



WORD on the STREET

Greater
Cincinnati
Coalition For
The Homeless





FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Supporters of GCCH,

It is with mixed joy and sorrow that I remember 2007.

Our theme for 2007 was "Word on the Street" in honor of Streetvibes, the Coalition's street paper. For years, Streetvibes has provided a voice to poor and homeless people, the folks who have a different story to tell. Streetvibes explores the flip side of the American Dream. It's not as rose-tinted as some other publications, but there's a shade of honesty in it that is often absent from the mainstream press.

Keeping us honest, all these years, was Streetvibes editor, photographer, writer and friend, Jimmy Heath. Jimmy passed away in December, 2007, leaving an awfully big hole at the Coalition. Jimmy poured his life and talent into Streetvibes and has left us with an incredible legacy to nurture. And it is with his spirit in mind that we forge ahead, celebrating Jimmy, the vendors, and all of the people who have helped make Streetvibes what it is.

I would like to thank you for your continued support of the Coalition. It is in times of loss that we realize how truly interconnected we all are. It is my belief that no place demonstrates the essence of community better than the Coalition. Through this community, true and lasting change is possible. Through this community, we will honor Jimmy and all the others who have gone before us, by realizing their dream of a world without homelessness.

Sincerely,

Georgine Dittz

THE BROKEN MIRROR

by Jimmy Heath

(Jimmy's final article published in *Streetvibes* - December 2007)

The man had found a comfortable and warm place to sleep in his sisters and brother-in-laws basement.

On the cot in the basement, he could hear the cold winds of winter. It was a soothing, sleeping sound. He felt like a squirrel or other tiny animal snuggled up, in their tiny hole. This warm and cozy spot was the man's comfy shelter and home. From the cot resting next to the furnace, he heard the whirl of warmth around him.

There were cobwebs and dust everywhere. It was dusty and dark down there, even with the lights on. The lighting made the place even gloomier, revealing the decrepit spirit. The stairs from the middle of the basement were steep and hard to travel for a wobbly man. There was a faint and peeling nature to the walls exposing the stone in some places, and many layers of peeling paint, including kitchen yellow and an odd red color.

There were old miscellaneous items hanging from the dark rafters. Odd wires to nowhere, nails that did nothing, cobwebs. Even with the lights on it, it was dark down there, and the glow only made the space gloomier.

There was an old wood and musty smell to this place, underneath a bright and lively suburban home. His sister hated the scary, smelly, old basement. Her husband was not bothered because this was part of his domain. It was his workshop, with old benches and cans of paint and old tools scattered about.

The man living in the basement reached for his bottle and took a good swig of booze, something that was aggravating and of concern to his sister upstairs. He had no idea of the far reaching effects this was having on his family and himself. He did not see the impact of his alcoholism and what it was doing to himself and his family.

Every one else in his family had rejected him, with the boozier not having a clue to what was happening outside of him and his



bottle. Sometimes the man in the basement sensed the uneasiness but that did not stop the drinking, brushing those thoughts off. Most of his family had already rejected him, and it was not out of tough love but annoyance.

The man was destroying himself and it mattered to everyone except the drunk. His family saw what was happening, but did not know what to do, except to tolerate this annoying troll living in the basement.

The man was spiritually oblivious to everything. During the day, his sister and brother-in-law went to work. The drunk had the run of the house, eating their food and drinking their booze and watching their TV. At the end of the day he crawled back home to his refuge, the basement.

He was a troll waiting under a bridge. Popping out on occasion to scare people and collect the "tax." Smelly and sick the troll kept up the boozing like it was his life mission. At least he was out of sight out of mind and that kept him safe for now. But the real curse lived in the mind and body of this lonely man who had lost everyone and everything to booze.

The house pets, two dogs, would bound down the steps and greet the troll. They were so pure, these dogs, and they provided love without malice. They did not care and they looked at you without judgment. This provided the troll with a sense of hope and realization.

Eventually he would have to get out, because he knew the outcome. The day came and he hit his head so hard that he put a hole in the drywall in the upstairs hallway. His sister asked him to leave. So on with the backpack and out the door he went. Downtown was his destination and he somehow was eventually rescued by buddy gray's Drop Inn Center.

He was helped back to his feet and showed how to be sober. He got his life back. That was in 1995 and he has been sober since. What a wonderful thing my life has become. Now, I am a productive member of society and live in Over-the-Rhine.

