

WISCONSIN COALITION AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

SPRING 2016 NEWSLETTER

ADVOCACY AT THE CAPITOL: WCAH is pleased to announce that due to its advocacy efforts, Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch has chosen to focus on the issue of homelessness in Wisconsin during 2016. WCAH staff and board members continue to work with the Lt. Governor, her staff and other legislators to provide a framework that will positively impact future policy and budget priorities for homelessness in the State of Wisconsin.

WCAH TO LAUNCH LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER: WCAH will soon launch a monthly newsletter aimed at informing members of the State legislature about homelessness in Wisconsin. Each month we hope to include a short profile of an organization working to end homelessness in Wisconsin. Please let us know if your organization would be interested in being profiled in the legislative newsletter.

WCAH TO RELEASE NEW POLICY PAPER THIS JUNE: WCAH has spent a great deal of time involved in listening sessions throughout the Wisconsin with stakeholders committed to reducing homelessness in Wisconsin. The end result is a policy paper; "A Roadmap To Ending Homelessness In Wisconsin". The publication examines the history of homelessness in Wisconsin, past State government response and policy and budget recommendations to end homelessness. WCAH hopes this paper will become the blueprint for advocacy at the State level to end homelessness in Wisconsin.

DANE COUNTY POLITICAL MAPPING PROJECT: After successfully implementing an effort to find out what legislators know about homeless programs in their districts throughout the State, WCAH has launched a similar effort that focuses on Dane County. The information gathered will provide an important advocacy tool. The end result is a compendium of all homeless service organizations, the types of services provided and which State representatives serve the district in which the homeless services are provided. This will offer WCAH staff a more robust and up-to-date listing which will better connect legislators to providers located in each district.

RECENT PRESENTATIONS: WCAH Executive Director, Joe Volk, recently participated in a panel discussion in the process of updating Dane County's 10 year plan to end homelessness. WCAH staff is eager and willing to present at your agency or homeless/housing coalition. Please feel free to contact us at WCAHWI@GMAIL.COM to arrange a presentation.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE/Ken Schmidt: Late in April, local news outlets reported the story of a homeless couple living in a car in Kenosha County with their seventeen dogs. Much attention was paid to the actions of the local authorities, which swooped in to save the poor animals. Nice story; the dogs were saved from a bad situation and hopefully, will be adopted by loving individuals/families.

However, what struck me most was the media's silence on the fate of the homeless couple, except that they may be charged with a crime and will owe a huge bill to the local Humane Society for the dogs' care:

According to Megan Gonerman of the organization (Safe Harbor Humane Society), all of the dogs suffer from lack of proper medical care and need grooming. "And on top of that, the emotional aspect is that the dogs were really nervous and scared as they came in." It is not known if criminal charges will be pressed against the couple or if they will be charged for the dogs' ongoing medical expenses. The shelter has spent more than \$7,000 in medical and grooming expenses on the dogs." (Excerpt from: examiner.com, April 30, 2016)

I suspect the couple was also "nervous and scared" given their pets were removed by law enforcement, as they obviously lack the resources to have a place to live much less reclaim their pets. The *people* certainly deserve our compassion and support, coupled with effective social services; at least as much as society has offered the dogs. I can only hope that these human beings are receiving attention and assistance, maybe even access to a place to call home. It is truly unfortunate that I know so much more about their pets' story than the fate of these traumatized homeless persons. The situation is much worse if the dogs were granted shelter and the people were not. Sadly, that part of the story probably will never be shared.

BOARD MEMBER PROFILE: Bill Perkins founded the Wisconsin Partnership in 1985 and was Executive Director until his retirement in 2013. Under Bill's direction, the

Partnership developed almost 900 rental and sale homes; provided training, technical assistance, and consulting services to over 140 nonprofit and for-profit companies and consulted on housing program design, evaluation, and management for more than 40 local and state governments and other public agencies. The Partnership created, managed, or consulted on 13 financing programs providing over \$300 million in debt and equity financing to develop, rehabilitate and conserve energy in almost 8,000 homes between 2001 and 2013. The Partnership managed more than \$37 million in down payment assistance and counseling to over 7,300 homebuyers in Wisconsin and provided financial support and/or counseling to another 5,000 homebuyers and 400 renters with funding from the Housing Partnership Network. The Partnership, under Bill's direction, helped more than 19,000 households live in decent, affordable homes.

DO YOUR PART TO HELP END HOMELESSNESS IN WISCONSIN

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