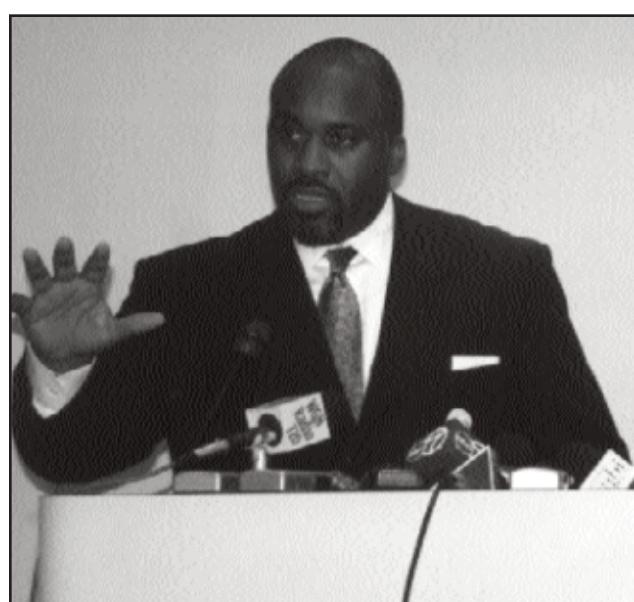
Another family that relocated out of the Robert Taylor Homes is led by Rochelle Williams, a separated young mother of four who is on the verge of losing her voucher.

CHAC said she lied about her household income. She showed me documents she used to try to prove to CHAC that her husband, who was working at the time that she received her voucher, was no longer living in her household. She showed case management his State Identification, a valid lease to his new apartment, plus a legally stamped letter stating that he was no longer living with Williams. But after a hearing, her voucher was still taken. Her case manager at CHAC is also her landlord.

Williams, who still is paying her portion of the rent, is living in her house in spite of the fact that she lost her voucher. She has two electric bills in her home and she can not afford to pay either due to not having an income.

What do low-income families do when they find themselves living without resources? Even though the low-income public housing buildings are coming down, prices concerning rent, gas, lights, food and transportation are not.

These conversations left me asking why CHA would give people who have no income a Section 8 voucher.



**CHA CEO Terry Peterson, at this June 2004 press conference on the five-year progress of the Plan for Transformation held at the Chicago Historical Society, said CHA would assist residents with their utility bills throughout the Plan for Transformation.**

Photo by Mary C. Johns

# Illinois Democrats Resist Social Security Privatization

by Mary C. Johns  
Editor-in-Chief

The Republicans and the Democrats are battling it out over Social Security. While everyone agrees Social Security must be reformed, Democrats deny there is a crisis, as alleged by President George W. Bush.



Mary C. Johns

**The President's Pitch**  
President Bush has said that Social Security faces a \$10 trillion unfunded obligation to beneficiaries. Trustees of the Social Security program have projected that by 2018 the program will owe more in annual benefits than the revenues generated by the payroll tax. They also say the program will be bankrupt by 2042.

In the 1950s, there were about sixteen workers paying for every Social Security beneficiary. Today there are about three, and eventually there will only be two workers per beneficiary, according to the President.

"These changes signal a looming danger," he said during a recent radio speech on the topic.

Most women did not work outside the home when the Social Security Administration was established, and the average life expectancy for American workers was less than 60 years.

Today, more women are working and most Americans live longer and need longer retirements, according to Democrats and Republicans alike.

To address these problems, the President has been talking about partially privatizing the program by allowing younger workers to voluntarily divert part of their Social Security payroll tax into the stock market, bonds and other private investments.

Critics of the President's plan have said that his proposal to reform Social Security will add to the current deficit, harm middle-class and low-income workers and will cut guaranteed benefits for future retirees. Democrats have expressed agreement with Republicans who have said there is a need to reform the Social Security system, but not to the extreme of partially privatizing the federal program.

## Democrats' Public Opposition

The Democrats argue that the President's declaration of the severity of Social Security's problems is highly exaggerated.

Some critics have even said the whole idea of privatization is a big hustle to enrich the wealthy. U.S. Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-IL), a former Chicago Housing Authority board member, wrote in a commentary published in *Crain's Chicago Business* magazine in February 2005 that the President's privatization plan would be a "crapshoot."

Another Democratic congressional leader went as far as to suggest that the privatization plan was a radical scheme that would "drain funds from Social Security."

"There is no imminent crisis facing Social Security and it is not going bankrupt, no matter how many times Bush tries to paint that grim picture," U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) declared to dozens of seniors, college students and people with disabilities at a town hall meeting on Social Security privatization in February of this year.

"Social Security will pay full benefits for the next forty to fifty years and almost 80 percent of all benefits after that. Instead of a radical privatization scheme, we have time to make adjustments to strengthen and guarantee Social Security for all generations."

The congresswoman also said that Bush' plan would cut benefits by 46 percent and that private accounts would cost \$5 trillion, increasing the federal government's already record high deficit.

Bush has also publicly stated that under partial priva-

tization, a person will make more money, have total control of directing their retirement investments, and be able to pass on these investments to their heirs.

But the nation's largest group of labor unions disputed the President's statements.

According to AFL-CIO data provided at the town hall meeting, most Social Security investments "cannot be passed on to heirs" nor will a person have control over their own money because "Politicians will pick Wall Street firms to control your investment accounts." This is a process, they said, "corrupted by politics."

At the town hall meeting, the newly elected U.S. Senator, Barack Obama (D-IL) proposed tax credits for workers, rolling back the inheritance tax and automatically enrolling workers into 401(k) plans with the option to decline.

"If they are automatically enrolled, statistics show that people end up saving more than they otherwise would have," he declared.

To ensure the program's solvency, Obama has two changes he wants to make. First, the government should raise the cap on payroll taxes. Currently, only the first \$90,000 of income is taxed for Social Security. That



Newly elected U.S. Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) talking about his views on the President's privatization plan for Social Security, as congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) takes notes during a town hall meeting in late February at Loyola University Water Campus.

Photo by Mary C. Johns

was going to make it.

"All of a sudden, a miraculous thing happened to me. Every month like clockwork, on the third of every month, I got a check from the Social Security system.

**T**here is no imminent crisis facing Social Security and it is not going bankrupt, no matter how many times Bush tries to paint that grim picture."

-U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL)

means someone earning \$100,000 annually would not have to pay the payroll tax for \$10,000 of that salary. Increasing the amount of money that can be taxed under Social Security could ease the burden facing the program.

Second, the Senator suggested increasing the retirement age, a method he said was used in 1990 to address Social Security concerns.

U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), newly elected as Senate Democratic minority Whip said at the town hall meeting that partially privatizing Social Security was risky and "a step in the wrong direction."

The proposal, Durbin told the crowd, would "dramatically cut benefits for many seniors, pushing them into poverty."

Other risks of privatization of Social Security funds pointed out at the meeting included a retiree outliving their private account balance. Health costs, bad luck or misjudgment with the investment could drain a lifetime of saving. Another risk was the threat that the returns go up or down depending on the market, and sometimes markets crash. Additionally, there are fees to manage the private accounts, which could cut into the account balance.

## The People Speak Out

**F**urthermore, there will be a tax on the private accounts that is paid out of a person's remaining Social Security benefits. This tax would amount to 70 percent or more of the private account, and the privatization tax is on top of the benefit cuts that will affect Social Security beneficiaries, according to the National Women's Law Center (NWLC).

The disability and survivor benefits for families tend to be of the most help to minorities because of their higher rates of premature death," according to NWLC data.

At the meeting, William McNary, president of US Action - a grassroots organization fighting for justice in health care and other areas – talked about how the benefits helped him personally after his wife died at a young age.

"When I was married to my first wife, she got cancer and died when she was 35 years old. And that left me a single parent with three young children to raise. And I was making not a lot of money because I was working for a non-for-profit organization, and I was wondering how I

What that check meant to me is that, it'll allow my first wife Lula, even though she was not here, to keep a promise that we made to our children, that each and every one of them will be the second generation in our family to go to college. And because of Social Security, each and every one of them had the opportunity to go to college," he said proudly.

McNary encouraged the politicians in attendance to guard against privatizing future benefits.

"Here's an opportunity where we can begin to keep a promise from one generation to the next. Let's this not be a promise that this generation breaks," he declared.

Karen Tamley, from Access Living and a recently appointed disability commissioner for the city of Chicago, said Bush's proposal to privatize Social Security is potentially disastrous for people with disabilities and those who may become disabled.

"This is our safety net," Tamley declared.

"Disability benefits are vital to workers. A 20-year-old worker today has a thirty percent chance of obtaining a disability before retirement age. So, you need to understand that this proposal will not just affect recipients of disability benefits now, but millions of Americans who are now in the working rolls," Tamley said.

Jack Marco, who attended the meeting, was against the idea of partially privatizing Social Security benefits in the stock market because he said people already are losing money investing in it.

"People in the best of circumstances today, who have pensions and have been putting some money aside for savings, had it disappear in three years in the stock market."

"That is because, what happened to the stock market in three years, 2000, 2001, 2002 the stock market lost about 50 percent of its value," he said.

Hal Gullett, president of the Illinois Alliance of Retired Americans, said privatization concerns those like him over 65 who care about their children's benefits.

"Those of us who depend on Social Security's lifetime guaranteed benefits, want our children and grandchildren to have those same benefits," said Gullett. "President Bush and the other privatizers are not representing the interest of American families," he proclaimed.

# The John Howard Association

by Cenabeth Cross

**D**uring my visits at the county jail and other places, I discovered an organization that helps the ones in need. The inmates that are inside the jails and institutions are the ones who come first with this organization. It's called the John Howard Association.

The John Howard Association monitors the prisons, jails, and juvenile detention centers here in Illinois. Their job is to review law makers, and their laws. They also make policies on prison reform and try to educate the public. They wish to bring about fair and humane treatment of the inmates in the prison populations. John Howard Association provides direct and indirect service to the incarcerated, corrections professionals and affected communities. JHA strengthens its advocacy work by developing relationships with reform organizations.

The organization was named for John Howard, a humanitarian and prison reformer. John Howard was a sheriff in England who lived in the eighteenth century. He traveled across the nation, checking prison conditions. He felt that the inmates should have someone to represent their needs. He also felt that programming was as important as the custody part of what the prisons are supposed to do. He felt that the inmates should have training and education.

JHA has fought for prison jobs and payment to the inmates for their labor. They advocate for inmates with special needs, such as mental problems, helping them get pre-sentencing psychiatric examinations. They also work with inmates with other special needs, inmates with disabilities, pregnant women, and juvenile offenders. They reject the idea of "one size fits all" prison programs: they believe, for example, that the older inmates need a customized treatment program.

In 1946, the group began to expand its focus to public education and policy development. In the 1950s, they began publishing many articles and radio broadcasts on the conditions of the Illinois prison system and what happens on the inside. In the 1960s, they published tracts urging the abolition of the death penalty in Illinois. In the 1970s, JHA joined the Illinois Prisons and Jails Project under the leadership of Executive Director Michael J. Mahoney. Since then, the JHA staff has taken on trained volunteers who visit the both adult prisons and juvenile institutions, including the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center and weekly visits to the Cook County Department of Corrections (CCDOC).

JHA issued the first major "Duran Report," referring to the environment of the inmates at the CCDOC. As the court appointed monitor in the Duran vs. Sheahan et al. case, the federal class action lawsuit about conditions, confinement and overcrowding of the facility, they conducted 41 monitoring visits to the Cook County Department of Corrections last

After many years, JHA has finally begun to get respect. They have been able to observe the staff when prison riots break out, visit the Tamms Correctional facility and assist

more than 33 states with their suggestions for improvement to corrections professionals throughout the nation. Their Juvenile Justice Reform Initiative is designed to improve the conditions of confinement for the younger inmates. This program was put into effect in the year 2000.