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COORDINATION OF SERVICES

The Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless provides a space for collaboration and information sharing for the homeless community and social service providers. Our Coordination of Services activities allow for social service agencies, advocates, and homeless individuals alike to come together and address the problems of homelessness in our community.

GENERAL BODY MEETINGS

GCCH is proud to have had 43 member agencies in 2007. These agencies are the lifeblood of our community, providing the direct service that make the difference between life and death for many of Cincinnati's homeless population. Ten membership meetings were held in 2007.

MINIMUM STANDARDS

In order to ensure that the shelters of Cincinnati are providing safe and respectful care to residents, GCCH conducts a biennial Minimum Standards inspection. In 2007, a committee was formed of volunteers from our membership, a representative from the City and a representative from the Health Department. The committee evaluated all of the shelters in Cincinnati who receive city funding. We were pleased to successfully pass 23 emergency and transitional shelter programs.

HUMAN SERVICE FUNDING

For over 20 years, the City of Cincinnati has dedicated 1.5% of its General Fund to human services. This policy is governed by the Human Service Advisory Committee (HSAC), a group of dedicated volunteers who read grant applications, do site visits and evaluate each agency based on their measures of success. The funded agencies include food pantries, shelters, employment training programs, HIV/AIDS assistance, after-school and youth programs, literacy programs, and programs that help with mental health, addiction, and disabilities.

In 2004, Mayor Luken cut human services funding out of the budget completely, leaving agencies befuddled, frustrated, and scrambling for additional resources. City Council restored funding back to \$2.4 million dollars, roughly .6% of the General Fund: a full 50% cut. The human services community mobilized and asked each candidate for council if they supported funding human services. They all said they did. Then in June of 2006, in an effort led by Councilmember Crowley, there was a unanimous vote by Council to make human service funding a top priority for the 2007 budget.

Shockingly, this did not hold true. City Manager Dahoney's 2007 budget recommended cutting human services down to roughly \$1.3 million, or .2-.3% of the general fund. GCCH kept the community informed, helping turn out between 300 and 600 people to each of the public forums on the budget to demand that this funding be restored. Supporters also generated thousands of call and emails to City Council and the Mayor.

Ultimately, human service funding was restored to \$2.6 million, or .6% of the General Fund in 2006.

While funding was restored, human services came under attack again in 2007 when City Manager Dahoney recommended that human services be cut back to .3% of the general fund for 2008. Mayor Mallory reinstated it back to the 2007 level and City Council approved the 2007 level: seven votes for and three against.

EDUCATION

There are many stereotypes and myths regarding homelessness in our community. We seek to eradicate this misinformation by portraying a more accurate and holistic picture of homelessness in Cincinnati. An educated public is a compassionate public willing to dedicate time and talent to creative solutions to homelessness.

EDUCATION PACKET

This past year saw the Education program grow with continued sales of the Education Packet. The "Teacher's Guide to Homelessness," is the most popular resource from the Education Packet. Over 40 schools and organizations have purchased a Teacher's Guide since they became available. New "Teacher's Guides" were sold to 3 Northern Kentucky schools, and 6 private schools and 3 public schools in Cincinnati.

STREETVIBES

Streetvibes continues to be a mainstay at GCCH. The paper has seen a growth in area writers and local articles. It is easily the most recognizable educational tool that GCCH offers. Streetvibes vendors purchase papers for 25 cents and sell them to the public for a \$1 donation, keeping the profit they have earned. Streetvibes vendors sold over 38,000 copies in 2007 and circulation was over 47,000, a 14% increase over 2007. Seventy five vendors participated in the Streetvibes program in 2007.



SHANTYTOWN

GCCH partnered with many area high schools and colleges to put on Shantytowns. Shantytowns are a series of events that raise awareness about homelessness and poverty. Most Shantytown events include activities, speakers that share their experiences and usually involve the students sleeping outside overnight. In 2008, GCCH will partner with the Mayerson Foundation and over 20 area high schools to hold a Shantytown weekend tentatively scheduled for the third weekend in October.



SPEAKERS BUREAU

The "Voice of the Homeless" Speaker's Bureau reached over 5,500 students and adults in 2007. We had 116 speaking engagements throughout the year. At most engagements, a homeless or formerly homeless member of the bureau shared his or her story, engaging the group and answering questions. The Education Coordinator also attends to talk about the Coalition and member organizations. The speaker's bureau also added 3 new speakers: Donald Whitehead, Anna Jacob, and Bill Buhmaster.



