



Photo by Samir Goswami



James Melton holding a prop from a CCH action he attended (see page 3).

Every Vote Matters

That homeless and poor people don't vote is a common misperception. In fact, many poor people do vote; some, like James Melton, never miss an opportunity. "There was a time not too long ago when black people could not vote," says James, who lives in a single-room occupancy (SRO) unit at East Park Apartments on the west side of Chicago. "Every vote matters. I have voted in just about every election since I was 18."

James, who is 51, grew up in Markham, a town just south of Chicago. In 1966, as one of the first five African Americans to attend Tinley Park High School, he experienced first-hand the challenges of integration. After spending his freshmen year at Tinley Park, he transferred to Hillcrest High School and was in its first graduating class in 1969. James attended some college and is now a freelance photographer and entrepreneur. His 27-year-old daughter attends nursing

school in Atlanta, Georgia. After the relationship with his former wife ended, he lived at the YMCA before securing his current unit at the SRO three years ago.

James has been quite active with CCH over the past few months. He has been to Springfield twice to lobby for the It Takes a Home to Raise a Child campaign and went to Rockford in October to protest outside the first gubernatorial debate between candidates Rod Blagojevich and Jim Ryan. Recently James participated in an event outside of Congressman Dennis Hastert's office in Batavia, Illinois, to urge the speaker to call national housing legislation for a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"People's voices have to be heard. If you don't tell people what you want, they won't know and you won't get it." He feels that his participation has made a difference. Not only has he learned a great deal about the

issues but also it is important for legislators to hear his story. "There need to be more of us to participate. Numbers are an important factor in getting things done."

James voted in this past election for one simple reason: "It is my constitutional right." He believes that, particularly for African Americans, voting is a hard-won privilege and that every vote matters. He feels that Governor-elect Rod Blagojevich will have his hands full when he takes office this month. "Obviously, the first item on Mr. Blagojevich's agenda is dealing with the budget." James is optimistic about the coming administration and believes that Governor-elect Blagojevich has vision and will care about homeless people. He is, however, very aware of the challenges facing Illinois with the projected \$3 billion budgetary deficit. "King Solomon once said, 'money is the answer to all things.' Without it you cannot do anything."

James plans to continue his activism by voting in every election he can and by participating in CCH events. The first time he went to Springfield was in the early 1980s, when Carol Mosley-Braun was a state legislator. That event continues to motivate him to vote. "Ms. Mosley-Braun stood up in front of a group of us and said, 'I am a state legislator, and I could become homeless.' Many people are a paycheck away from homelessness. We need to continue to hold our legislators accountable on this issue."

ADVOCATES CREATE STATE- WIDE HOUSING PLATFORM

Advocates for affordable housing in Illinois are coming together for the first time to work on a common agenda to address housing needs in the state. The process began over the summer after the State-wide Housing Action Coalition successfully advocated for a series of state legislative hearings on Illinois's housing needs.

The House Urban Revitalization Committee will issue a report based on their hearings and submit it to the new governor. By developing a common agenda, organizations participating in the hearings and others concerned with housing issues wanted to present a united message around the priorities named in the House report, as well as a united effort in Springfield to pass the agenda.

"It was certainly a challenge to get people to agree on a specific set of solutions, because the crisis in affordable housing is so complex," said Les Brown, director of policy at CCH. *(Cont. on page 2)*

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STATEWIDE HOUSING PLATFORM

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The process for identifying priorities included examining information presented at the hearings, holding community meetings around the state and convening two statewide meetings where all the groups came together to prioritize initiatives.

The result is an agenda that covers a broad range of issues and housing needs. The centerpiece of the agenda calls for a state-level entity dealing with housing policy, planning and implementation.

Other items on the agenda fall into three broad categories: planning and overcoming municipal barriers, access to existing housing, and production and affordability of housing. Examples of other agenda items are:

- A statewide inclusionary zoning bill mandating localities to create a policy for setting aside affordable units in every residential development
- Encouragement of municipalities' planning for housing needs by tying state infrastructure funds to affordable housing planning

- A program to help people with disabilities make home modifications to prevent them from having to enter nursing homes
- Funding for social services for supportive-housing programs
- Rent subsidies for people earning less than 30 percent of area median income
- Capital development funds for very low income housing
- A statewide tenant's bill of rights that would define landlord-tenant relationships and their rights and responsibilities
- A source-of-income amendment that would prohibit landlords from discriminating against voucher holders

"We see this agenda as a first step. Now our challenge is to come up with a structured way to work together to pass the agenda. We are hopeful that with a coordinated strategy and a new administration we can really make an impact," said Judy Meima, executive director, Statewide Housing Action Coalition.

For a complete agenda, please contact CCH.



Then gubernatorial candidate Rod Blagojevich greets protesters outside his fundraiser. "It Takes a Home to Raise a Child" campaign advocates came out to raise the issue of the lack of affordable housing during the governor's race.

REMEMBERING PAUL

Recently we lost an important national leader, Senator Paul Wellstone, in a tragic plane crash. When the Chicago Grassroots Collaborative hosted the kickoff of the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support on May 6, 2000, close to 2,000

grassroots leaders and activists were in attendance. People were noisy and restless. They wanted to hit the streets and march for "healthcare for all." Paul Wellstone turned to me and shouted angrily, "Tell the crowd to shut up!" I said, "Why don't you?" He did, and the crowd shut up and listened.