On Tuesday, Feb. 8, I had an opportunity to interview the chairperson, Laura Lane Fergerson. Here's what she said.

Cenabeth Cross

**Residents' Journal:** How did you become involved with JHA?

**Laura Lane Fergerson:**

A friend, Cliff Kelly, was a volunteer with JHA, so he nominated me to the board in 1997. I have been board chairperson since fall of 2003.

**RJ:** What kinds of subjects do the board members discuss during meetings?

**LLF:** We have two large monitoring systems working and we give updates on visits. We monitor the Duran decree on overcrowding and talk about policy issues. If we take on any new policy issues we will hear from someone on the board. The prison system is not prepared to return inmates back into society. Our focus is [inmates returning back into society], who needs to be there, and rehabilitation. We take the position of monitoring. We're in the jails throughout the year and it's important that we take these issues and put them in action.

**RJ:** Why is it important to have an organization like this in place?

**LLF:** There are too many people of color and the poor in jail. Seventy per cent are Blacks and Latinos. Some haven't been convicted but can't make bond. The rehabilitation process[es] in the prisons aren't working. Sheridan Correctional Center was closed then reopened. The warden and others created the center for drug addicts, which we look at as a crime. There are a few bright spots and changes.

Laura went into a meeting right after the interview and I proceeded to interview one of the volunteers. His name was Philip J. Carrigan, Ph. D. as it said on a card he had given me. A resident of Waukegan, he had driven to the courthouse on 26th Street just for this.

**RJ:** How did you become involved with JHA?

**Philip Carrigan:** I'm a scientist and I worked for a large pharmacy. I was involved with the homeless people [in Waukegan] and I would visit them in jail there. A friend introduced me to Cliff Kelly and I joined. Then Eddie Washington ran for State Representative in Waukegan and when his spot opened I asked to be on the board.

**RJ:** Do you or have you heard of any of your fellow workers experienced any trouble with prisoners or prison officials while working?

**PC:** No. The best part is the visiting of the jails about once a week. It's my vocation. It's what I'm most interested in. Others go too.

**RJ:** Do you ever get emotionally involved with the inmates?

**PC:** Occasionally I get involved.

**RJ:** Do you ever become fearful or felt intimidated while working with the inmates?

**PC:** No. The JHA is well known in the Cook County jail. Charles Fasano [Director of Prisons and Jails Program] is well known and we meet with the warden or superintendent. The JHA is seen as an advocate so we ask what is needed. There may be 200 or more visitors because of the JHA. We oversee segregation, look at the cleanliness and the food. We check on conditions for writing and can [the inmates] afford it. Some want to talk to the prisoners to find out what happened, how the case is going, they ask if they get visitors. Many people on the streets can't visit if they have a warrant on file. I learned this in Lake County where people asked me to go see some of their buddies. People with mental illnesses

don't want to talk.

Phil was the one who informed me that John Howard lived in England.

Phil went on to say that "there had been many organizations like the JHA but it has dwindled down to us. We mandate reports for being a positive force on this issue for human rights." Phillip feels there is no rehabilitation in the prisons he has visited and he feels that guards and other prison personnel should have to go to anger management classes.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> I went to talk to the president of JHA himself, James R. "Chip" Coldren Jr., Ph. D. His office is located at 300 W Adams.

**RJ:** What is the organization about?

**JC:** It's about citizen participation and monitoring the correctional system.

**RJ:** How do you recruit volunteers?

**JC:** Several different ways. If you're a member of the board, there's an expectation that you'll do monitoring work. We do a lot of publications and we do ask people to volunteer. When college students want to intern, part of the course is to volunteer. Very rarely on occasion someone will be turned away for some reason or other. You fill out an application, we review it at the office, if we feel we want to ask any further questions we call them in for an interview. Once we approve it we send it to the organization to do a background check. If you're only visiting locally there's no need for a background check. If approved we require you to go through a training session.

**RJ:** How are you funded?

**JC:** Different ways, up until now we were funded by United Way. We're a non-profit organization so we accept donations and contributions. When we do our work for court cases, we are paid by the courts or the county. Occasionally we do contract work. We're very busy, we answer over 1000 phone calls a year, we conduct about 75 visits a year in addition to all other advocacy work.

**RJ:** Do you get emotional in any way?

**JC:** Can't avoid it. I took a group on Western and Lake and we passed a locked door and a kid about 14, a small skin-

**P**hillip feels there is no rehabilitation in the prisons he has visited and he feels that guards and other prison personnel should have to go to anger management classes.

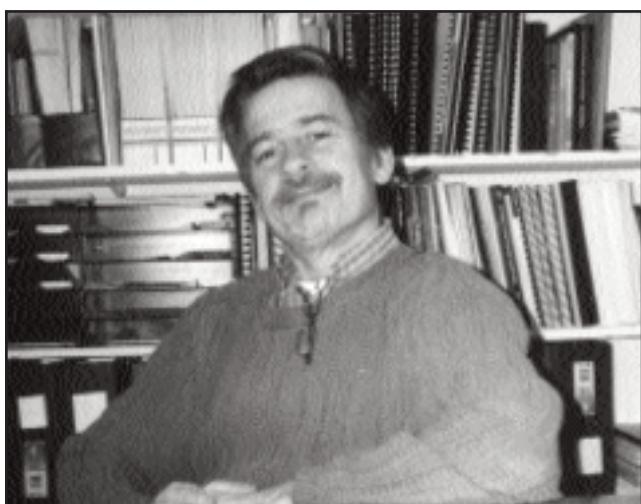
ny kid, and it made us sad just to see that. People who come along, when they see all the black men and women locked up, it's emotional. The emotional thing is to observe a naked man with a mental problem to be locked up that way. Yes, it gets emotional. We can't ever be satisfied and you can't satisfy everyone. You always have to improve what you're doing.

We talked a bit more and he asked me why I wanted to join the organization. I told him that my brothers had been incarcerated, all 3. One, the oldest, had started when he was about 12. When he turned 31, he begged us to get him out because he said he was losing his mind. He never said that before and he had been in Sheridan, Pontiac, Statesville and all the rest. He started at the Audy Home on Roosevelt Rd., so my family and I visited all the prisons he went to. So, we got him out. The next day he went to an empty apartment somewhere on Marquette Rd. and killed himself.

When my brother was in Sheridan, he was boxing. He was good and he had won the golden gloves. His time was up but they kept him anyway until my parents threatened to get help. They then sent him to Pontiac before he was released. I would like to think that this was the organization that helped us secure his freedom.

Chip told me that something similar had happened to his brother.

The JHA has many plans for the future. They want to pinpoint and designate issues that need immediate action. They want to continue to monitor correction facilities, respond to requests for assistance and publish a Prisons & Jails Report. In the community leadership arena, they want to develop an outreach plan, start a website, increase public education and outreach programs and they want to establish a policy center for correctional professionals. They want to reorganize their board and redraft their bylaws. Last but not least, they want to come up with new ways to raise funds and to increase board's fundraising. All of these plans have started and they have set a deadline of 2007 to complete them.



John Howard Association President James R. "Chip" Coldren Jr., Ph. D.

Photo by Cenabeth Cross

year.

Also in 2004, the JHA conducted 10 monitoring visits at Illinois Department of Corrections adult facilities, with participation of 12 board members and citizen volunteers. JHA initiated a series of special monitoring visits to the newly established therapeutic substance abuse program at the Sheridan Correctional Center. They also implemented expanded monitoring activities at Cook County.

hitting punching slapping kicking name calling hair pulling breaking objects intimidating stalking

**It's late at night.** You hear loud angry voices.

Glass breaking. Children crying.

The voices get louder. You hear a sharp slap,

and a few seconds later, what sounds like a body

hitting the floor.

## What Would You Do... What if it was You??

### **IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN DANGER CALL 911**

For a referral to an agency that provides shelter, counseling or legal advocacy,  
you can contact the

City of Chicago Domestic Violence Help Line:

**1-877-863-6338**

**1-877-863-6339 (TTY)**

### **THERE IS HELP AVAILABLE**

For more information about domestic violence, obtaining an Order of Protection or how to get involved in your community, call the Chicago Police Department Domestic Violence Program.

**312-745-6340**

or your local Community Policing Office.



Chicago Police Department  
Philip J. Cline, Superintendent



City of Chicago  
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

This project is supported by Grant #99-WF-VX-0017 awarded by VAWA, ICJIA

pulling hitting punching slapping kicking name calling hair pulling breaking objects intimidating



## You know what the Midwest is?! Young and restless ... Kanye West



### CPS Food: Healthy Or Unhealthy?

by Dayna Moore-Harris

On February 26, 2005, Shannon Pelote sat down for sixth period lunch at Paul Robeson High School and prepared to eat. As she looked down at her tray, she saw a horrific sight: she saw greasy, lukewarm cheese pizza, layered in old, bumpy mozzarella cheese, barely cooked grease-laden french fries, and a bruised orange. To wash this "delightful" feast down, there was a small carton of chocolate milk, a few days past its expiration date.

Shannon Pelote, 17, a full-time student at Robeson High, says that she eats the food at her public school and it is extremely unhealthy.

"After I'm done eating lunch I feel like a big fat pig," Shannon said. She also has relatives that attend public schools in Chicago who feel that food in their school is unhealthy and disgusting as well.

"Greasy pizza, deep-fried French fries ... wow, that's really good for the heart" Shannon said in a sarcastic tone. She also says that there is a limited variety of food.

Although Shannon makes a valid point, not everyone has the same idea about the food in

Chicago Public Schools. Mark O'Brien, a 43-year-old sociology teacher at Paul Robeson High, said he occasionally eats the food at the public school in Chicago where he works and feels that the food is healthy but it could be a little better. He also has relatives at public schools but they bring packed lunches because they don't like the food that is provided at school.

"They have small portions and no variety," Mr. O'Brien said, echoing what Pelote previously said.

In contrast to Mark O'Brien's idea of public school food, many people feel the same way that Pelote feels about the quality of the CPS food.

Clara Moore-Harris, 73, a homemaker, has several children and grandchildren who have gone through the public school system. She feels the food in the public schools today is very unhealthy as well.

"In past decades, the quality of food was much healthier than it is today," Moore-Harris said. She believes the value of food today is mediocre and of poor quality. She also says food in public schools has made her grandchildren gain a significant amount of extra weight.

She said, "Food was better when my kids were going to school as opposed to what my grandkids get today."



Student reporters for Residents Journal and photographers with the organization Picture This! pose after a photo shoot in Chinatown and Lakeview in December 2004.

Photo provided by Kari Lydersen

### A Young Journalist by Josh Kuhn

To me, writing is a way of life. Journalism is great because you get to learn something every time you write. Writing can sometimes change people's lives.

To find out what it takes to be a good journalist, I interviewed Peter Slevin and Kari Lydersen, who both work at the Washington Post in Chicago.

"The most important thing is courtesy, and creativity," said Slevin, chief of the Washington Post's Midwest bureau. "You have to find information and make it clear and interesting."

I asked Slevin how he got into journalism. He said he didn't go to journalism school.

"I thought it would be a good idea," he said.

Slevin has been in 50 countries including the former Soviet Union, countries in Europe, Iraq and Cuba, writing about Fidel Castro. He has covered the police, courts and politics. He wrote his favorite story in the Soviet Union.

I asked what he could tell a young journalist.