STREETVIBES VENDOR PROFILE

SAM JACKSON

Streetvibes 2007 Vendor of the Year

Sam Jackson started selling Streetvibes in late 2006. He would come into the office and buy 5 or 6 copies of Streetvibes and then come back a few days later. Often Sam came in discouraged and said he was having trouble selling the paper. The staff offered him encouragement and told him to keep it up.

When Sam started selling Streetvibes he was homeless. He stayed at the Drop Inn Center or outside in a doorway. During the homeless count in May 2007, we located Sam sleeping outside of St. Peter in Chains in Downtown Cincinnati.

Then something started to change. Sam started buying more papers and he quickly ascended to the top of the sales chart. Over the next few months he routinely sold more than 100 Streetvibes. Sam had begun to establish a customer base that bought the paper from him. His confidence began to show and Sam was regularly in the top 3 of sales every month.

Sam kept his energy and confidence up throughout the rest of the summer and into the fall. Then at the November Streetvibes vendor meeting, Sam came in and proclaimed that he had been working with Tender Mercies and had moved into an apartment. He also said that one gentleman who he routinely talked to near Fountain Square had offered him a job as a part-time dish washer at the popular Boi Na Braza, Brazilian Steak House.

Sam continues to sell Streetvibes even though he is working close to 40 hours a week. He continues because he enjoys talking with people and believes in educating people about homelessness and poverty. Congratulations Sam on your great success!

ADVOCACY

At the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless, we realize the importance of addressing the systemic and root causes of homelessness in order to institute lasting and permanent change. To this end, GCCH works with police, city officials, community groups, and social service agencies to support homeless people in advocating on their own behalf.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING ADVOCATES

Now in its third year, AHA continues to work towards its mission of good, safe, accessible & affordable housing for all Cincinnatians. GCCH is proud to continue in our role providing administrative support for this dynamic and important group. To enhance their education program, in 2007, AHA contracted with the University of Cincinnati's Institute for Policy Research to survey perceptions and attitudes that Cincinnatians hold towards affordable housing 31% of respondents did not even understand the term "affordable housing." These findings will provide a baseline for directing the education campaign.

In June, AHA held its annual meeting at the Urban League. A panel composed of local and state politicians discussed the issue of housing and their policy approach towards improving access to affordable housing.

Finally, AHA became active in the advocacy side of foreclosure prevention. An ad hoc group was formed in the fall to supplement the direct services being provided to people facing foreclosure with a systemic advocacy approach. AHA is currently stressing homebuyer education and financial literacy, access to stable and fair re-financing options and addressing the blight caused by foreclosure.



State Senator Kearney, State Representative Driehaus, and Hamilton County Commissioner Portune discuss housing issues at the AHA annual meeting in June.

DAY LABOR ORGANIZING PROJECT

GCCH continues to collaborate with the Cincinnati Interfaith Worker Center to encourage day labor workers to advocate for improved working conditions and fair wages. Significant portions of homeless individuals work, but often the only jobs available to them are through day labor halls that provide low wages, inconsistent work, unsafe working conditions, and discriminatory and disrespectful working environments. In 2007, work continued on city level legislation that would hold day labor halls accountable for their treatment of workers. Three class action lawsuits that address failure to pay and dangerous working conditions were initiated. All are welcome to join the weekly meetings Wednesdays, 9:00am at Our Daily Bread (1730 Race Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202).

CRIMINALIZATION OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS IN CINCINNATI STUDY

In 2007, GCCH released the "Criminalization of Homeless Individuals in Cincinnati" study. The report explored the number of arrests of homeless individuals for minor misdemeanors and the cost of those arrests to the tax payers of Hamilton County. The study identified 840 people, through public records, as homeless based on their address. Individuals were considered homeless if they provided an address for an agency or the jail 50% of the time. 72% of the charges against homeless individuals were minor misdemeanors or misdemeanors.

The report identified the "Big 10" Homeless Crimes: open flask, sitting, "dumpster diving," spitting, public urination, littering, loitering, panhandling, trespassing and disorderly conduct. 50% of homeless crime charges were for open flask. Homeless individuals cannot survive without committing these crimes. There are no public restrooms; panhandling is a means of survival when living wage employment is not available; when shelters are full, trespassing and loitering are the only alternative.

