

Mission Statement

Project Hope works
in
partnership
with families
so they can move up
and out of
poverty.

◆
We do this by:

being a catalyst for
change in the lives
of families and in
the systems which
keep them poor;

◆
developing and
providing family
support solutions for
homelessness and
poverty;

◆
acting for just
public policies that
strengthen families.

◆
We do this in
collaboration with
a multitude of
organizations that
support these
goals.

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Editor,
Patricia Curran, SND

Telephone
617-442-1880

E-mail
info@prohope.org

Sharing Best Practice: from Boston to Jerusalem

by Margaret A. Leonard, Executive Director

I just returned from a 10 day learning experience in Israel, one of 11 Executive Directors of non-profit agencies in the Greater Boston area who were invited to join the Jewish Community Relations Council on this mission.

The purpose of this trip was two-fold: to gain a deeper understanding of the issues there, and to share a co-learning experience with our counterparts in Haifa. Those aims were realized.

We gained a deeper understanding of the issues by hearing from the best thinkers from the Middle East (scholars, government figures, religious leaders, NGO staff members) and from ordinary people who invited us into their hearts and homes.

In Haifa, where there is a highly diverse population of Israeli Jews, Ethiopian and Russian Jews, Arabs, Christians, we met with our counterparts.

Executive Directors of non-profits there run programs to feed and clothe the poor, run educational and economic development programs for an emerging civic sector. We shared with them some of our sophisticated skills

which have been honed over time. They shared with us their passion for fostering a community based civic

sector committed to equality and respect for diversity. Our co-learning will continue into the future.

They shared their passion for equality and respect for diversity.

This part of the world is now alive for me. Vividly impressed in my mind in heart is the

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Overcoming a Credit History

One of the obstacles to moving out of poverty is having a history of bad credit, yet if any of us were to lose a job, have outstanding loans and no savings, that is where we would end up. It is so easy to fall on hard times and be branded a credit risk: so hard to regain the trust of the financial community.

One of our mothers, "Shanay", spent a year in our Shelter because no one outside of Project Hope trusted her to pay rent. She did all she could to prove herself. She got a job driving a school van which led to a better job with another transportation company. She met with a Debt Consolidation Agency to make repayment agreements with her creditors. She began a small savings account in addition to making

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Leadership Training: One Family Scholars

[Project Hope co-founded the One Family Scholars program with Wellsprings House of Gloucester.]

One person can make a difference.

Family homelessness is solvable.

These were two of the points hammered home at the day long workshop for One Family Scholars. OFS women have touched homelessness in some way but are highly motivated to move out of poverty, for their sakes and the sake of their children.

They now number 65 and each has a scholarship to an institution of higher learning. As they study, they are also being trained to become leaders in their local communities; astute, informed, skilled, and strong voices in the campaign to end family homelessness. The One Family Initiative which operates this program is headed by Marjorie Clapprood (formerly a politician and talk show host) who is supported by a talented and dedicated team determined to prevent family homelessness.

Strategic Planning

One of the student think tank/ action groups that met the afternoon of February 19, 2005 at the Elks Lodge in Malden was on fundraising. It was time to make new goals for the second

semester. The first semester had been somewhat discouraging for the participants. They now knew from experience that it was not easy to raise money. Their bake



Tasha Jette, a One Family Scholar from Project Hope, listens attentively to Jennifer Sharkey's tips on how to raise money.

sales on college campuses had netted just a few hundred dollars, even though they had used all the precious free time they could find to meet and plan for larger goals. They realized they did not have printed materials that appealed to college aged students, and that you can't raise money unless you spend money.

Professional Guidance

With Jennifer Sharkey's input (the One Family Inc.'s fundraiser), they decided to shift to a position of extending her reach for the second annual **Mothers of**

Inspiration event. Their goals would now support hers. Together they would search for people who cared about homelessness, women, and education and be willing to provide resources and scholarships.

Each idea sparked another around the table. One person heard that students on Meal Plans in a local college donated unused monies to charity. Another knew of a company's grand opening that would include a cash give away element. They would offer complementary tickets to their college presidents, build relationships, feed

in "warm leads" to Jennifer. In an hour's time they had filled in their Individual Action Plans, naming the actions, the measurable indicators of success, and the timelines.

In just one day they had clearly enhanced their leadership skills. ❖

For more information on One Family activities, please call 617-423-0504.



During a Kwanzaa talent for drumming event. And I did good.

Women on the Move: Advocates for Change

[Project Hope co-founded Homes for Families. Transition to Work is a Project Hope Program.]