"Have fun, find something interesting and be optimistic," he said.

I wrote a story about Senator Barack Obama's visit to Howard

**Journalism is great because you get to learn something every time you write. Writing can sometimes change people's lives.**

Fitzgerald and he said his future plans are to learn more about Chicago.

I asked Lydersen how journalism affects her life.

"It basically shapes my whole life because a lot of my activities and friendships started with stories I did," she said.

I asked what her favorite article she wrote was.

"About women in Mexico getting cancer from the factories they were working in, working with toxic chemicals without the proper protection," she said. "That caused different types of cancer."

I asked what it takes to be a good journalist, from her perspective.

"It takes curiosity, determination and an open mind," she said. "You have to love what you're doing."

What do I think it takes to be a good journalist? I think sometimes it takes a lot of imagination because you have to visualize the stories you write. You also have to understand what you're writing about because you can't write about something you don't know. It also takes a lot of dedication to what you're doing. If you don't care about what you're writing then probably no one else will either.

Another thing about journalism is you always have to look at different perspectives, not just get one side of the story.

### 90 Days in Hell Part II

by Anonymous

It's been a while and you've been waiting for the second part of my story about my time in Cook County Jail.

The wait is over - here it is.

Being locked up is no joke. A lot of people don't know anything about solitary lockdown without commissary, or problems like not eating and sleeping right while missing what we were doing in the world.

Sitting in jail for my crime, I couldn't hold a grudge against the judge. I just had to do my time and deal with it.

It's a man's world. That's the Original Gangster chant to the young bucks like myself. Because I listened to them. I'm sitting in the slammer sick, with no money, no smiles, no fun, no games.

Just stress and memories.

My baby's getting older day by day and my heart is getting colder. I'm sitting in my cell wishing I went to school, but it's too late. Now I'm thinking and hearing my mother, my teachers, my baby's mama telling me to "stop doing that before you get locked up."

I ask myself why I didn't listen

Alternative High School. Slevin has also written about Obama. I asked what he thought of him.

"I think he's fascinating," he said. "He asks a lot of questions of himself and I think he has his feet on the ground, he's down to earth."

I asked how to prepare to write a story.

"Read a lot, find information and research it," he said.

He said his next story would be a profile of US Attorney Patrick

Fitzgerald and he said his future plans are to learn more about Chicago.

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Another thing about journalism is you always have to look at different perspectives, not just get one side of the story.

to them. The only answer that comes to mind is that I was good at what I did, just like Michael Jordan was good at what he did.

Nobody told him don't shoot that ball. Weed and liquor and money had my mind out of my body.

My thoughts get interrupted by an older guy calling me stupid. My first mind was to slap the old fool but instead I asked him how he figured out the truth. He told me, "Little brother, you're 17 years old with a whole lot of potential, and you're just scared to use it. You should be glad you can just walk and talk because there are a lot of people who would like to be able to do that."

When my mother, the person I love most in the world, told me this same kind of thing, I didn't want to listen. But when some old dude I'm locked up with tells me this, I'm all ears and it's making more sense. This old dude wasn't knocking my hustle, he just saw something in me I had all along.

After that, he finished reading his book and I started thinking about what I would do when I got free.

### Urban Youth International Journalism Program

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Assistant Directors  
*Satin Crable  
Kari Lydersen*

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# Drug Addicts: A Childhood Life with a Mother on Drugs

## by Chantell Suggs

At the age of seven, my mother began to abuse drugs. It was an everyday routine.

At age of eight, my mother and father separated. Both were using drugs. The drugs took over her mind.

I loved her because she was my mother but at the same time I hated the addiction she had. She sold the TV and VCR and even spent the rent on drugs. Where were we going to sleep - in the alley in a cardboard box?

No rent, no room and board. At this point, life was getting worse as we moved here, there, everywhere. I remember once my mother's husband hanging her out of the ninth floor apartment building by her leg. They both were high as a kite.

At the age of 10, I was up like chuck. I moved in with my aunt. My brother moved in with my grandmother. I found out my mother was pregnant again. My mother was out doing all the drugs she liked. What's a girl to do? She'd always say she was going to stop using, but she never did. Her favorite saying was, "I can stop when I feel like it."

That's what they all say.

I remember her leaving her husband. She had had two little girls by him, Satierhia and Karria. They stayed with my grandma, but grandma got tired and told my mother that she needed to get her life together. My mother decided she would make a better life if she stayed in a shelter and they could help her find somewhere for us to stay. We all moved back in with her. She had us all: Lazerrick, myself,

Satierhia, Karria. She was trying to get cleaned up.

The shelter we used was not like most shelters. It was nice. It was like we had our own apartment. The staffers at the shelter were helping her get a job and an apartment. She was doing so well I finally respected her as a mother.

Then she met one of the recovering addicts. They got together and everything went sour like a lemon. She started using again. Once she wanted to get high so badly that she climbed out the window of the shelter to get drugs.

It was a big downfall for me. It still burns my chest like fire.

All of us went to live with my aunt again. But she came and got my two little sisters and me, and moved us to Joliet. We went to a shelter and had to sleep on the floor. It was so bad. Then we went to stay with my uncle. My mother started dating him and we moved with him back to Chicago. He worked with her and she stayed clean. I opened up and believed in her again.

But when she went back to visit my grandma in our old neighborhood, she would use drugs. I started worrying about the VCR again. My mother got pregnant. She had my little brother Sam Jr in 1997. She was still dipping and diving into drugs. But it was cool. It wasn't to the point where she was in the streets and not there for us.

But then the drugs just took over. She started getting crazy, stealing and being on the street. Her relationship went bad like spoiled milk. It felt like the same thing happening all over again. This time my older brother had had enough. He was tired of coming and going, fed up with her addiction. This time my aunt and grandmother had three little foot soldiers and me. My mother was back on the streets and my older brother was in jail.

She got pregnant again. She had five and one on the way. She really was only around one, the one inside her belly. She was on drugs all the time she was pregnant.

She had the baby and he had asthma real bad. He got

so sick one day, he had to go to the hospital. He was about nine months old.

She never went to see him the whole time he was in the hospital. One time my grandmother gave her cab fare because the hospital was wondering why his mother had never come to see him, only his auntie. When my grandma gave her cab fare, I was on the porch. I could see her going into a crack house across the street. She wouldn't even use money to see her own child in the hospital.

That was the turning point for me. I gave up on her totally. I was a teenager and I just knew that things weren't going to get any better.

If it wasn't for my auntie and grandmother, who took in six kids who weren't theirs, I don't know where I'd be right now. Now I'm 19 years old. I have a one-year-old son, Demarlowe Jr. I'm in school and doing well. I have so much support from my family. I'm going to college in the fall for journalism.

My current life with a mother on drugs is painful. It's hard not having a mother's support. But my two little sisters and three brothers are all strong. My father is a recovering addict and he's back in my life. My grandmother is still like the backbone for all of us to stay together. And my aunt, back in sixth grade I started calling her "Auntmother," she is the person I go to talk to.

We love our mom but we hate her addiction.

**Congratulations to Chantell Suggs for her Honorable Mention Award in the 2005 Columbia College and Chicago Young Authors writing contest, which drew almost 700 entries from around the country. Chantell was honored for her story "Drug Addicts," published in this issue. Nice job Chantell!**

# An Immigrant's Tale: Coming to the US

## by Imelda Vera

Immigration has always been an issue in the United States. Immigrants are often mistreated because they are undocumented. I believe this is unfair; everyone in this so-called land of opportunities should have equal rights.

Unfortunately, this reality has hit my family. Many families suffer because of the injustice against immigrants.

My dad was born and lived in Guanajato, Mexico. He noticed that the money he had been making was not enough. He took the hard and hurtful decision of leaving everything in search of a better life for my family. My mom wasn't thrilled with the decision but she respected what my dad had in mind for us.

Days later he attempted to cross the border. Since we didn't have enough money, my dad along with six other people made it across the border without a "coyote," a smuggler who helps you get across the border. They charge you money for their services. It is pretty expensive. It took them an

exhausting four days. After making it into the US, they slept in storage rooms.

Finding a job was extremely difficult for them. They traveled a lot to different states with no luck. They decided to try Chicago and were lucky enough to find work. My dad started missing us, so he called my mom and told her to come to the United States. My mom was not happy with this news, and refused. Then she realized this was the best choice for all of us.

My mom paid the coyote, a smuggler who takes people across the border, \$3,000 and we were on our way to a new life. July 4 was our first attempt to cross the border. We were all nervous and scared of what might happen. Our worries became a reality.

We got caught and were arrested for eight long hours. They released us and sent us back to Mexico. We made our second attempt the next day. This time everything went well, we made it across safely through a river. We were finally in this new world.

so the ball could go straight through. Naismith called it basketball because it was played with a soccer ball and two baskets.

Tim Jasaitis, 28, a worker at the Sears Tower said that he enjoys basketball because it is a fast paced sport.

"Kirk Hinrick, a point guard on the Bulls, is my favorite because he plays with a lot of heart and prac-

**In 1891, people played basketball with fruit baskets. The ball kept getting stuck every time someone scored and someone had to get the ball.**

tices teamwork and fundamentals," Jasaitis said.

He said that he only shoots around his parents house for fun, sometimes he will play a competitive game of H-O-R-S-E or P-I-G. "I don't think basketball is the best sport because there are lots of petty rules that

We went to Los Angeles, California and took a plane to Chicago. We met up with my dad, and everyone was happy to see him. He took us to an apartment that he had ready for us. We now needed to adjust to a new lifestyle.

We didn't like it at all. We missed our beautiful Mexico and we wanted to go back.

A year passed and we returned to Mexico. My dad applied for permanent residency for all of us in the US. It came in 1991. My dad wanted us back so we flew back to Chicago. Since then we have been here and we have learned to love this land.

My mom, age 51, told me, "It was all worth it in the end, to see my kids grow up and turn out the way they did makes me proud. I'm thankful we made the decision to come to this country."

Even though there are many injustices against immigrants, I agree with my mom and think the United States has given us the future we need to succeed.

slow down the pace of the game," Jasaitis says. He also says that the Bulls will probably win a championship again just not any time soon. "I think the Miami Heat has a good chance this year because Shaq has the ability, and girth, to carry an entire team," he says.

Dorian Breuer, 32, works as Director of Development at an animal shelter. He said that his favorite part about basketball is the dribbling.

"The Bulls are my favorite team because sometimes they are the best and other times they are the worst," said Breuer. He says that he plays basketball at the Throop Play Lot.

"I do think basketball is one of the greatest sports ever invented because one guy just made the sport and later everyone plays. So many people play it in the US," Breuer said. "The Bulls will win another championship because the Bulls just like all the other teams they pick the players and eventually they will have a good team."

If you want to see who wins the championship this year you're just going to have to wait and continue to watch your favorite teams play.

# From the Aztecs to the Bulls

## by Roberto Del Toro

The Aztecs of Mexico invented basketball in the 16th century and they named their game *Ollamaliteli*, according to [www.brownielocks.com](http://www.brownielocks.com). The players had to put a solid rubber ball through a ring made of stone that was up high at either end of the court, but unlike the present day they didn't have any rules. The first team to score won the game.

The Aztecs may have invented basketball but James Naismith, considered the father of basketball, knew nothing about them when he came up with the modern game.

In 1891, people played basketball with fruit baskets. The ball kept getting stuck every time someone scored and someone had to get the ball out. It wasn't until later that someone thought of removing the bottom

## **Young Abusive Relationships**

**by Nalleli Salgado**

Many young ladies involved in abusive relationships hide it from their families and friends. Many young men do not understand that abuse is unhealthy for the mind and is definitely not a way to prove you love someone. They do not understand that it's not okay to take out their frustration in a violent manner.