There was an average of 242 charges against homeless individuals per month. The number of arrested for combined homeless and housed individuals remains fairly constant throughout the year, with only a slight dip during the colder months. However, for homeless individuals, the number of arrests per month spiked in April and July. This suggests that homeless individuals are more prone to arrests and citations during the warmer months because they leave crowded shelters and are more visible.

At a cost of \$65 per night in jail, the report tracked 53 individuals who were arrested six or more times during a year and estimated that these individuals could have cost the County \$4.2 million dollars. Based on the charges against these 53 individuals, most appear to have substance abuse issues.

It is believed that they are constantly re-offending because they get caught in a cycle of street, jail, shelter, street, jail, shelter.

The report recommends the creation of specialized intensive case management, permanent supportive housing, and increased access to treatment to help solve the problem.

As a result of the study, the Homeless Reentry Initiative was established to consider some possible solutions. The committee has begun to develop a specialized intensive case management service to target homeless individuals who cycle through the Justice System and who are likely chronic substance abusers.

To read the full report go to www.cincihomeless.org/content/publications.html

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alcoholism Council provides substance abuse treatment services. (513) 281-7880

Bethany House Services provides a full range of housing, education, and assistance programs to homeless and low-income women and children in the Greater Cincinnati area. (513) 921-1131 www.bethanyhouseservices.com

Caracole provides affordable housing and supportive services for persons living with HIV/AIDS. (513) 761-1480 www.caracole.org

Catholic Social Services provides comprehensive social services. (513) 241-7745 www.cssdoorway.org

Center for Chemical Addictions Treatment provides a wide range of quality treatment services for alcoholism and other chemical addictions to adults in the Greater Cincinnati area without regard to financial status. (513) 381-6672 www.ccatsober.org

Center for Respite Care provides housing for individuals who are too sick to be in the shelter, yet not sick enough to be hospitalized. (513) 621-1868

Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority provides quality, affordable housing for low- to moderate-income families. (513) 721-4580 www.cintimha.com

Cincinnati Union Bethel provides supportive services and education programs that assist urban women, children, families, and communities to reach their greatest potential. (513) 768-6907

City Gospel Mission provides daily meals, clothing, safe overnight shelter, recovery programs, and other need-based services. (513) 241-5525 www.citygospelmission.com

Contact Center performs community organizing of low and moderate-income individuals in Over the Rhine around issues of affordable housing, safety, and economic opportunity. (513) 381-4242

Drop Inn Center is a homeless shelter in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. They provide essential services to people experiencing homelessness, and empower people to move from homelessness to housing. (513) 721-0643 www.dropinn.org

Excel Development Co. works with the mental health community, to provide suitable, affordable housing for independent living. (513) 632-7149

First Step Home offers long-term drug and alcohol treatment and housing for low-income women and their children in a safe and supportive environment. (513) 961-4663 www.firststephome.org

Franciscan Haircuts from the Heart restores dignity, self-respect and self-confidence to the homeless and poor through professional hair care. (513) 381-0111 www.haircutsfromheart.org

Franciscan JPIC works on, supports, and advocates for various social justice issues in Cincinnati. (513) 721-4700

Freestore Foodbank provides food, products, and services to help people overcome barriers to their basic survival needs, and further self-reliance. (513) 241-1064 www.freestorefoodbank.org

Grace Place Catholic Worker House where women with or without children – who are in transition from homelessness can find temporary residence in an atmosphere of hospitality and hope and receive the support they need to move forward and achieve their goals and dreams. (513) 681-2365

Greater Cincinnati Oral Health Council provides or arranges dental disease prevention and treatment services for low-income or homeless individuals and other special needs populations. (513) 621-0248

Hamilton County Community Development fosters development of viable urban communities by providing decent housing, suitable living environments, and expanded economic opportunities, principally for persons of low and moderate income. (513) 946-4888 www.hamilton-co.org/commdev

Healing Connections provides quality employment and support for women seeking self-sufficiency and competent paraprofessional home care services to persons who are underserved by existing programs, especially the elderly poor. (513) 751-0600 www.healing-connection.org

