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Street Sights.org
Shedding light on homelessness in Rhode Island

Advocates say tent cities show need for long-term solutions

Since the original Hope City tent dwelling was founded in Providence in January, the local press has covered each stage of its development and developments of a second large tent city, Camp Runamuck. More recently, the national media has taken an interest in the story with coverage ranging from *The New York Times* and the Associated Press to *Al Jazeera English*.

Some advocates appreciate how the press coverage has made the public more aware of the issue of homelessness, but they note that the problem is much more widespread than Providence, and that it requires actions that reach and solve deeper issues of chronic homelessness.

"There isn't a homeless problem just in Providence. There is a homeless problem in Woonsocket, Narragansett, Newport, and other parts of state," where people are living in their cars and tents," said John Joyce, one of the founders of Hope City.

"We need to be talking about some real, long term solutions, he said. "It's a problem that the state

of Rhode Island is not meeting in the summer to plan for the coming winter months ahead."

Don Boucher, program director of the Housing First RI/Riverwood Mental Health Services, agreed. "All the rhetoric about why people are in tent cities or where they should be loses sight of the problem," he said.

"I think that the tent city issue can't be separated from the chronic homelessness issue as a whole."

According to a recent report published by Housing Works Rhode Island, 6,423 people, including 952 families and 1,770 children, experienced homelessness in 2008.

For a long-term solution, the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless, along with other homeless advocacy organizations, has called on state officials to increase their support for permanent supportive housing.

Boucher, who runs a permanent supportive housing program, said, "The answer to the problem of chronic homelessness



Barbara Kalil talks to a reporter at Camp Runamuck

PHOTO BY BRIAN YOUNG

is subsidies—whether it is federal, statewide, or at the local level. It isn't theoretical. The ability to take chronic homeless people and place them in permanent supportive housing works."

Amy Kempe, press secretary for Gov. Donald Carcieri, said, "the state of Rhode Island is very progressive in its approach to

homelessness and its approach to affordable housing. We can stretch a dime better than anybody else."

Megan Smith, one of the founders of Hope City, and spokesperson for Camp Runamuck, agreed, saying, "Making the tents go away is not solving the homeless problem."

The inside story:

Camp Runamuck founder tells her side of the story

An open letter to my "friend" Don Carcieri, from Barbara Kalil:

Hello Don,

Longtime no hear, no see. I mean, I know you're out there somewhere. You have sent out your spokespeople to talk for you about "those homeless people." You have talked about us, around us, but not to us. Why is that? Our little Camp Runamuck started back in March where we (John, Sandy, Mike, and I) slept at Roger Williams Memorial Park. We stayed there three weeks until we were asked to leave because the Preservation Society had a tour at 7 a.m. one day and were "horrified" that homeless people were camping in the area where Roger

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Health law foes roar at meeting

By **ARLINE BOLVIN**
STAFF WRITER

Rhode Island's first town hall meeting on the proposed national health care reform was filled with contentious debate, yelling, and raucous outbursts of "liar, liar."

The meeting, in mid-August, was hosted by U.S. Rep. James R. Langevin at Warwick City Hall. About 500 people were allowed inside city hall, while 300 or more waited outside with the hopes of being let in. In the city council chamber, Langevin explained the proposed legislation as PowerPoint slides scrolled overhead.

The sounds of yelling – including shouts of "No Bama" -- filled the hot air outdoors, sometimes drowning out conversation on the sidewalk. Large signs depicting President Barack Obama with a Hitler-style mustache waved in the hot evening air as Lyndon LaRouche organizers chanted and sang.