Abusive relationships are common. The American Medical Association estimates "four million women are victims of severe assaults by a boyfriend or husband each year. One in every four women is likely to be abused by a partner in her lifetime." Abuse can sometimes be caused by confusion about the intense feelings that come with relationships. But "excessive jealousy and controlling behavior are not signs of affection at all," according to the web site [www.kid-health.org](http://www.kid-health.org).

For this article, I interviewed three young people whose ages range from 18 to 23. My first interview was with a 19-year-old man who is an abuser. Since all the people I interviewed requested anonymity, I will call this young man "Ray."

"Ray" said, "I tend to lose my temper and patience very easily. I know it's not a way to show my love, but when things are not financially right and things are not working out for me, it's easy for me to take it out on someone else. I try not

to do it but it's very hard. I don't believe in counseling; I think my abuse will stop when I'm able to accomplish my goals and when I have my life on track without any stress and frustrations."

An 18-year-old named "Jason" told me, "I think physical abuse is wrong because I wouldn't like it for another man to do it to my daughter." He also stated that for the young abusers, "It isn't right to abuse your significant other because it'll come back to your kids. For the young ladies who are being abused, try to stay strong because your 'superman' will come one day."

My third interview was with 23-year-old "Karina." She said "physical abuse is wrong because no woman should be treated bad and get hit for stupid or no reasons. Physical abuse, in my opinion, happens because of the way the abuser was raised. They shouldn't blame their acts of violence on their status of life.

"There are guys who are struggling with their families for food and shelter and they don't beat on their wives. And not just that, but physical abuse can harm a woman mentally, making them act in crazy ways like murdering their husbands. Guys should not hit women because what goes around comes around, only worse."

During my interview with "Karina," it really stood out when she stated that abusers are the way they are because of the way they were raised. "Abusers often leave their families

for a family of choice - then repeat the abusive cycle from the other side," it says on [recovery-man.com](http://recovery-man.com), a web site about abuse. "The abused becomes the abuser and so continues the cycle." So there is much truth in "Karina's" opinion.

People always ask why women tolerate violence. As an abuse victim myself, I used to ask that question. I met my abuser at a very young age. There is so much I could say about my experience in an abusive relationship but I have limited space in this article.

My best answer is that it's different when it happens to you after you fall in love with the abuser (without knowing he will eventually abuse you in time). It is hard to get out of the relationship because you love him and always think he will change for you and you believe all the promises he makes. The truth is it will never stop because he believes you will never leave him. It's sad to say that I stayed in my abusive relationship for those reasons.

The truth is just as people like me want to help out women and make a difference, physical abuse will continue among youths and adults alike. Young women and men need as much education on this topic as possible to know that physical abuse is wrong and that there are ways to end it legally. This is my main point to writing this article and I hope people take my article into consideration.

## **Why are Men Abusive?**

**by Serrita Douglas**

In abusive relationships, women are sometimes afraid to leave their husbands or boyfriends because they either love them too much or are scared they're going to get killed.

It's very scary if a woman has kids and the kids see their abusive daddy beating on their mother. They're going to think it is okay to beat up women in the future. Men just don't see that women can be killed that way, even though women brought the abuser into the world.

Women are the ones who go through all the pain and pressure in life, and if men can't control their anger they should get locked up for doing things like choking women, pushing them down a flight of stairs, forcing them to have sex or beating them.

Women need to know they have the strength to leave their men.

I interviewed Karina Simons at the Chicago

Abused Women's Coalition.

I asked why women don't leave abusive men.

"It's about safety or fear," she said. "Or she loves her partner and doesn't want to leave. Or they say they'll change. Also, women don't want to be alone."

I asked why men beat women.

"Because they learned to act that way or that's their way of expressing their feelings," she said.

I asked how women can leave abusive partners.

"There are women who have gotten out by going to a shelter, or they feel safe leaving when their partner is in jail," she said. "They leave and don't look back. Women can do that."

I asked what abuse means.

"Being controlling or emotionally abusive, or sexually abusive. Some men are abused and many are abusive because they learned to be that way from watching other men," she answered.

I asked where women can go for help.

"There are different kinds of domestic violence services and shelters, including support groups and legal options. The Coalition's hotline is 877-863-6338."

## **Bruised Love ...**

**by Angel M. Reza**

*A blow to the face  
A bruise on your eye and you still  
Won't say goodbye.  
A crack on the lips  
He used to kiss  
Drives you insane,  
You don't deserve this heart  
Full of pain.  
Emotionally torn apart,  
A nearly shattered heart,  
Screams so loud-hits to match  
Enough to make you cry  
Words that hurt so bad  
That you die inside.  
Three years go by,  
The same thing going on,  
Can't you see something's wrong?*

## **Knowing Hepatitis C**

**by Lyda Arnold**

Hepatitis C is a disease that attacks and destroys the liver. It leads to jaundice, which causes yellow eyes. It also can cause cirrhosis, causing fatty tissues to build up in the liver. Normally the liver can repair itself, but when hepatitis C is involved, sometimes the liver can't fight disease. There is no cure or vaccine for hepatitis C like there is for hepatitis A and B.

Some people die from hepatitis C while others can live with it for many years. Treatments, including interferon shots, help patients live longer.

Hepatitis C patients often need a liver transplant, but since the virus is in the bloodstream, it can attack their new liver too.

It is spread through blood, including by IV drug use, tattoo needles, manicures, blood transfusions and contact

with blood in accidents. It can also be sexually transmitted, though that isn't the main form of transmission.

According to the web site [epidemic.org](http://epidemic.org) run by Dartmouth College, "hepatitis C in combination with less common hepatitis B accounts for 75 percent of all liver disease around the world."

The site says that liver failure due to hepatitis C is the leading cause of liver transplants in the US. "The average lifetime cost for hepatitis C treatment has been estimated at about \$100,000 per individual patient who does not receive a liver transplant."

I interviewed James Davis, who is hepatitis C positive.

I asked how he got hepatitis C. "I'm gay and it was sexually transmitted," he said.

I asked how he feels about having a

disease there is no cure for.

"Sad," he said. He said it doesn't always affect him a lot.

"But every now and then when my hepatitis C is active, I have to go on interferon shots," he said. "It's scary but all my siblings and nieces and nephews know I'm positive for it. It isn't currently active."

I asked if it's true you can live with hepatitis C for a long time.

"Yes, I tested positive 10 years ago."

How else can hepatitis C be caused?

"IV drug users who share the same needles and don't clean them can transmit hepatitis C," he said. "It can be transmitted sexually as well, the way I got it."

I think it's important for people to know to get tested or how to avoid getting hepatitis C, because it could kill



Fire escapes form a dense web of metal on the back of these buildings in a Chinatown alley.  
Photo by Chantell Suggs

## The World of Skateboarding

### by William Egan

*...Here comes the quarter pipe - should I grind, stall or manual?...*

Welcome to the world of sk8boarding, or skateboarding. In this article I will explain the world of skating in my own words, through interviews and a sonnet.

I love to skate. I skate after school, after dinner, all the time. People think it looks cool, and it is. You should try everything once in life, including skating. You will love it. You will never want to let the board go.

I am planning to open a skate shop after I graduate from high school. I will make ramps and have clothing and a cafe and other stuff in the shop. I will hire my family and friends to work for me. I will bring skateboards from my house to put up on the walls and my sister is going to design the shop. My friends will help me make ramps and all the stuff that needs to be fixed. We will put up a TV and radio and speakers on the wall. We should be able to have the whole shop done in two or three months (from the time we start it). We all are saving money to start the shop, and we will all own it together as business partners.

I interviewed Jack Butceb, the owner of Windward Sports skate shop in Chicago.

I asked how long he's been open - 23 years. I asked how he got into the skateboarding business.

"I started out as a surf shop but found out that there is more money in skateboarding than surfing," he said.

I asked what he likes best about skateboarding.

"It gives people the chance to go out and exercise."

I asked what advice he has for people who want to

open their own shop.

"Don't just have a skate shop. Have more than one thing to sell," he said. "People want more variety of stuff in a shop."

I interviewed two teenage skateboarders, Chris and Van, who asked their last names not be used.

**Residents' Journal:** Why did you start skating?

**Chris:** Because it looked fun.

**Van:** I just wanted to.

**RJ:** When did you start skating?

**C:** About four years ago.

**RJ:** What was the first board you had?

**C:** A cheap Target board.

**RJ:** What got you interested in skating?

**C:** Well it looked fun, and people can get a lot of money for skating in tournaments.

**RJ:** How long do you practice a trick?

**C:** Until I get it down.

**RJ:** What was the first trick you learned?

**C:** Manual and stall.

**RJ:** What do you think of me interviewing you?

**C:** It's a waste of time. I just want to be skating.

**RJ:** What do you like most about skating?

**V:** Learning new things, and you can travel the world on tours.

**RJ:** What do you think the history of skating is?

**V:** I'm not sure but I think the first boards had metal wheels and wood boards.

**RJ:** Why is skating popular in different parts of the world?

**V:** It is fun to do and girls like watching the boys fall

and make fools of themselves.

*...I am halfway up the quarter pipe, I am up it, I did a grind then went into a stall and then into a manual. This is the world of sk8bording...*



**Ebony Williams (right) is greeted by Mary Ellen Caron, Director of Chicago's Department of Youth and Children's Services, at a conference in February. Williams opened the conference by reading a poem first published in Residents' Journal.**

Photo by Micah Maidenberg

## Don't Drop Out by Keith Strong

Thinking of dropping out? Education is really important in today's world. Although school may seem difficult and nearly impossible sometimes, it is important that you don't give up hope. Dropping out may seem like an easy solution, but it will make your life even harder.

Students who drop out have fewer career options and are disadvantaged compared to high school graduates in finding a job. According to the web site Focus Adolescent Services, teens who drop out normally don't like school in general or the school they were attending; were failing or getting poor grades; didn't get along with students or teachers; or were suspended or expelled.

I interviewed three students at

Howard Area Alternative High School who dropped out and came back to school: Francine Barnes, 18, Pamela Jones, 18 and Amanda, 19, who didn't want her last name used.

**Residents' Journal:** Why did you drop out?

**Francine Barnes:** I didn't really, I just missed a lot of school.

**Pamela Jones:** I dropped out because I had to get a job and it was during school time, so I went to work instead of school. Then I was so far behind in school, I just stopped going.

**Amanda:** I didn't like my school. They only knew me by an ID number.

**RJ:** How did dropping out make you feel?

**FB:** I like getting back in school.

**PJ:** Dropping out made me feel dumb. I was at home a lot. It was boring.

**A:** Bad, because I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. But I knew I wanted to get back in school.

**RJ:** What made you go back to school?

start running a business.

Eli Argamso, 28, graduated from Amundsen High School in 1995 and started Big E's Coffee across the street from the high school in August 2003. I asked him how he started his business.

"I wanted to help the neighborhood grow," he said. "I just got the idea for it."

I asked what made him think to open a business near Amundsen.

"I live in the neighborhood, just a few blocks away," he said.

I asked how he opened the business.

"I paid for it in cash, \$25,000," he said. "But I would recommend to take out loans."

Is it hard to handle the business and to balance the business and family?

"It's a challenge," he said. "It's hard. But life's hard. I think anyone can open their own business. Just do it."