Interfaith Hospitality Network teams homeless families with volunteers from 50 area churches, 16 host congregations, and 34 support congregations to provide needed food and shelter. (513) 471-1100 www.ihncincinnati.org

League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government work to increase understanding of major political issues, and influences policy through education and advocacy. (513) 281-8883 www.lwvcincinnati.org

Legal Aid Society works to resolve serious legal problems of low-income people, to promote economic and family stability, and to reduce poverty through effective legal assistance. (513) 241-9400 www.lascinti.org

Lighthouse Youth Services provides comprehensive social services designed to encourage good citizenship, responsible behavior, and self-reliance. (513) 961-4080 www.lys.org

Madisonville Education and Assistance Center provides vital assistance – including food, clothing, rent, and utility assistance – to individuals and families living in Fairfax and Madison Place, Madisonville, and Mariemont. (513) 271-5501

Mercy Franciscan at St. John provides individual, family, and pregnancy counseling; programs for adoption, family caregiver, parenting, and child development; and other programs. (513) 981-5800

NAMI of Hamilton County works to offer hope and help to all affected by mental illness through educational programs, support groups, and phone support, and advocating for better services, legislative changes, and increased research on mental illness. (513) 948-3094 www.nami-hc.org

Our Daily Bread provides a warm meal and supportive services in a safe place to all who come. (513) 621-6364 www.ourdailybread.us

Over the Rhine Community Housing provides decent, safe, racially integrated, low-income housing in Over-the-Rhine, especially for homeless or chemically dependent persons. Its co-op structure enhances self-determination. (513) 381-1171 www.otrch.org

Peaslee Neighborhood Center works to welcome and nurture the involvement of the neighborhood in building a stronger, healthier community. (513) 621-5514 www.peasleecenter.org

People Working Cooperatively performs essential home repairs and services so that low-income homeowners can remain in their homes living independently in a safe, sound environment. (513) 351-7921 www.pwchomerepairs.org

Project Connect keeps children experiencing homelessness connected to their education by providing supplies, transportation, uniforms, and enrichment opportunities in summer, after-school, and shelter tutoring programs. (513) 363-3300.

Salvation Army provides a wide range of supportive services, including emergency shelter, disaster relief, and outreach. (513) 762-5600 www.thesalvationarmycincinnati.org

Sober Living provides a safe, affordable, sober housing and structural living environment to individuals recovering from alcohol and drug addiction. (513) 681-0324 www.soberlivingohio.com

Society of St. Vincent DePaul provides a unique style of personal assistance with food, clothing, rent, utilities, transportation, and companionship to people facing economic, emotional, or spiritual crises. (513) 562-8841 www.svdpcincinnati.org

St. Francis / St. Joseph Catholic Worker House is a community of volunteers who are dedicated to feeding the hungry and providing dignified hospitality to the poor. (513) 381-4941

Stop Aids provides support services, prevention, education, and housing assistance to homeless individuals living with HIV/AIDs in Cincinnati. (513) 421-2437 www.stopaidsincincinnati.org

Talbert House provides services in mental health, criminal justice, and substance abuse in order to improve social behavior and enhance personal recovery and growth. (513) 751-7747 www.talberthouse.org

Tender Mercies, Inc. provides housing and individualized supportive services to homeless persons with histories of mental illness. (513) 721-8666 www.tendermerciesinc.org

Volunteers of America provides case management and housing to formerly homeless individuals. (513) 381-1954 www.voarv.org

