

# Liberty Voice

Spring 2009



## News Brief

### STOP THE \$3 MILLION PROPOSED CUT TO AIDS SERVICES!!

The AIDS LIFE Campaign is calling on all people living with HIV/AIDS, advocates, providers, and friends to do two things:

1. Take 2 minutes out of your day to make one phone call to Governor Rell (800-406-1527)
2. Get everyone in your community, circle of friends & families to do the same.

Your message is simple: "Stop the \$3 million proposed cut to AIDS services by The Dept. of Public Health! People with AIDS are NOT expendable!"

Together we can make a difference!

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## A Story of Success...

Recently a woman walked into my office, and, with a big grin, stated, "I'm your success story!" Jane\* had stopped attending the Day Program a few months prior. The staff had wondered where she was and how she was doing. Jane had been homeless off and on for several months when she first arrived at the Day Program. She was struggling to put her life back together while also trying to stay connected to and provide for her children who did not live with her. Jane had been told by many people that with her mental illness she was incapable of living independently, being a good mother, or even taking care of herself. Yet each day, she came to the program and worked to stay organized and move forward with her life. Jane got into treatment with a counselor and psychiatrist, as well as attending anger management and women's groups in the community. She worked with staff at the Day Program to improve her computer skills and to schedule trips to see her children. After a long wait, she moved into a transitional housing program for a few months and then good news arrived—her name had come to the top of the waiting list for a subsidized apartment. Jane moved in and has enjoyed being in a quiet community where she can focus on herself. She continues treatment with a mental health provider and keeps in contact with her children. "I can finally say that I'm okay. I haven't been able to say that in a long time. Thanks for that."

Jane's story is an example of how the Day Program can fill the missing pieces in a client's service network. We certainly can't take credit for all of Jane's successes, but we were able to provide a necessary link to the community for her. Staff met with Jane to complete housing applications, schedule mental health appointments, and provide hours and hours of listening and support. Stories like Jane's are great motivation to continue this work. The Day Program thrives because of the dedication of the clients and their commitment to better their lives. Each week brings new clients and new opportunities to serve the community. Hopefully we will have more stories like Jane's to tell in the future.

- Khelen Rhodes Kuzmovich  
Day Program Coordinator

\*Name has been changed for confidentiality.



**"Thank you for allowing me to be who I was at your program. It wasn't the best time in my life, but I am now doing so much better. Thanks for not judging me when my illness was at such a bad point."**

- Jane

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## A Note from the Executive Director...

Thanks to the generosity of donors in New Haven, a difficult winter was made a little easier. Liberty participated in the "Make A Good Gift Better" matching gift campaign sponsored by the Community Foundation of Greater New Haven. We raised more money than ever in our annual fund drive and it was matched up to \$8,650 by the Foundation. Liberty also received two grants from the Neighbor-to-Neighbor LifeLine Program sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven and United Way of Greater New Haven. People in New Haven realized the plight of individuals this winter seeking housing and food and they responded. The newsletter contains an article about the brunch program that was started with these funds. Does a brunch make a difference in the face of other pressing problems for people? Yes, it sure does when you see someone smile after a good meal. Liberty has been offering help to people seeking housing in New Haven for over twenty years and the key element in that is not just help, but hope. A brunch, supportive housing, encouragement, providing access to services all bring hope; hope that tomorrow can be better than today. Thanks to our donors and supporters for giving us the tools to pass on hope to individuals in struggling circumstances.

## Board News

### Board Spotlight...



Robert Orr has been a member of Liberty's Board of Directors since 2003 when he was recruited for his expertise in community design and public/private partnerships. Robert is an award-winning architect, town planner and visionary leader of New Urbanism; the urban design movement that aims to reform local and regional real estate development to create walkable, mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhoods. Robert has been involved in the United Way Day of Caring project when volunteers came to our Transitional Housing Program for assistance in repair and upkeep. Robert also serves on the affiliate corporation Board, Liberty Developments, Inc., which is responsible for the development and financial operations of the building at 210 State St. Robert has watched as the building has been finalized and offered suggestions on how to integrate the storefront space into the neighboring community, which include his office on Chapel Street. Robert is involved in many Boards in the community including the Trinity Church Missions Committee, which has provided financial support to Liberty's mission of relieving homelessness.

## Re-Entering the Work Force...

At our last Board meeting, we discussed the efforts of the Liberty staff to support clients who were interested in working. Most of our clients who receive housing support are on disability and are unable to work. However, there are a few individuals that actively seek employment since their disabilities are not as restricting.

In the last year, Liberty has been providing access to computers for our clients, assessing their interest in working and then connecting them to supportive employment programs. Despite the difficult economy, these efforts have paid off. Four of the clients have found permanent employment while another four are still actively seeking new opportunities.