I interviewed another business

**FB:** My kids. Because they need a good future, just like me.

**PJ:** I thought about my future, and I have a daughter I have to provide for.

**A:** I wanted to get my degree.

**RJ:** Do you think going back was good for you?

**FB:** Yes

**PJ:** Going back was very good for me, because I am graduating in June 2005 and attending DePaul University.

**A:** Yes, because I want to be somebody.

**RJ:** How can dropouts get back in school?

**FB:** Register and stop playing.

**PJ:** Dropouts can come back to school if they get their mind to it. Go in the community and find help, because someone out there is willing to help.

**A:** Go back to your same school, or if you were unhappy with it find an alternative school.

In conclusion, education is really important in today's world. Although school may seem hard, don't give up.

owner who asked his name not be used, who owns several restaurants.

I asked what he does to make his business.

"I work hard," he said.

What does it take to be a businessman?

"You have to have money and experience."

Does your business help you a lot?

How?

"Yes, it helps me pay my car payments and more."

When did you start this business?

"In 1999."

How do you feel about owning your own business?

"Sometimes it's okay. But sometimes I don't feel like owning my own business because your business is your responsibility 24-7. If someone calls, you need to be there no matter what time, night or day."

## Teenage Pregnancy by Francine Barnes

I'm 18 years old and I'm a teen parent. I was 15 going on 16 when I had my first daughter, then I had another daughter close to my 18th birthday.

Teen pregnancy was not what I was looking for. I'm not going to lie. I wanted to have an abortion but it was too late.

People have abortions because their pregnancy was unplanned, a mistake. People are concerned about how having a baby will change their lives, concerned that they are not mature enough and will have financial problems. I think the great majority of parents support their daughters in their decision to have an abortion.

I know how to prevent an unplanned pregnancy from happening: strap up, use protection. Each year, almost one million teenage girls get pregnant, according to the Web site about.com's Women's Issues section. 19 percent of those ages 15 to 19 who have had sexual intercourse become pregnant. The overall US teenage pregnancy rate declined 17 percent between 1990 and 1996, from 117 pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 to 97 per 1,000.

My mom helps me out by watching my daughters while I'm at school and my god mother helps with clothes. People say you shouldn't have kids when you're young and I believe it, though for me things are working out all right. But going to school while you are pregnant is really difficult. It slows you down and makes it hard to do your work.

I asked some people about their teen pregnancy.

Octavia Smith is 19 and has three kids.

"I have had lots of troubled times where I had to not go to school because I couldn't find a baby sitter," she said. "So now I have to get my GED. It's better than nothing, I guess. But I wish I had never gotten pregnant even though I get some help from the father."

Shani Owens, 18, has had two kids.

"I really wasn't looking forward to having kids. It just happened," she said. "I thought he loved me and we didn't use protection. Now he's gone out of my life. I'm struggling a little bit, but things will get better."

## How to Start and Run a Business by Naveed Anwer

I want to own my own business, and once I get it off the ground I want to hire people to run it so I can move on to another business. I will sell shares in my business, that way I can raise money to start a bunch of businesses. I will let other people manage those businesses and let people buy the businesses if they pay me a certain amount per month.

I interviewed two Chicago business owners about how they got their

# Tales of Lawndale Housing

by Beauty Turner  
Assistant Editor

**M**any of the poorest of the poor in Lawndale feel as if they have been exploited for years by Cecil Butler and his company called Lawndale Restoration as well as U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD.

Until last year, no one paid close attention to the cries of the people in the Lawndale community. People only started to cast their eyes to this West Side neighborhood when one of Cecil Butler's apartment buildings' roofs caved in, endangering the safety of residents.

The subsidized housing that Butler provided for Lawndale residents left many of them literally without a roof to call their own. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, more than 1,800 code violations were found in a fall 2004 inspection. Butler's buildings suffer from mice and roach infestation, rotting ceilings, roof leaks, dangling electrical wires, and dirty sewage in many of the basements. There are lopsided, rickety porches and stairs. Year after year, these same places passed inspections and federal HUD money kept coming in, like rain through an open window.

Residents were demanding to know how did that keep occurring? Where were these same inspectors earlier when they passed these buildings to continue to receive federal dollars?

"Nothing is going to change," Shirley Beck, a long-time resident of Lawndale, said. "We have been living like this for so long and nobody cared. What is going to make the city care now?"

A number of activist groups are organizing the people of Lawndale to fight for better housing. They have also been fighting among each other.

"We have been working with the residents of Lawndale for over a year now. We are working to help protect their options and interest, and to make sure that what they decide is what is best for them," said Maurice Redd, executive director

of the Lawndale Neighborhood Organization. Redd explained that the median income level in Lawndale Restoration buildings was \$20,000 and less.

The residents affected by the terrible building conditions were given two options: take a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher and move into the private market or to move into another project-based subsidized housing building. The folks who chose Section 8 were not to get any additional financial help from HUD.

In September 2004, the in-your-face group called V.O.T.E. – Voices Of The Ex-offenders – hosted a tour of Butler's properties for then US Senate candidate Alan Keyes, the Republican nominee. The tour included one of Butler's buildings that had collapsed after a car ran into a support pillar.

At the time, Keyes made blunt statement to the media about the dilapidated properties. He alleged that Butler was a affiliate of Mayor Richard M. Daley, and that's why the buildings were allowed to continue in disrepair.

V.O.T.E. organizers also made a number of accusations, coming out against the presence of another activist group in Lawndale, the Association of Communities for Reform Now, or ACORN.

"The residents of Lawndale have been under siege for years. Cecil Butler is a tyrant as well as an alleged thief. Most of the residents of Lawndale are not even aware about him nor are they aware about the group called ACORN," said Paul McKinley, a member of V.O.T.E.

"ACORN has been around for years and they didn't do anything until our group came on the scene. Now they want to become the great white saviors of the Black community," McKinley said.

"ACORN is organizing the residents of Lawndale who wish to stay in their project-based buildings," said Madeline Talbot, Executive Director for Chicago ACORN. She said the group collected 615 signatures out of 1,048 apartments for residents who want to keep their project-based subsidies.

"HUD wants to voucher out the residents of Lawndale but what HUD isn't telling the Lawndale residents is that the hous-



Pictured here in September, 2004, a dismantled ceiling in one of Cecil Butler's dilapidated buildings.

Photo by Beauty Turner

ing market is extremely tight and that they are also voucherizing out low-income public housing residents that are being relocated underneath the CHA Transformation Plan and many of them are losing their vouchers," Talbot went on to say.

Talbot also explained that many of the tenants who relocated with Section 8 Vouchers after the car demolished one of Butler's buildings were losing their vouchers because they could not install their utilities.

I called Cecil Butler and tried to talk to him about his buildings. "I have been murdered; they have crucified me," Butler said, sounding wounded like a shot deer by the negative news surrounding his buildings.

Butler's properties are allegedly due to be confiscated and there is talk from the city that the properties may be divided up by 60 different developers.

## Senior Services 2005 and Beyond

by Michael Ibrahim

**S**eniors may be living longer these days, but they still need services. Recently, two seniors asked me for assistance to expedite resolution of problems they confronted.

In the first case, she was confused about her appointments and couldn't read the forms the clinic gave her. I made about a dozen phone calls to my friend's health-care provider and two clinic visits. Later, the doctors surmised her medicine was too strong, causing the confusion.

The second neighbor I helped was Carolyn Smith, a senior Section 8 Voucher holder who has heart trouble, crippling arthritis and cannot hear well. She has had multiple problems settling down to adequate living arrangements. Presumably, the CHAC service providers were there to help her.

But between the years 2003 and 2005, she was forced to make multiple moves to new dwellings at her own expense. For her, the costs were considerable since she has meager savings and lives on a fixed income.

Her story is that landlords were not paid due to CHAC computer errors. CHAC's share of the rent was mailed to wrong addresses. Smith's landlords, as a consequence, did not get paid. Smith confirms that CHAC hurried to correct the problem and she doesn't blame the agency specifically for the high-tech glitch. She's not resentful toward CHAC.

However, she continues to seek help from the courts in order to get refunds for the multiple security deposits she paid to different landlords. Smith will probably lose all the money she spent on costs associated with moving.

She feels it is unfortunate that she has had to go to court to get refunds on her deposits from the particular landlords concerned.

After schlepping around town with my neighbors' documents and letters, I discovered there were social service and activist groups well-informed and suitably skilled to handle the problems of both these senior ladies.

Gary Arnold at Access Living, a group that advocates for disability rights, said their organization's Civil Rights



Michael Ibrahim

Intake Department most likely could have made Smith's situation easier. At the very least, Smith should not have been left entirely to her own resources in her attempts to correct her problems with CHAC. Arnold assured me that Access Living's services are open to all people with disabilities, including seniors.

"We at Access Living often collaborate with groups outside the disability community on different projects. Whether they be housing, or healthcare issues, we make an effort to network with senior groups. For example, we work with groups like Metro Seniors in Action, the Jane Adams Senior Caucus and El Valor," Arnold said.

As it turns out, Access Living shares similar interests with some of these other groups even when not jointly targeting specific projects. Seniors receiving SSI benefits and seniors with disabilities alike have the option of taking advantage of services available through Access Living.

There are at least five different categories of services offered through the organization: housing, civil rights intake, healthcare, youth and education, and consumer services. Consumer services include peer support group information and referrals. Anyone requiring technical information about the use of prosthetics or wheelchairs, for example, would most likely be directed to consumer services.

In addition to working with seniors with disabilities, Access Living is training disabled youth as leaders of their communities. They expect this training will provide the opportunity for more disabled youths to engage in community activism and politics.

Another group, El Valor, is working with a significant Latino base. El Valor's branch on the Far South East Side of Chicago at 92<sup>nd</sup> and Houston proves that their ecumenical

welcome mat is spread for all of Chicago's diverse communities; African-American, Asian, Latinos, as well as those of European ancestry. El Valor has been around for at least thirty years and serves a total of around 2,000 families annually.

Dona Carmen, El Valor's media spokesperson, explained that "we are a well-rounded organization, not focusing entirely on one single aspect of the community, but rather we target the community as a whole."

She said the organization provides services to older adults and children from birth to five with special needs as well as youth enrichment after-school programs to children of school age.

"Our senior service department is also large, primarily because we provide a space where seniors may actually come and work. Part of what we do is we have an intake procedure which allows us to find jobs for those seniors with special needs," Carmen told me. They also seek outside contracts with companies to employ seniors at their facilities.

Rhea Byers-Ettinger, lead organizer at Metro-Seniors in Action, explained that her organization also offers a number of services to seniors, including affordable housing assistance. Currently, Metro Seniors in Action is partnered with the Balanced Development Coalition. Together they are in support of the Preckwinkle-Burnett plan for affordable housing outlined in the ordinance which Alderman Toni Preckwinkle (4th) and Alderman Walter Burnett (27th) jointly sponsored and placed before city council.

"What we want to have is an ordinance that will automatically allow for 15 percent of all new development in the City of Chicago to be set aside for affordable housing," Byers-Ettinger said. "In the case of seniors, many of whom are on fixed incomes, implying that their incomes do not rise comparatively along with the rising costs of housing, there needs to be some mechanism put forth insuring that seniors will have some place to live in Chicago."

These groups belie the notion that no one is out there advocating and organizing senior citizens. Every senior should feel confident to contact these groups and get the help they need.

# Healthcare Justice Act Raises Hopes

by Lorenzia Shelby

**A**dvocates for universal healthcare celebrated passage of the Healthcare Justice Act of 2004, Illinois House Bill 2268, this past summer. The new legislation is designed to help the 3.5 million uninsured people in Illinois. On December 15, 2004, supporters of the bill held a candlelight vigil. At the candlelight vigil, State Senate President Emil Jones and State Representative William Delgado were the keynote speakers. Other speakers included Alivio Medical Center Director Carmen Velasquez and Health and Policy Research Group founder Dr. Quentin Young.