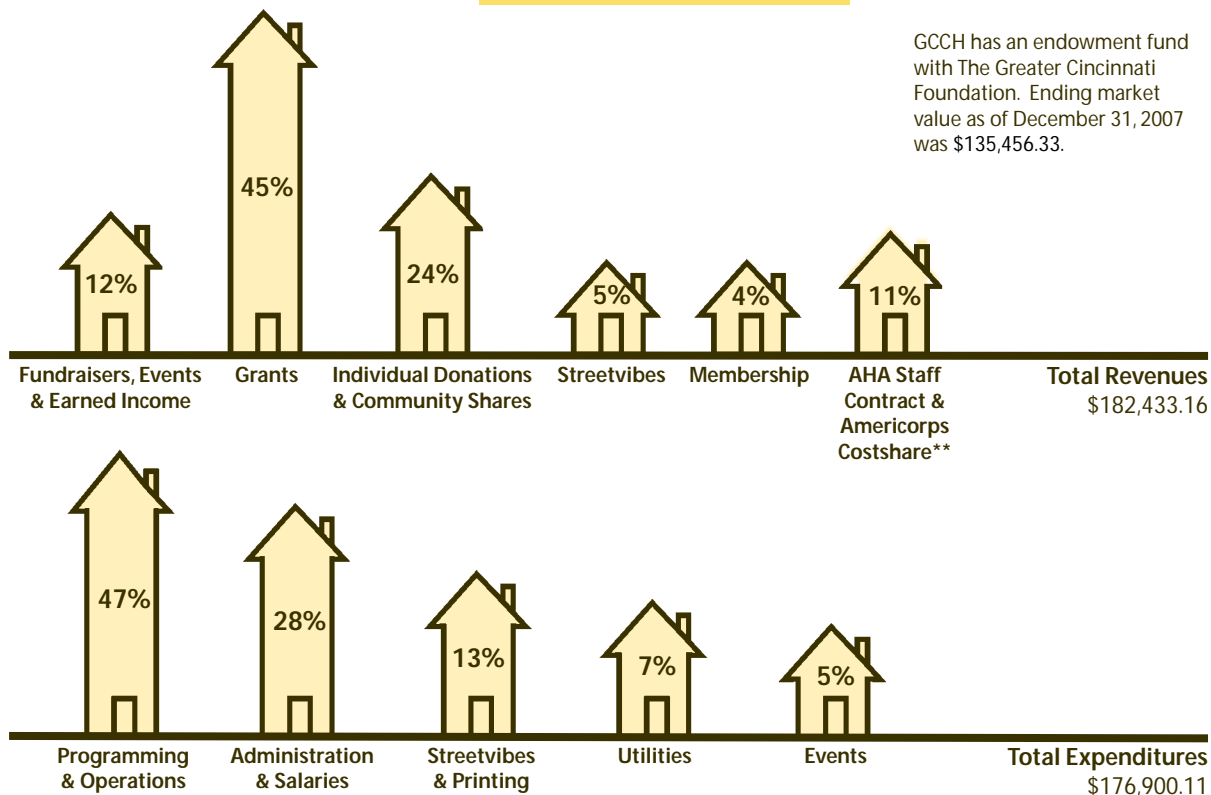
Walnut Hills/OTR Kitchen provides meals to the area's homeless, low income, and working poor. (513) 961-1983

Welcome House collaborates with the community to provide a continuum of quality services for individuals and families who are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to eradicate homelessness, foster stability, and promote a just society. (513) 431-8717 www.welcomehouseky.org/index.htm

YWCA Battered Women's Shelter provides emergency shelter and transitional housing to victims of domestic violence. (513) 241-7090 www.ywcacincinnati.org

FINANCES

GCCH has an endowment fund with The Greater Cincinnati Foundation. Ending market value as of December 31, 2007 was \$135,456.33.



*Unaudited figures for fiscal year ending December 31, 2007

**GCCH contracts with the Affordable Housing Advocates to house and pay the AHA staff. AHA pays the staff through GCCH. Also, partners in the statewide VISTA agreement pay Americorps through GCCH.

***GCCH does not receive any City, State, or Federal Funding.

JOIN THE FIGHT TO END HOMELESSNESS

The more support we have from the community, the further our efforts reach. GCCH's work is possible only with the help from member organizations and generous individual gifts.

Organization Members Our members may receive: voting rights at our General Body meetings, Streetvibes subscriptions, Speaker's Bureau engagements, discounted printing services, and more depending on membership type.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact the Coalition at (513) 421-7803.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

YES! I want to end homelessness in Cincinnati!

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$150 ☐ Other \$ _____

I would like to receive more information about:

☐ Speaker's Bureau ☐ Cincinnati Urban Experience ☐ Education Packet
☐ Day Labor Organizing Project ☐ Streetvibes



Please fill out and return to:
 Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless
 117 E. 12th Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202

Thank you for giving generously!



117 East 12th Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Phone (513) 421-7803
www.CinciHomeless.org

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W W W . C I N C I H O M E L E S S . O R G



The Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless is a unified social action agency, fully committed to its ultimate goal: the eradication of homelessness with respect for the dignity and diversity of its membership, the homeless and the community. The Coalition works towards this goal by coordinating services, educating the public, and engaging in grassroots organizing and advocacy.