Two years ago, **Homes for Families and Transition to Work** started a collaborative training program for women interested in raising their voices to make positive change. Ten to twelve homeless and formerly homeless women meet once a month for six months to learn about the legislative process and the power of their own stories and voices. A six month advanced course is also offered for those interested in continuing to learn and advocate for change.

Listening

Sabrina Webby, the Director of Organizing and Advocacy from Homes for Families, facilitates the women's learning process. They start by sharing their own

experiences with one another, quickly realizing the value of their expertise and drawing strength from one another. From the perspective of their concrete stories, they study the legislative process, advocacy agendas, and public speaking.

A woman at a recent meeting told how she decided to leave her apartment before being evicted. She decided she did not want to run the risk of blemishing her credit history or jeopardizing her future. She used the benefits she received from welfare to pay for childcare in the evening while she rode the trains and buses all night. Because she had voluntarily left her home, she was not considered homeless and therefore ineligible for federally funded shelter support. She needed to wait until a *community supported* bedroom was available. The group used her experience to look at tenant rights, options and current prevention initiatives that would have saved her from losing her apartment.

speaking engagements. In this capacity they can directly see the effect of their stories and wisdom gained from their experience. Last year, at the legislative breakfast for homeless families, one of the women in this course prepared for and shared her story in front of 4 legislators. She commented on how she felt trapped by the harsh work requirements. If she were to work an additional 5 hours to meet the requirements, she would go over the income of \$1,041 allowed for her family of two while in shelter. If she were to earn \$1 over the limit, she would no longer be eligible for emergency assistance from welfare to pay for their stay in shelter and once again find herself homeless without the means to pay for housing.

Effectiveness

Representative Maire St. Fleur thanked the woman for sharing her moving story and helping to educate the legislators. She further commented that hearing the woman's story helped her to understand the dilemma from a deeper perspective and renewed her commitment to working for improvements.

Another woman, since entering the program has called her legislators everyday on a variety of issues, stating, **"I now believe I can make a difference. And I'm going to raise my voice so that no woman will have to go through my experience."** ❖

Enriched Learning

Throughout the year the Children's Center celebrates the richness of ethnic and cultural difference. As holidays appear, thematic presentations, role play, story telling, dancing, singing, and eating special foods bring learning to life.



...presentation, Simone found she had a
...ng. "The lady did a beat and then I tried
...l," she said.

Speaking Out

The next step in the process is to actually participate in raising their voices at the state house and other

UnitedWay

Sharing, continued

evening in Jerusalem when I stood on this sacred ground and to my left was the Church of the Holy Sepulcher which housed the tomb where Jesus was buried; to my right was the Wailing Wall where Jews gather; and just in front of me I could hear the bells and chants of the Muslims calling the community to prayer. **One site, one view of three powerful world religions praying to one God; each longing for peace.**

What a momentous time it was! It coincided with the election of Abu Mazon and Ariel Sharon's decision

to disengage from Gaza. Everywhere the yearning for peace was palpable. There was a clear recognition that Arabs are second class citizens in the land of Israel and that this needs to be righted. The determination to pursue what is right was firm, no matter how painful the civil unrest. I was reminded that "Peace is not

something you wish for; it's something you make, something you do, something you are, something you give away."

[Robert Fulghum]
As the people of Israel make these difficult decisions, and give back, I for one will accompany

them in heart, prayer and spirit. ❖



Children's art marked the path of the Co-existence Walk in Haifa, Israel.

Credit History, continued

these repayments but she was denied several housing opportunities because of her history. Project Hope employees helped her appeal a decision and testified on her behalf, but still she was denied. A month later, a second appeal to a different agency (with staff again turning out) yielded the desired result of an apartment-based subsidy.

From the Heart

Before that last appeal, when there was no visible light at the

end of this tunnel, the staff and families of Project Hope gathered for the annual Thanksgiving dinner in a local school hall. Anyone who wanted to express thanks came to the mike. Many mothers came forward to give thanks for their health, for their children, for having food and a place to stay. And then a child stood up; Shanay's child, and said: "I thank God for my Mother." *It was a reminder to all of us that his mother was a sign of love, a person of courage whose*

determination to provide for her family deserved our admiration.

Because of situations like Shanay's, Project Hope has a Stabilization Program. We support families after they move out and monitor their transition. In this situation we put our guarantee on being her "extended family" in writing. Because of this program and our guarantee, Shanay is now in a 2 bedroom apartment, taking the next step up and step out of poverty. ❖