Each expressed their support and commitment for healthcare for all. The Healthcare Justice Campaign was launched in 2002 to win accessible, affordable, quality health care for all residents and it was endorsed by over 100 diverse organizations. The groups backing the bill say they are the voice for the uninsured in Illinois.

The bill passed the House and Senate in late May 2004. Governor Blagojevich signed the bill into law August 20 of that same year. A health care task force will now recommend to the legislature ways to solve the healthcare crisis in Illinois, according to the Campaign for Better Health Care's Web site. The General Assembly will then vote on a solution by December 31, 2006, with implementation by summer of 2007.

The Health Care Justice Act was presented to the House and Senate by then State Senator Barack Obama and Representative Delgado. State Senate President Emil Jones



Lorenzia E. Shelby

bring together all of the different players and stakeholders in the healthcare industry, from consumers to hospitals to doctors, nurses, insurers, to pharmaceutical companies to businesses to get input from all of the stakeholders. The task force is made up of people in the healthcare industry and legislators and their job is to get public input and they're going to be holding public hearings in every congressional district in the state. And they are going to be doing research to come up with a set of recommendations or a plan that could be passed by the state legislators that would increase access for healthcare for the uninsured.

**RJ:** How long has your organization, the Campaign for Better Healthcare, been in existence?

**Bougearel:** 15 years. The vision of the organization is really to work toward ensuring people have access to affordable and quality healthcare. The organization was founded on the principle that healthcare is a basic human right.

Carmen Velasquez, director of the Alivio Medical Center in Pilsen, had a lot to say about the Healthcare Justice Act.

**RJ:** What are your thoughts on the act?

**Velasquez:** I am a member and supporter of access to healthcare for all. As we say in the Campaign for Better Healthcare, everybody in, nobody out. We are very supportive of this healthcare act.

**RJ:** Why is it important for the government to provide medical assistance to the uninsured?

**H**ealthcare in this country is a catastrophe and people who get care under Medicaid get often very difficult or very inferior care because they're poor and vulnerable.

-Dr. Quentin Young

also backed the legislation. He talked to *Residents' Journal* in a brief telephone interview.

**RJ:** I want to ask you about the Healthcare Justice Act of 2004?

**President Jones:** We just passed that bill

**RJ:** How do you propose to implement the Healthcare Justice Act of 2004?

**President Jones:** That's up to the governor, the executive office, not the legislators.

**RJ:** Why is it important for the government to provide this assistance?

**President Jones:** It's important for the government to provide healthcare for those in dire need of it.

**Residents' Journal** also talked to a spokesperson for the Campaign for Better Health Care, Molly Bougearel. She offered these comments about the bill.

**RJ:** How will this bill help the 3.5 million people in Illinois who went without healthcare insurance in 2003 and 2004?

**Bougearel:** What it is, is a processed bill and attempt to

**Velasquez:** First of all, healthcare is a right. All human beings are entitled to have good quality medical care. So it's very important in this country, in the same way we fight for education for our children ... it's another aspect of quality of life. That's a must for all of us.

Another strong supporter of the Healthcare Justice Act of 2004 is Dr. Quentin Young. He expressed his thoughts and aversions to the act.

**RJ:** Why is it important for the government to provide medical assistance to the uninsured?

**Dr. Young:** You bet your life it is. We have a situation where 45 million don't have health insurance and 50 million have very poor insurance. Healthcare in this country is a catastrophe and people who get care under Medicaid get often very difficult or very inferior care because they're poor and vulnerable. Medicare is much better. Medicare is sort of the model I was talking about. It covers everybody over 65 years old – rich, poor, black, white or whatever with its generous packages of benefits and it also takes care of disabled people. Medicare is a huge success. Now, the enemies of that



**Illinois State Representative William Delgado played a major role in promoting and supporting the Healthcare Justice Act of 2004**

kind of system are trying to undermine it.

Illinois State Representative William Delgado played a major role in promoting and supporting the Healthcare Justice Act of 2004.

**RJ:** How do you propose to implement the act?

**Representative Delgado:** Really it can't be implemented until the report comes back in 2007. In the meantime, what we have been doing through the Campaign for Better Healthcare is to continue organizing through our communities.

**RJ:** Why is it important for the government to provide medical assistance?

**Representative Delgado:** We would have to find all parts participating, which means the employer percentage and the employee pays a percentage. So we do need the government role, but we do not anticipate the government being the single answer. One is, I don't think we as people want the government to be as big daddy. Two, I don't think they're capable of implementing this by themselves.

**RJ:** Has this bill been signed by the governor?

**Representative Delgado:** The first portion of it was signed by the governor, and that was to create the commission ... but to answer your question, has universal care come to Illinois and been signed by the governor? No, there's no place to apply, there's no healthcare for everyone yet. We are in the early stages of bringing Illinois to the middle. Now we have a serious debate and a good discussion on how this will be inevitable and we are very excited. I believe in the next few years you will see [universal healthcare] happen.

**RJ:** Who presented this bill? Was it you and Obama?

**Representative Delgado:** That's correct I presented it in the House and [then-state] Senator Obama presented it in the Senate. He was very excited about it, since it helped him out a lot for his Senate run, the U.S. Senate run.



## Residents' Journal Around Town

**Left photo, from right:** RJ Publisher Ethan Michaeli, Sun-Times columnist and former Chicago Reporter head Laura Washington, Editor-in-Chief Mary C. Johns and Assistant Editor Beauty Turner with students, during one of Washington's classes at DePaul University. In the right photo: Beethoven Elementary School students pose with Idan Raichel (third to the left) and another member of the Idan Raichel Project, an Israeli-Ethiopian Pop-Fusion band, before performing at a concert hall in Skokie, IL in February. The CHA youth and others attended the concert courtesy of the Israeli Consulate General's office in February.

# Black Metropolis National Heritage Area Project

by Mary C. Johns  
Editor-in-Chief

A small group of Chicago Bronzeville area residents, local business people, and housing developers recently got together to talk about ways to make the "Black Metropolis" a National Heritage Area (NHA). They see the NHA as a way to preserve the historical sense of community, and to care for their land and culture, as well as provide an opportunity to pass on the knowledge and culture of the past to future generations.

The National Park Service defines a National Heritage Area as "a place designated by Congress where natural, cultural, historic and scenic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography."

At the first Annual Heritage Development Summit, held at the Hyatt Regency McCormack Hotel, on March 15, preservationists, business leaders, homeowners, community organizers, local bank and state government representatives listened to Jerry Adelmann, the executive director of Openland, a conservation organization, talk about the development strategy for becoming a National Heritage Area. Then the group of people attended several sessions to address the four critical steps needed prior to congressional designation of Black Metropolis into a National Heritage Area.

National Park Service guidelines state that four tasks are required in establishing National Heritage Area status. They must first complete a suitability/feasibility study "that can be completed in as few as nine months or three years, and costing as much as \$200,000 and as little as nothing if funded by Congress." The suitability/feasibility study is required to include information on the national significances of its story, data on whether the story is being told elsewhere, how the story can be told and who should be responsible for telling the story and how. The second task would be to incorporate public involvement in the suitability/feasibility study. Third, they must demonstrate widespread public support among heritage area residents for the proposed designation, and attain commitment from key constituents, which may include citizens, area governments, industry

The participants then shared views about how the area reflects traditions, customs and beliefs that are a valuable part of the Black Metropolis national story. They discussed how the area provides outstanding opportunity to conserve natural, cultural, historic, and/or scenic features, and talked about how the area provided outstanding recreational and educational opportunities, especially for the youths. Afterwards, they discussed with three housing developers, the ways to get the residents, business interests, non-profit organizations and governments within the proposed areas involved in the planning process.

During a panel discussion, moderated by Laura Washington, Sun-Times columnist and former publisher of

community. That they can't dig a ditch ...They can't lay a brick... They can't pour concrete in their own community. It's awful, and we have to do something about it," he said.

Finney also suggested that the group work towards getting City College-run Washburn Trade School, located at 3233 W. 31st St. opened again.

There is a lot of African American buying power in the communities and community activist Bobby Johnson wanted to know if any of the developers analyzed the Illinois budget to find out where money from tourism, and other attractions, is going that is supposed to assist the minorities in Illinois.

Finney said he and others worked with African American legislators in the general assembly on the state budget last year, and said he would do so again this year. Then he invited those in attendance to work with him regarding the state budget, and encouraged them to support a state tax increase this year.

Harold Lucas of the Black Metropolis Convention & Tourism Council wanted to know from Jared Davis, executive vice president of the Neighborhood Rejuvenation Partners/The Davis Group, a real estate development firm, what they intended to do with the landmark Overton Hygienic Building the Davis Group recently bought the building after it came under foreclosure in recent months. The building was formerly being developed by the Mid-South Planning and Development Commission with Empowerment Zone funds.

The building, located at 3619-27 S. State St., was built in 1923 by entrepreneur Anthony Overton, who was "one of the nation's foremost producers of African-American cosmetics." The building also housed "the first nationally chartered, African-American-owned bank," according to information on the city of Chicago's website. He added that he used the historical account of the building as an instruction tool for a history lesson he provided to school children in the area when he was principal for a day last year.

Lucas said the plans for the building when it was under ownership of Mid-South was to serve the public housing residents living across the street from the building. Davis said his organization bid up to \$1.2 million to purchase the Overton Hygienic building at an auction after the building went under foreclosure.

He said that though his organization hasn't fully thought out the ultimate end use for the structure, they are going to relocate their offices as part of it and have commercial space on the first floor.

Davis added that he was open to hear what ideas the public had for services offered at the building.

"We're still in the development process and the planning process...So, if there is a conversation that needs to be had with Black Metropolis and the rest of the community, then we're open to that," he said.

Lucas asked the developers what Black Metropolis should do to counteract the Bush administration's desire to cut Community Development Block Grants and HOPE VI and empowerment zone funding to build new housing. Finney said he along with several Illinois Democratic leaders and others, "were working aggressively to make sure that we don't see CDBG and programs like that deep-six as the Bush administration comes forward with no budget."

In the past 20 years, over 150 American communities have embarked on a path toward possible NHA designation, according to data provided by Elaine Van S. Carmichael, president of Economic Stewardship Inc., and consultant for the Black Metropolis National Heritage Area Project. To date, there are only 27 National Heritage Area designations in 16 states nationwide with more than 45 million Americans living within the boundaries that were passed by the U. S. Congress.

The summit concluded with the group talking about their next steps for National Heritage Area designation, which included how to encourage elected leaders in Washington, D.C. to prepare legislation authorizing, instructing and fully funding their NPS suitability/feasibility study.



Bronzeville community activist Cecelia Butler (seated with hands up), asks developers questions during the Black Metropolis National Area Project Summit in February.

Photo by Mary C. Johns

the Chicago Reporter investigative magazine, the summit attendees listened to the developers talk about their public and private housing projects in the Bronzeville Community. They questioned the developers on how they were willing to commit to working in partnership with them to develop the heritage area and asked the developers for their input on ways to continue economic activity in the area.

One woman in attendance wanted to know what the developers' opinions were on the state of African American participation in the construction trade, specifically, whether they felt pessimistic or optimistic about unions in general.

**T**hose are our jobs, and it's bad when you have to hire...white people to come in and build buildings in our neighborhoods and watch young men and young women walking by those jobs every day.