Fiercely and challenging, he quieted down a restless, unruly crowd with his power, his passion and his connectiveness. People shut up and listened. Then he took to the streets and marched with homeless people, welfare

JOHN DONAHUE

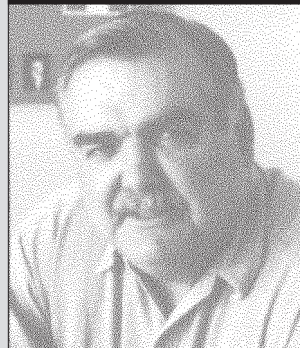


Photo by Julie Dworkin

mothers, low-wage workers, day laborers and activists from all over the country.

Paul felt as comfortable on the streets as he did at the podium. More important, he was able to make the connection

between the needs of the people and public policy at the highest level. This connection with grass-roots people and their struggles was always his guiding light.

As a young professor at Carleton College, Paul risked tenure when he was arrested with students protesting the Vietnam War. In subsequent years, he was arrested again in other acts of civil disobedience on behalf of bankrupt farmers and numerous other causes.

And just as getting arrested for protesting the war could have cost him tenure, he understood that his recent vote against the war with Iraq could have cost him the election. After the vote, when all the senators had left the chambers, Senator Durbin and Paul stayed on. Paul said to Senator Durbin, "This may have cost me the election, but we did the right thing. That's what we're here for."

We will remember Paul and we will remember his words:

"It is not enough to believe in justice unless you are willing to fight for justice, and it is not enough to fight for justice unless you are willing to risk everything." —Paul Wellstone

The Beans Are Good —The Cause Is Great

They came because they heard the beans were good—seven travelers in a yellow van riding into the mountains of Santa Fe, the heart of Panama's coffee-growing region. They came from Chicago and from Northampton, Massachusetts. They came to meet a man named Jacinto, a leader of a peasant cooperative that grew the beans *naturally*. While they were there, they learned about coffee, about community and about possibility. When the time to leave finally came, they were filled with hope—because they found that what they had heard was true. The beans were indeed good.

What brought these fellow travelers together across so many miles into the hills of Panama? Coalition Café, a project of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

Coalition Café coffee is certified organic, shade-grown, fair-trade, small-batch roasted coffees purchased from grower cooperatives and small farms, where they are grown without the use of chemicals, pesticides, or deforestation. The beans are roasted and packaged by Café Habitat in Northampton, Massachusetts, an economic development project also working with homeless people. Every bean is purchased at fair-trade (www.transfairusa.org) rather than “free-trade” prices.

Spearheaded by volunteers, Coalition Café trains and employs homeless people for jobs in marketing and sales. They also raise funds for CCH's programs through coffee sales to local cafés, grocers, businesses, law firms, other not-for-profits, and individuals seeking a “justly



delicious” cup of coffee in the morning. Ultimately, CCH would like to open a café or kiosk to further promote the project.

Volunteers on CCH's Coalition Café Committee are also marketing the coffee through special CCH events, churches, schools and their own workplaces. Through a community service project created by the committee, area teens are selling coffee at school events and at CCH and neighborhood fundraisers.

To continue the dream, Coalition Café needs your help. Help us raise funds at your neighborhood church or school fundraiser. Or just buy a pound today, and you too will be transported to the mountains of Santa Fe.

Coalition Café is more than just coffee. It's community. It's possibility. It's justly delicious.

To purchase Coalition Café coffee and other products, visit our website at www.chicagohomeless.org or call 312-435-4548.

Trust Fund Supporters Visit Speaker Hastert



Photo by Lisa Kukulinski

Participants at the National Housing Trust Fund action portrayed Hastert keeping a housing bill in jail.

On Tuesday, November 19, nearly 100 housing advocates traveled to the Batavia office of Representative Dennis Hastert to urge him to call H.R. 3995 for a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives.

H.R. 3995 was an omnibus housing bill that could have included an amendment for the National Housing Trust Fund—legislation that would create a funding stream at the federal level for the development of housing for very low-income people. Despite

widespread bipartisan support for the bill, Speaker of the House Hastert did not call the bill for a vote.

Although Hastert was not in his office, the event received good media coverage.

PIFI: Contribute to CCH at Work

The Public Interest Fund of Illinois (PIFI) is a coalition of 45 community organizations that raise funds to support Illinois nonprofits engaged in social change, citizen education and empowerment. Since 1991, PIFI has raised over \$1.3 million for its member organizations, including the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. Currently, PIFI participates in payroll deduction campaigns in over 85 workplaces representing more than 350,000 employees throughout Illinois. Does your workplace allow you to contribute to PIFI? Find out more at www.pifi.org.

COALITION

Updates

The 22nd Annual Meeting of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless took place on October 16 at Northwestern University School of Law. Featured special guests included Studs Terkel, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and radio personality, and Ana Castillo, a prominent Chicago author who is a voice from the Chicana experience. Addressing CCH members and supporters, Terkel focused on homelessness as an economic problem and drew comparisons to the Depression era to illustrate homelessness as a recurring reality in United States history. Castillo brought to life the often unheard voice of immigrants experiencing homelessness and domestic violence.



Donations to the

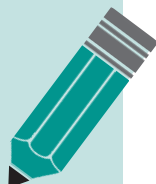
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