People outside the building expressed views both for and against health care reform. Several people said they were against a government takeover of health care, adding, "we don't need socialism in this country." Many more people said they wanted the cost containment they believed could be achieved only through the creation of greater competi-

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Police at Tent City during the eviction process. See editorial on page 2

PHOTO BY BRIAN YOUNG

Inside

Van heads out to assist veterans

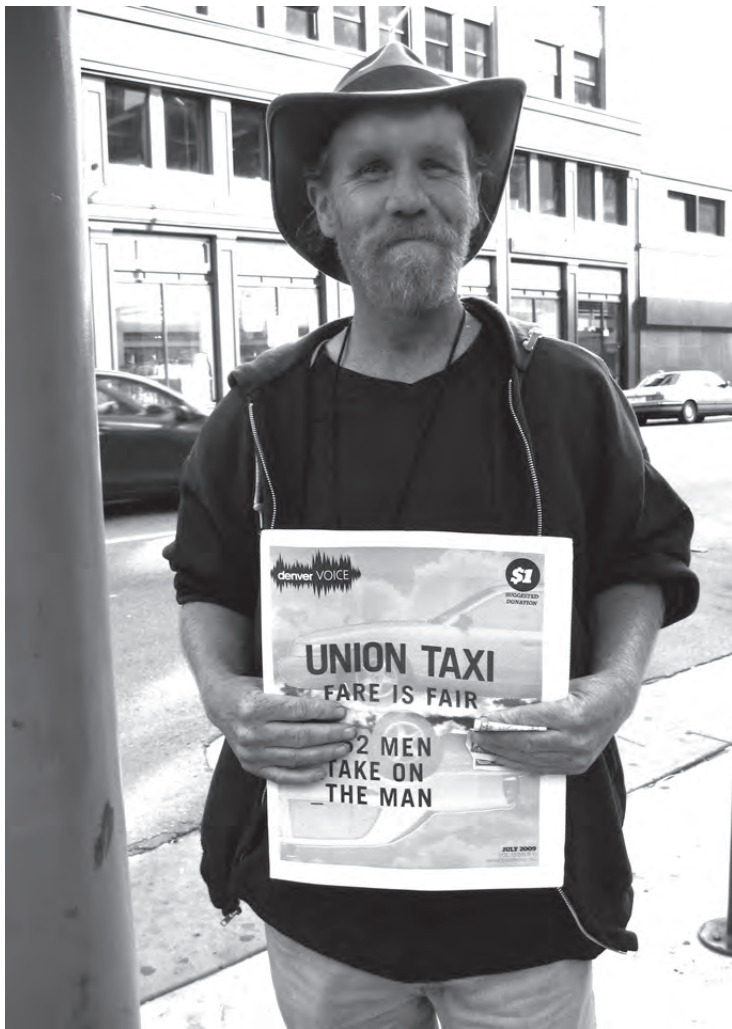
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Gathering celebrates recovery

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Farmers markets offer fun and food

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When the *Street Sights* delegation went to the North American Street Newspaper Association Conference in Denver, Colorado, *Street Sights* staff members met Charles Davis, a vendor for Denver's street paper, the *Denver Voice*. Davis has worked for street papers around the country: including papers in San Francisco, Portland, Sacramento, Seattle and Dallas.

PHOTO BY ELIZABETH OCHS

Views of homelessness on display at URI exhibit

BY DAVID EISENBERGER
STAFF WRITER

A gallery night was held at the URI Campus on Washington Street on August 20, 2009, showing the various works of some homeless, previously homeless, and various artists.

The type of art varied, from sketches to 3D work, photography, etc.

The groups involved were as follows: Big Nazo Labs, McAuley House Arts Program, Mathewson Street Church, with their Arts Reach program, Central Falls High School, AS220 Photographic

Memory Program. Most works can be purchased from the various artists.

Particular works of interest: Lee Johnson, with prints of Hope City, Burnside Park, Kennedy Plaza, and the various places where the homeless congregate. Most faces are easily recognized, for the face of homelessness is out there. There were various soup kitchen sketches, done by Stephen Gross, which are well-known in the city.