-Dr. Rev. Leon Finney, President, Woodlawn Community Development Corporation

and private and nonprofit organizations, in addition to area residents.

In the three break-out sessions, the community organizers, historians and others, strategized together to come up with the analysis and documentation to include in the suitability/feasibility study that would illustrate the requirements of NPS standards.

In the sessions, they shared the anthropology of Black Metropolis that produced dozens of famous personalities, musicians, entrepreneurs, social justice advocates, literary writers and physicians like Dr. Daniel Hale Williams. Williams performed the first open heart surgery and also founded Provident Hospital, "the first Black-controlled hospital in America," according to the African American Registry.

They talked about the DuSable trails that were established by Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, the founder of Chicago. And they discussed the significance of the nine landmarks in Bronzeville acknowledged by the city of Chicago, historic sites, the age-old churches and present and past entertainment joints like the now-closed Gerri's Palm Tavern, formerly one of the oldest black-owned businesses in the city, where notable Black entertainers like Ella Fitzgerald and others performed.

Leroy Bannister, the president of East Lake Management & Development, said he was pessimistic because he didn't "think the unions have done anything to assist the African American community in developing any kind of experience or expertise in the construction trade."

Bannister added that his organization was willing to provide jobs for youths in the Black Metropolis and to help them get experience in the construction trade.

"We're willing to work with them. We're going to insist that they be responsible. We're going to insist that they have a level of discipline. But we will work with them in that regard. And we try to use resources in and around our buildings to give people experience to help them become educated," he said.

Rev. Dr. Leon Finney, Jr., president of the Woodlawn Community Development Corporation, suggested those in attendance change the way they deal with labor unions so that African American people can have the opportunity to build their own homes in their communities.

"Those are our jobs, and it's bad when you have to hire...white people to come in and build buildings in our neighborhoods and watch young men and young women walking by those jobs every day. That's devastating to them, to believe that they can't build in their own commu-

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# Privatización del Seguro Social

por Mary C. Johns

Jefe de redacción

Tres líderes congresistas del Partido Demócrata de Illinois participaron hace poco en una reunión pública con la comunidad en Chicago para escuchar las preocupaciones respecto al actual programa del Seguro Social. Durante más de 70 años, el Seguro Social ha impedido que millones de ancianos caigan en la pobreza. Estos líderes sugirieron formas de resolver los problemas a los que se enfrenta el programa de mayor antigüedad del gobierno federal y criticaron la controvertida afirmación del Presidente Bush en el sentido de que a este programa social financiado con los impuestos sobre el salario "le acecha el peligro" de caer en bancarrota en un futuro no muy lejano.

## El incesante debate

El Presidente Bush señaló que el Seguro Social se enfrenta a obligaciones con los beneficiarios por un monto de 10 billones de dólares para las cuales carece de fondos. Los fideicomisarios del programa del Seguro Social han proyectado que ya en el año 2018 el programa deberá más dinero en beneficios anuales que los ingresos generados por los impuestos sobre el salario. Además, afirman que el programa quebrará antes del año 2042. Hoy día, la mayoría de los estadounidenses viven más tiempo y precisan jubilaciones más largas.

"Estos cambios apuntan a un peligro en acecho", declaró el Presidente en un reciente discurso sobre el tema en la radio.

Para resolver estos problemas, el Presidente ha estado hablando de privatizar parcialmente el programa permitiendo que los trabajadores más jóvenes destinen a cuentas privadas parte de los

impuestos que deben pagar al Seguro Social. Estos trabajadores podrían invertir ese dinero en acciones, bonos y otras formas de inversión privada.

Los críticos del plan del Presidente han advertido que esta propuesta de reforma del Seguro Social aumentará el déficit actual, perjudicará a las clases medias y a los trabajadores de bajos ingresos y reducirá los beneficios para los jubilados en el futuro.

Los demócratas argumentan que la declaración del Presidente sobre la gravedad de los problemas del Seguro Social es sumamente exagerada. Algunos críticos han incluso afirmado que toda la idea de la privatización es una treta para enriquecer aún más a los ricos. AFL-CIO, el mayor grupo de sindicatos del país, ha denunciado que, según la propuesta del Presidente, "los políticos seleccionarán a las empresas de Wall Street que controlarán las cuentas de inversión de los trabajadores." Según ellos, se trata de un proceso "corrompido por la política."

Jan Schakowsky, congresista demócrata por Illinois, sugirió que el plan de privatización es un esquema radical "que desviaría fondos quitándoselos al Seguro Social."

"El Seguro Social no se enfrenta a una crisis inminente y no va a caer en la bancarrota, por más veces que el Presidente Bush intente presentarnos un panorama sombrío", afirmó Schakowsky en dicha reunión con la comunidad el pasado mes de febrero. "El Seguro Social pagará beneficios completos durante los próximos cuarenta a cincuenta años y casi un 80% de todos los beneficios a partir de entonces."

En dicha reunión con la comunidad, el demócrata Barack Obama, electo recientemente por Illinois al Senado de los Estados Unidos, explicó los dos cambios que él quiere efectuar para

garantizar la solvencia del programa. Primero, el gobierno debe aumentar el límite para los impuestos sobre el salario. Actualmente, sólo se pagan impuestos del Seguro Social por los primeros \$90,000 de los ingresos. Eso significa que una persona que gane \$100,000 al año no paga impuestos por los otros \$10,000 de ese salario.

En segundo lugar, este senador sugirió aumentar la edad de jubilación, un método que se utilizó en 1990 para resolver algunos problemas del Seguro Social.

## La naturaleza peligrosa de las cuentas privadas

Dick Durbin, senador demócrata por Illinois, electo recientemente como responsable de la minoría demócrata en el Senado, advirtió en dicha reunión con la comunidad que privatizar parcialmente el Seguro Social era peligroso y "un paso en la dirección equivocada".

Esa propuesta, según la denuncia de Durbin ante la comunidad, "reduciría drásticamente los beneficios para muchos ancianos, hundiéndolos en la pobreza."

Entre los demás riesgos, mencionados en dicha reunión, que encerraría la privatización de los fondos del Seguro Social estaría el peligro de que los jubilados vivan más allá de la fecha en que se agoten sus cuentas privadas. La prolongación de la vida, los costos médicos, la mala fortuna o los errores de juicio en el manejo de la inversión podrían acabar con los ahorros de toda una vida. Otro riesgo es que el rendimiento de la inversión variará dependiendo del mercado, que puede incluso desplomarse en ocasiones. Asimismo, hay que pagar tarifas por la administración de las cuentas privadas, lo que reducirá su saldo. Casi ningún sistema privado de anualidades ofrece ajustes por el aumento en el costo de la vida y con una inflación de 2.5% anual, el valor de la pensión anual de una

persona que se jubile a los 65 años se reducirá en un 40% cuando esa persona tenga 85 años.

## Los beneficios del actual sistema del Seguro Social

Desviar los ingresos del Seguro Social hacia las cuentas privadas pondría específicamente "en peligro la seguridad financiera de generaciones de mujeres y sus familias", según los datos del Centro Nacional Jurídico de la Mujer (NWLC).

Hoy en día, se garantiza un ingreso de por vida para los trabajadores jubilados y sus supervivientes, lo que es particularmente importante para las mujeres, quienes tienden a vivir más tiempo, pasan más tiempo solas y tienen menos bienes que los hombres. Los beneficios actuales del Seguro Social no varían con el mercado de acciones, lo cual se hará aun más importante en el futuro cuando las empresas se alejen de las pensiones tradicionales para adoptar los sistemas 401(k).

El Seguro Social también proporciona un mayor porcentaje de ingresos antes de la jubilación para las mujeres que han trabajado y recibido bajos salarios y se han dedicado a atender a sus familias, explica el centro NWLC.

Los beneficios por incapacidad y los beneficios que se pagan a supervivientes para las familias tienden a ayudar más a las minorías debido a sus tasas más altas de incapacidad y muerte prematuras que son equivalentes a una póliza de seguro de vida por \$400,000 o una póliza de incapacidad por \$350,000.

## Nueva noticia

El *Washington Post* publicó a principios de marzo que el "plan del Presidente Bush de reestructurar el Seguro Social tendrá que esperar hasta el año próximo y podría dejar fuera a las cuentas individuales que la Casa Blanca ha luchado tanto por incluir en la reforma."

# Russian

Chinese

Korean

# Letters to the Editor

## Cabrini Goes to Washington

Dear Editor:

Cabrini-Green residents who believe the CHA is illegally demolishing the buildings at their development have taken their concerns all the way to the global arena. They argue that housing is a human right, and that the CHA is violating their right to housing because of the Transformation Plan and other policies.

On March 4, a group of public housing residents from Chicago, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., homeless people, and other low-income people from across the continent made a historic plea before the Organization of American States, of which the U.S. is a member.

Their goal was to bring global attention to the rising poverty in our hemisphere, especially in the United States.

The Cabrini residents, along with the U.S.-based Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, and allies from Canada and Brazil, told the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights – an arm of the OAS – that their countries' governments are moving further away from living up to their obligations to provide adequate housing.

One of the four people who testified was Ms. Carol Steele, a resident leader at Cabrini-Green and President of the Coalition to Protect Public Housing. She spoke about how the CHA's Plan for Transformation is leading to public housing residents being relocated against their will, and in some cases becoming homeless.

Ms. Steele testified that the U.S. government's withdrawal of a commitment to public housing has been a disaster. "The facts tell a



Pictured here are Deidre Brewster (left) and Carol Steele (right) standing on either side of Cheri Honkala, the national coordinator of the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, in early March

Photo courtesy of JCUA intern Marco Perschon

horrible story," said Steele. "16,000 units of public housing demolished, with less than 1,500 replacement units for families built."

She noted that more than 20,000 units are slated to be razed as part of Chicago's 10-year plan, and that the CHA's predominant philosophy is one of "demolish first, build later." This demolition occurs at a time when the Chicago metro area has a shortage of over 153,000 units of housing for low-income city residents.

Ms. Steele and the human rights lawyers who presented the case to the Commission asked for several measures so that the countries named will improve their housing policies, including an analysis of the countries' housing conditions in their reports, and more funding for housing programs.

Human rights law speaks to the rights and concerns of displaced public housing residents in Chicago and around the nation. And, although the hearing was the first time the OAS had considered a broad report about failing housing conditions across this hemisphere, grassroots movements in other parts of the globe have embraced the strategy of framing housing as a human right in their advocacy efforts.

The OAS could not have granted this hearing at a more appropriate time. President Bush's recent budget cuts deep into the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), especially for programs that help low and very-low income Americans.

The Cabrini residents believe that if the CHA won't listen to them, and the federal government won't listen to them, then they must take their case to an even higher level. The hearing before the OAS was one step in this journey.

-Noah Leavitt, Advocacy Director of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs and member of the Poor People Economic Human Rights Campaign legal committee

-James Pfluecke, Organizer, Coalition to Protect Public Housing

## Justice System Needs Reform

Dear Editor:

We live in a country with two justice systems. One justice system for the privileged and the powerful like Charles Colson, Elliott Abrams, Jeb McGruder and Michael Milken and another for the poor and powerless who are predominantly black and Hispanic. A system that forgives those whose crimes tear at the very fabric of democracy, yet forever punishes those whose crimes impact less people on a smaller and more personal scale. It is a system that has empathy for the powerful but ruthlessly tears families of the poor apart, rips children from parents and consigns thousands to lives of low wages and hopelessness. Then, has the temerity to profess shock and amazement when people who have been systematically stripped of both their present and future, prey on a society that they are not allowed to rejoin.