A client from our Transitional Living Program joined the meeting to tell his story of the difficulties in finding a job. Prior to his illness which caused him to become homeless, he always worked. The staff at the program encouraged him to once again pursue employment. He explained how discouraging it was going from one business to another along Route One looking for work and being rejected. "I know I would have given up without the support of the staff. They told me that if I put the time in, I would find something, and I did. I feel like a part of society again instead of feeling sorry for myself. When I get up at 4:45 am every day to take the bus to work, I am really happy".

Liberty's work is about supporting individuals who have had difficult times finding their way achieving their goals. Assisting and supporting them to find employment is one of those efforts and we are pleased with our results.

## Liberty Receives Neighbor-to-Neighbor LifeLine Grant...

In January, Liberty Community Services submitted two applications to Neighbor-to-Neighbor LifeLine, a six-week emergency winter fundraising drive led by United Way of Greater New Haven and the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven. The intent of the United Way and Jewish Federation was to raise \$1 million for organizations that provide food, shelter and other basic services to local families and individuals facing economic challenges this winter. Liberty received \$19,800 for a winter Sunday brunch program for the homeless and \$10,000 to provide emergency financial assistance to clients living independently. Barbara Vosburgh, Director of Organizational Development, said the organization had been trying to start a Sunday brunch program for months but never had the resources until the Neighbor-to-Neighbor LifeLine Program came along.

Each Sunday, brunch attendees arrive at Liberty Safe Haven and are greeted by staff and volunteers from the community including volunteers from the United Way, who guide them to a waiting area. Staff provides materials and information about area social services to the individuals as they wait to be seated. Michael Hall, Program Director, states, "Not only are we helping people meet their nutritional needs while here, we are also trying to direct individuals to resources that can help them better their lives." Several homeless individuals who dine at the brunch have been connected to other Liberty services, such as the Day Program. A small corps of volunteers from the Day Program also attend each week to help set up, serve, and guide diners to their tables. One person who attends the Day Program says, "It's great for me to be with my family on Sunday mornings. We all struggle, but I am homeless. This is a way for us to be together and eat a really great meal. It's feeding our bodies and our spirits."

Sweet Relief Catering of New Haven provides the meals which include eggs, bacon, sausage, fresh fruit, pancakes, pastries, juice, coffee, and more. Originally the brunch was designed to serve 50 individuals, yet the number continues to swell each week, with between 120 and 160 being served.



## Sunday Brunch...

Mary supported herself for many years as a CNA. Even though she struggled to make ends meet, she loved what she did and enjoyed going to work every day helping the elderly. Then in one night her life as she knew it, changed.

That was three years ago. Today, Mary is homeless.

After leaving work one night when her shift was over, she was brutally attacked and hospitalized for over 2 months. Her injuries left her permanently disabled and unable to work at the only skill she was trained to do. Without income, she lost her home. Mary has been on the street for the past 2 years.

When asked where she lived, she replied "everywhere and anywhere, and I hide, I hide at night when it is time to sleep. I hide from anyone who could hurt me. I am so afraid of getting hurt again." Mary said Sundays are especially hard for two reasons. The first is finding places open on Sunday that serve food. The second is that she misses her old life more on Sunday. In her "other life" Sunday was her favorite day. She would sleep late, cook herself breakfast, read the paper and just relax the day before a new workweek. Now she roams the streets thinking all the time about how things were so different once." I think the Sunday Brunch saved me. I was so depressed, then someone told me about this free Brunch, a real Brunch they said. I haven't been to "Brunch" in so many years. I couldn't believe I could go. Thank you so much. Can I come back next week? I can look forward again to my Sundays. I won't be like this forever you know. One day, one day I'll be ok. I know I will. This is a sign". Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Neighbor-to-Neighbor LifeLine grant and made this possible. Without these dollars there would be no Sunday Brunch. You have given Mary hope.

Dignity, Compassion & Respect



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## About Us...

For over two decades, Liberty Community Services has offered a new beginning to individuals in our community facing homelessness, addiction or chronic illness. Liberty provides a stable place to live with supportive services that help foster physical and psychological health. This combination of stability and care helps to bring about life-saving changes.

We are proud to be a part of the success of those we serve and to support the community we share one individual at a time.

## Thank you...

On behalf of the individuals we serve, our Board and Staff, we wish to thank all our donors, volunteers and sponsors. We'd like to pay special thanks to:

\*Community Foundation of Greater New Haven "Make A Good Gift Better" Matching Grant Program

\*United Way of Greater New Haven & Jewish Federation of New Haven Neighbor-to-Neighbor LifeLine Grant

\*Grace Jones Richardson Trust

\*Rogers Family Trust Fund

\*Carol Orr and Maria Freda for donations of furniture and household items.

\*Yale students with the Sports Empowerment Program who teach exercise classes every Sunday at Safe Haven.

**For more information about our programs, staff and events  
please visit our website:  
[www.libertycs.org](http://www.libertycs.org)**