For further events or to get on the e-mail list contact Steven Pennel at 277-5206 or www.uri.edu/prov. To join the various art programs visit arts@etal.uri.edu

IN MEMORIAM

Jules Choate, beloved friend

When I think of Jules... I see him surrounded by people, laughing and chatting away. As you walk towards them, Jules would catch your eye as he gazed over his "shades" and by the time you got there his arms would be open wide for a big hug. Jules made you feel special that way. He always made time for you - because you were his friend.

He was kind, funny and generous, easy to talk to and a great listener. He took things slow and savored every moment. I feel blessed I shared many of those moments with him. As we all have.

Most especially Gwen. Just as Jules was everywhere Gwen was there beside him. Two souls connected - two hearts sharing each others love.

At this moment, I have to mention our friend, Gwen, because she still carries her Jules with her, a separation of space but not of love.

And when you see Gwen peek at you over her "shades" you know that the wink that follows came straight from Jules.

A man who was loving, a true friend, a rare jewel.

Please remember that around every corner, under each tree or walking beside you - he will be. His spirit lives on in us - his friends.

Memorial Mass to be held Friday, September 4, at 2:00 p.m. at St. Francis Chapel Westminster Street, Providence.

-- LISA DUNN

Word Scramble

So you think you are good at this stuff? Well I give you eight 5-letter words in a different form than usual.

I give you a word -- maybe a few other letters added later -- that is actually another word familiar to homeless folks.

An example: "Seat." You will find "teas." Can you use these letters to make another word?

Nest t
thees
cock l
men yo
rate w
dires
this r
Dr. Ses

OK. If you succeeded, let me give you three 7-letter words:

Three Ls
roast GE
Let Bank

INSIDE STORY

From page 1

Williams plaque states that the area is reserved for people in distress. How ironic is that? So, we were kindly asked to leave. John scouted for a new place and found an area on South Water Street. It was an area where we thought we wouldn't bother anyone. Don, we were there for a month before anyone knew we were there. The Providence police happened to find us by accident. I think that tells you a little bit about us. We were quite and respectful.

A few more people wanted to join us. They too were tired of the shelter system and how it does not work. Word of our "tent city" spread. All we asked people was to be respectful of one another and each other's property.

Then, one day one of our residents was assaulted down the street and our camp was raided by the police. We were told to sit on the hill with our hands on our knees while the police opened and cut our tents open, and turned our property upside down. Do you know why Don? Because homeless people have no expectation of privacy. Yes that is what Lt. Ryan said in front of all of us. Let me ask you this Don, if a domestic assault happens in your neighborhood, do the police go into all the houses in the neighborhood just to look for anything illegal? I don't think so. Is it any wonder why homeless people are scared of the police. They are supposed to protect us, yet we know that they hold our lives in their hands.

So, Don, our group grew and grew. It's not that we don't want to follow rules. It's because the rules that are in place don't work for the people. The shel-

ter system needs a major overhaul. We need sustainable affordable housing. We need program assurances. Have you stayed in a shelter lately Don? Probably not. Let me tell you, it's not pretty. Or safe. Or clean.

Getting back to our camp, your people and the D.O.T. informed us that we cannot stay at our site. We knew that already Don. Tell me Don, where can we go? The D.O.T. and the state police told us that they would assist us in relocating. But their idea of assisting was to tell us to go to the shelters because "the shelters are like accordions, they expand when needed." I've got news for you Don, the accordion has busted. The shelters are busting at the seams right now. So, now we move to East Providence under the Washington Bridge where lo and behold the state tells us we can't stay here either. Instead of getting a solution from you, we receive an invitation to court for a restraining order. But (and this is the best part) your solution to all of this is to sleep on the floor at Crossroads or pay \$16 a tent per day to camp in Narragansett. If we had \$16 a day we would have an apartment Don.

So, I lie awake at night wondering what is our next step?

You don't have any solutions. You don't even pretend to care about us. I guess you're not my "friend" Don.

Disgusted and homeless,
Barbara Kalil