In Illinois, the Community Renewal Society's grassroots membership, along with our coalitional partners played a large part

in the Developing Justice Coalition's work to pass Senate Bill 3007 (SB 3007), which became law recently. This bill seals the criminal records of class four felons so that they will have a real second chance to be reintegrated into society. Prior to the bill, those formerly incarcerated were not only banned from receiving state and federal assistance to improve their life chances. They were also prevented from virtually any career path that paid more than minimum wage. They were a huge population of people who were effectively outside of mainstream society, destined to live lives of poverty and hopelessness unless they were both incredibly fortunate and extraordinarily determined. Most people, me included, are neither incredible nor extraordinary. Because of this, poverty and hopelessness are among the primary reasons why so many people commit another crime when they are returned to society.

The Community Renewal Society sees the passage of this legislation as a tangible example of reconciliation sentencing.

Reconciliation sentencing is a practice rooted in the Islamic-Judeo-Christian traditions of seeking the lost and restoring those who have strayed the farthest from their community. For us, it is primarily a Christian charge to reconcile and forgive those who have fallen short of their human potential so that they can find their virtue and make their communities better places to return to. SB 3007 is the beginning of making that possible for everyone who has committed a crime because redemption should not just be for the privileged and the powerful.

By signing SB 3007 the Governor took a first, good step on the road to a society that reflects the higher values of reason, reconciliation and redemption. It will impact the everyday lives of ordinary people and will go a long way toward fulfilling one of the fundamental charges of a just society. That being, when people have paid their debt to society, we must make a place for them. The violation of this basic social justice tenet should be unacceptable to anyone, but especially odious to people of good faith.

-Rev. Calvin S. Morris Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Community Renewal Society

## Crystal Clear Views

Dear Crystal:

With spring time knocking on my door, I'm starting to be more mindful of what I eat. For me, overeating is a problem and as a single mother I just can't find the time to exercise. I really do want to slim down and stay healthy. Do you have any tips to help me?

-Junk in the trunk

Dear Trunk:

Well, with the weather getting warmer, a lot of us are wondering how we are going to shed those winter pounds. First of all, remember that in order to stay healthy, we have to see losing weight as a lifestyle change and not as a temporary diet.

When we're changing how we eat, one problem a lot of us face is the feeling of



Crystal Medina

failure. If we eat something we're not supposed to, we feel guilty and we just give up, convincing ourselves it is too hard. A better way of changing our diet is to stay positive. Just

because you have eaten something "bad," doesn't mean all is lost. You can feel good about the fact that you have done so well up until then.

I have a little system of my own that

might help you avoid junk food. When I was having a craving, I substituted it. If I was craving candy, I ate fruit. Sugar is sugar. I love potato chips! Now I can settle for trail mix with nuts and raisins, pretzels and crackers! They all taste great! Try to substitute water or 100% juices for pop and other sugary drinks. Remember, you can almost always bake or broil your meats instead of frying them in oil.

Also, try bringing your lunch to work. I always tend to eat healthier lunches if I make them at home.

What about when you overeat when you're bored or sad? You know what I mean, carrot sticks, celery...crunchy is always comforting. Also, whatever I used to order extra (butter, sour cream, cheese, etc.), I don't anymore. I'm sure you get my drift. I know I sound like a cheesy infomer-

cial but I swear it worked for me. The fact of the matter is it worked because I was not in a diet mind set. Fad diets and temporary diets don't work.

Exercise is also easier than you think. An exercise program can be informal. Basically, you can turn anything into exercise. If you can, instead of getting on the elevator, take the stairs. You might be able to use the car, but it can be relaxing to walk to a store near you. At work, try to stretch out a little during the day. Enjoy the fresh air! The easiest might be just to remember what it is to be a kid again. Go out and play with your children, it's healthy for all of you and they will love it! Walk through the zoo, swim at the beach, play ball. That's one of the good things about Chicago in the summer time, sky's the limit!

**Residents' Journal** welcomes submissions from all of our readers and especially from public housing residents. Please send all letters to our new address: 4859 S. Wabash Ave. Chicago, IL 60615. You may also call our office at (312) 745-2682 to discuss your ideas for submission.

# Harold Ickes News

## by Jacqueline Thompson

### *Building Improvements Uneven*

**H**arold Ickes Homes can now boast that one building has the honor of having seven floors with brand new blue tiles in the hallway of each level. It is truly lovely to see. I wonder when our nine story building will be on the receiving end.

Yes, in our building we have iron pipe hand railings, new push plates on the front and back doors, but the doors are beat up and falling apart, so the new plates are not even adhering to them. One side of our double front door fell off of its hinges somehow overnight.

At least the glass blocks that grace the front of the building have been replaced, thank you. So some upkeep work has been done.

### *Noble Community Members will be Missed*

In other news, we've lost a number of long-time residents in a short period of time. Mrs. Ida Brown, Mr. Joseph Cunningham, Mrs. Evans, Mrs. Joann Green, Mr. James Liggins, and "Moody" from the Douglas family all succumbed to natural causes. If that wasn't enough, Bernellia Davis, the mother of Gloria Williams, our own Local Advisory Council president, also passed.

We offer our sincere condolences to each family. Some of these residents were pillars of the Harold Ickes community for decades. Ms. Ida Brown, for example, was a fixture on her porch. If you didn't see her sitting there, you knew something was wrong. They all shall surely be missed.

### *Residents Enjoy "Family Feuds"*

An event that took place October 2004 seems worthy to revisit right now so residents can be aware of the program if it repeats this autumn. The CHA games program took place at the very new Harold Washington Cultural Center at 4700 S. King Drive in the heart of Bronzeville. CHA Commissioner Earnest Gates created the program. All residents were invited to learn about the Plan for Transformation, the 10-year, \$1.6 billion redevelopment effort, through team efforts and games like a modified version of the Family Feud. A week ahead of the games, we were able to study the CHA manual for answers. Sharon Gilliam, Chairperson of the CHA board, was in attendance.

This reporter was invited to be a team member, and accepted the challenge to experience a day of educational enjoyment. It all worked out because the teams consisted of all ages – children, adults and senior citizens.

The winning teams earned appreciable cash prizes and the audience participated in a rich raffle. Using family style teams made the whole production especially endearing.

### *National Teachers Academy Update*

After the surprise upheaval of the administrative staff at National Teachers' Academy-Professional Development School in July 2004, the entire school community – teachers, engineers, office clerks, lunchroom staff, security officers, volunteers and parents – took the new partnership contract with the



Jacqueline Thompson

University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) with quiet acceptance.

The original staff who stayed on realized the strength of the young foundation of the new school and decided not to let the dream die. They put forth their best energy into staying for the sake of the children, the reason for it all. Even though the grades that did rise in the two years of steady commitment were not enough, relationships did form between staff, children and volunteers.

The joint responsibility for educating the children and the student teachers has taken on a serious cohesion whereby all staff members, from the chief engineer to the lunch room manager, have taken on the spirit of the school slogan, "NTA is the place where learning never ends." At NTA, even staff members who aren't instructors go out of their way to teach the children. They do it in a way that is genuinely unexpected yet highly acceptable.

An example: one a third grade teacher, asked the chief engineer if he would take her class on a tour of his work area in the school. He consented and this reporter was invited to go along. Our tour was also accompanied by Director of Media Fred Brown who documented the session for the future classroom educational viewing.

The first stop was into the office of the chief engineer. He began by showing huge, poster-size photos of the land that the school sits on before and after construction. Then he showed the original architectural design for each of the two buildings, the main school and the Park District/Infant Toddler Center. He moved to his computer and pointed out the state-of-the-art grid that held the atmospheric information of each square foot of each room in the school's complex. Then he showed us how he used the computer to make any necessary adjustment to the atmosphere in any area of the school.

From there, the tour moved upstairs to the roof where the huge fresh air recycling center houses giant fans. After that, we went to the room where the ultra modern heating system's computers communicate with each other to get the job done.

The children were awed, asking good questions, absorbing ready answers, and when they were allowed, touching safe machinery.

This kind of learning for elementary pupils is truly unheard of.

Brown will take up where the tour left off by showing the students how the video he took will be edited in his laboratory.

Another example of support staff involvement with the kids is the lunchroom manager. He spends three days a week after school helping some students with their homework.

We also have the example of John Pointer, community representative at NTA. He developed a coffee klatch called JP's Corner where the parents come regularly on Friday morn-

ings to talk over issues that concern all parents including CHA housing relations, school/teacher relations and other issues. Pointer also spends time as a mentor, encouraging the 850 or so students, even pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, to follow the rules.

Emilio Valencia works security at NTA. He and his new wife are Hispanic. Yet he and she have returned to Harold Ickes two days a week to pick up youths with their parents' permission, and take them to their church for cross-cultural experiences and spiritual nourishment. While that seems like a lot to do for Ickes resident families, his church, the New Life Covenant on North Mozart Avenue, held a Christmas party for 500 children in the gymnasium of the NTA park district. Among the many gifts given were 50 brand new bicycles. Each of the children received a new bible of their own.

The best report comes from the parents' response. For the first marking period after the changeover to UIC, the report card pickup numbers revealed that 90 percent of the parents



**The National Teacher Academy's Chief Engineer shows third grade students how he controls the airflow throughout the classrooms and school from his computer, while Director of Media Fred Brown documents the lesson for later viewing.**

Photo by Jacqueline Thompson

picked up the cards. Two classrooms boasted 100 percent parent turn out to pick up cards. These numbers show improvement and parental involvement. This is always good news for our children and community.

### *Officer Should Apologize*

Contrary to the colorful statements made by the Police Officer Wardell Harris, "a pile of manure" has nothing to do with the tireless efforts made by the staff and community members who love what they do at NTA-PDS. Harris used that language in a November 2004 *Chicago Tribune* article to describe the area around Harold Ickes Homes and the school. None of us deserved the unkind, unfounded, ill-advised opinion of one public "servant" who did not take into consideration that the children who attend NTA CAN READ what he was quoted as saying.

This reporter believes that an apology to the community from one who is being paid to "Serve and Protect," should be made even at this late date. He should try to explain to the children just what he meant.



**Cardinal Francis George, pictured here with Residents' Journal Editor-in-Chief Mary C. Johns (left) and Assistant Editor Beauty Turner**

Photo by Micah Maidenber

### *Religious Leaders on Relocation Tour*

We The People Media, the not-for-profit organization which publishes Residents' Journal, hosted a tour of the public housing relocation process for Francis Cardinal George and other faith leaders on Feb. 23, 2005. Cardinal George led more than 20 other Roman Catholic priests as well as leaders of other faith groups, including Rabbi Ira S. Yudavin, Executive Vice President of the Chicago Board of Rabbis, the Rev. Paul Rutgers, Executive Director of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, and the Rev. Michael Denton, Co-Association Minister of the Chicago Metropolitan Association of the United Church of Christ, as well as leaders of foundations and other civic organizations and We The People Media Board members.

The Cardinal and the leadership group toured one of the two remaining buildings in the Robert Taylor Homes development and met with Mary Foney, a grandmother who lost her right to relocation services and is facing homelessness as a result of the imminent closure of the building. The faith leaders also met with Brenda Wilburn, a relocated resident who now lives in the South Shore community. We The People Media will continue to work with the Cardinal and other faith leaders to develop resident-based solutions to the challenges facing low-income families as a result of neighborhood change. The Cardinal expressed his support for We The People Media's work, including the development of a Community Information Center, which would offer training and resources to low-income families. To learn more about We The People Media's work and about the Community Information Center, please call our offices at (312) 745-2681 or check our web site, [www.wethepeoplemedia.org](http://www.wethepeoplemedia.org).

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