



Homeless Persons' Memorial Day Observance



Photo Credit: Karen Smul and Connor Moriarty

On December 19, 2018, Care for the Homeless observed Homeless Persons' Memorial Day to remember those who passed away in New York City during 2018 without stable housing. This year we joined with several partners including Urban Pathways, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Dinosaur BBQ and Broadway Presbyterian Soup Kitchen to feed about 125 people, memorialize those who passed away, and talk about how to end homelessness. In a program featuring City Councilmembers Ben Kallos and Carlos Menchaca, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, New York State Assembly member Andrew Hevesi, the Commissioner of the Office of Temporary Disability and Assistance Samuel Roberts, and 10 CFH client leaders, the names of 163 departed were read and projected on a screen while a bell tolled and a candle was lit for each individual.

Homeless Persons' Memorial Day has been observed on or about the winter solstice – fittingly the longest, darkest night of the year – for almost 30 years now in cities across North America, to recognize the lives of our neighbors unnecessarily impacted by poverty and homelessness; and to recommit ourselves to ending this immoral and avoidable inhumanity. We live in an age when shocking things, like the violation of the basic human right to healthcare and decent housing, quickly lose their impact to shock. Those of us who care so deeply about these issues cannot let that happen. Homeless Persons' Memorial Day is an opportunity to make that clear.

It is shocking that in a country with at least 585 billionaires – far more than any other country in the world – in the city with more billionaires than any other – more than 46 million Americans live below the poverty threshold, and over 110,000 New Yorkers pass through our city homeless shelter system each year, with thousands and thousands more living rough on our streets. It is shocking that the death rate among chronically homeless people is two-to-four times higher than among our general population, meaning an avoidable loss of 20 or 30 years of life for chronically homeless people.

An excerpt from CFH Executive Director George Nashak opening remarks reads, "George Bernard Shaw famously said, "There are those that look at things the way they are, and ask why? I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?" Won't you join me in this solemn moment to ponder why not?"

Homeless Persons' Memorial Day Observance cont'd ...

- Why not stable housing for the 60,000+ men, women and children in city homeless shelters tonight, when it costs our city more to run shelters than it would to operate stable housing?
- Why not the human right of proper healthcare for all in the world's richest society?
- Why not in our community of excess provide basic food security for every family?
- And why not, at long last, end the discrimination, racism and stigmatization that costs each of us so very much?"

As we read 163 names of people who died in our city in 2018 without housing, we reminded those in attendance that each death was a tragedy that didn't need to happen. It is said that our biggest problem in ending homelessness isn't apathy, it's ignorance. That is why we hold a Homeless Persons' Memorial Day to recommit to our mission of advocating for better policies and programs that can save so many children, women and men who suffer every night. Thank you to all of our partners for their effort in making this a meaningful Memorial and especially our elected officials that came out to show their support and commitment to ending homelessness.

Let's Keep People in Their Homes – Here's How We can Do That



Source: homestabilitysupport.com

Assembly member Andrew Hevesi is continuing his fight in Albany to pass the Home Stability Support (HSS) Legislation, something that he spoke about at our 2018 Homeless Persons' Memorial Day. Care for the Homeless and our client leaders have been advocating for this legislation to raise the housing subsidy available to New Yorkers receiving public assistance up to 85% of the average fair market rent established by the federal Department of Urban Development (HUD) for a community based on family size. HSS is a statewide rent

supplement for families and individuals who are eligible for public assistance benefits and who are facing eviction, homelessness, or loss of housing due to domestic violence or hazardous living conditions.

There are currently 171,000 households in New York receiving the public assistance "shelter allowance", but the allowance has not kept up with rising rents. Prior to 1975, the rents of households on public assistance were eligible for the full payment of rent. However, over the past 40 years the failure to regularly increase the benefit to keep up with the rising costs of rent has made it less and less valuable. For example, the household allowance for a family of three in the state currently ranges from \$264 a month to \$447 a month, based on location and other considerations. The actual average market cost for a 2-bedroom apartment in New York State, according to HUD, should be between \$760 and \$1,907. This is a huge difference that puts many people at risk of homelessness.

The cost of the updated home stability support allowance is estimated at \$450 million in state funding. In New York City, it is estimated that the new home stability support allowance would cost about \$11,224 on average for a family of three, while city shelter cost for the same family is on average \$38,460. That is a savings of \$27,236 per household per year. Keeping very low-income families or those in deep poverty in their apartments, and avoiding homelessness, would save the state millions of dollars.

In this budget cycle we hope that Assembly member Hevesi, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins and the many legislators who support the program will keep at this effort. If you are committed to fighting homelessness you can help, too! Please call your State Assembly Member and your State Senator (find them at whoaremyrepresentatives.org) and urge them to support Home Stability Support. You can also tell Governor Cuomo that you support the legislation at 518-474-8390.

CFH Looking for Opportunities To Give Public Education Presentations

Care for the Homeless, and our client leaders in the CFH Speakers' Bureau, are looking for opportunities to make presentations to civic groups, school classes, faith groups, media and other interested groups about homelessness in New York City, and how we can fight, prevent and end homelessness. Presentations often include a client leader talking about their own story of experiencing homelessness, and often includes a CFH policy advocate. We're also glad to include open question-and-answer sessions as part of our presentation.



CFH client leader Philip Malebranche speaking at Columbia University

We are glad to try and customize our presentations for interested groups, and can arrange our presentation to fit your time schedule as well as addressing any subject your group is particularly interested in. All presentations are free, although contributions are gladly accepted.

In the past we've made presentations on radio shows, to school classes of all ages from elementary through college graduate programs, to church groups, neighborhood organizations, state and national conferences and more. If you are part of a group or organization looking for an interesting and enlightening program, don't hesitate to get in contact with us at policy@cfhnyc.org.

The Busy Advocate's January Calendar

Thur., Jan. 3, First Session of Congress, House and new Senate member sworn in, Washington, D. C.

Wed., Jan. 9, 12:00 p.m., NYC City Council Meeting, City Hall Council Chambers, New York, NY, 10007.

Wed., Jan. 9, Legislative Session starts, NY State Senate and State Assembly, State Capitol, Albany, NY.

Mon., Jan. 14, 10:00 a.m., City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings Hearing, City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings Hearing for Intro 1211-2018 requiring developers who receive city financial assistance to set aside housing units for homeless individuals and families, City Council Chambers at City Hall, New York, NY, 10007.

Mon., Jan. 21, Martin Luther King Day, many people observe this with volunteer public service.

Thur., Jan. 24, 1:30 p.m., NYC City Council Meeting, City Hall Council Chambers, New York, NY, 10007.

Mon., Jan. 28, 10:00 p.m. - 4:00 a.m., HOPE Count, NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) will conduct its annual Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE), to volunteer please register [here](#)

Tue., Jan. 29, 12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m., CFH Consumer Advisory Board Meeting, 30 E. 33rd Street, 5th floor conference room, Manhattan, NY, 10016.

Become an advocate today! Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for up-to-the-minute-info

