



# Arlington Street People's Assistance Network

A-SPAN News

Summer 2002

## A Game of Chance: Affordable Housing

Dan Figg, Case Manager

When the Arlington County Section 8 waiting list reopened in May of 2001 for one month, A-SPAN workers, believing this to be the only opportunity we would have to place our clients on the waiting lists for perhaps years to come, made concerted outreach efforts to complete and submit as many applications as possible. Workers came to Homeless Bagged Meal Program distribution sites with applications and clipboards offering to assist clients with application completion. We delivered these applications in large quantities to DHS and at the closing of the list at the end of May, were hopeful that many of these individuals would receive vouchers sometime within the next five years.

To our surprise, the clients we placed on the list began to receive letters of notification during the summer of that year. We were confused by this rapid response. We had assumed the waiting list was backlogged with high numbers of eligible families and that our clients would not receive their vouchers until these long-awaiting Arlingtonians were served. We still are not sure as to the reason for this disappearance of what we believed to be a large backload of applicants. One hypothesis is that a dwindling number of properties in the county that accept Section 8 vouchers has led many voucher holders to leave the jurisdiction or, worse, to

homelessness. In recent years HUD has estimated the voucher return rate by families unable to rent housing to be as high as 40%.

In October of 2001, the Arlington County Department of Human Services surprised us again when they announced that the list would be reopened the first Friday of every month for one day. This has proven to be a landmark event for A-SPAN. Since October, we have worked with clients at Opportunity Place, Homeless Bagged Meal Program sites, and, during the winter months, at the Emergency Winter Shelter, ensuring completion and submission of applications for homeless individuals who would otherwise be too overwhelmed by their own problems of daily living to apply.

4,859 units of housing affordable to those at 60% and below of area median income in Arlington have been lost over the past two years.\*

Since then our clients have continued to receive letters of notification and many, with our assistance, have secured housing despite the dearth of owners willing to accommodate voucher recipients. My greatest concern, however, is that this period of "feast" could soon transform once again into "famine." As more consumers receive vouchers, more units disappear. There are twelve managed properties of which we are aware in Arlington that accept Section 8 vouchers out of

*\*Arlington County Staff Report  
(see Affordable, page 3)*

In this issue...	Page
Affordable Housing	1
Director's Corner	2
A-SPAN Volunteer Day	3
Stories from the Streets	4,5
Shelter News	6
Thank You's	2,7

## Director's Corner

by Lora Rinker, Executive Director

Perhaps you read the editorial "Housing on the Back Burner" (The Washington Post, Sunday, June 9, 2002) by David S. Broder. Mr. Broder describes the national apathy and inattention to the lack of affordable housing - an issue that is very much on the front burner of more and more local governments. Arlington is a case in point. Following such housing debacles as affordable Arna Valley metamorphosed into upscale, expensive Avalon at Arlington Square, local officials are realizing that pre-emptive and bold actions are necessary to stem the tide of other affordable units suffering a similar fate. We applaud recent actions of the County Board and County Manager to preserve the Gates of Arlington Apartments (a section of the Buckingham Apartments). This raises hopes that our community residents and leaders understand the crisis dimensions of this issue and are working to define more effective approaches to preserving and building a community that is economically and culturally diverse and caring.

Articles in the Post and other local papers, running concurrent with the Broder editorial, inform readers of the rise in homelessness in the suburbs across the DC Metro area - an increase of 12.4% in Arlington. The lack of affordable housing is a major roadblock in efforts to end homelessness. While there are other contributing factors that also need to be addressed, such as mental illness and substance abuse, it is extremely difficult for people suffering from these illnesses to recover without stable living conditions - whether permanent independent living or temporary housing with supportive services. It is an obvious fact, yet needs repeating, that homelessness and the lack of housing that is affordable are inextricably linked.

In the long run, it will take pre-emptive and bold action from all levels of government, including new

legislation, to address the nation-wide affordable housing shortage. It is not just a shortage but a crisis.

The Fannie Mae Foundation's Affordable Housing Survey was released at the annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The survey finds that a lack of affordable homes is a bigger problem in communities (37% say it is a very or fairly big problem) than are job loss and unemployment (36%), crime (23%), and air pollution (21%). Only lack of affordable health care was viewed as a bigger problem (43%). The survey is located at:  
<http://www.fanniemaefoundation.org/news/pr/2002spr/Report061602.pdf>.

### Very Special Thank You's

- Westfield Realty for their sponsorship of the A-SPAN 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner.
- Monarc Construction for donated renovation work on Opportunity Place.
- Paradigm for the donation of ten microwaves for A-SPAN clients.
- Volunteers in Technical Assistance for their donation of office furniture to A-SPAN.
- Consumer Electronics Association for t-shirts.
- The Arlington Jaycees for sharing with A-SPAN their holiday gift wrapping fundraiser at Ballston Mall which raised more than \$1,000 for A-SPAN.

(Affordable cont. from page 1)

over 150 managed properties. Though this does not account for individual owners who rent property in the County, it is clear to us that the choices available to voucher holders in Arlington at this time are to say the least minimal. To make matters worse, some of the properties which purport to accept the vouchers apply income minimums and strict credit requirements to voucher applicants, effectively disqualifying many voucher holders, and universally excluding consumers with disabilities and senior citizens who live on low fixed incomes at a rate of 10% of median income. Through hard work, A-SPAN has, so far, a nearly 100% success rate in voucher utilization. We help clients resolve credit problems and have been able to convince individual property owners to take a chance on our clients. Nonetheless, we are still concerned about the limited number of managed properties in Arlington which currently accept Section 8.

The Arlington County Department of Human Services successfully advocated this year for an increase in rent reimbursements from the Section 8 program. We are hopeful this will increase the number of individual owners who are willing to work with the program in our competitive market. We feel it is imperative we take steps to convince other managed properties of the benefits of working with the Section 8 program. It is our belief that the low number of properties willing to rent to these lower-income families is an embarrassment to our community and that, if such owners wish to do business in Arlington, they should be prohibited from this pernicious form of housing discrimination against the working class and disabled of Arlington.

**Seeking EWS Volunteers for this  
winter. Call Linda at  
(703)820-4357 ext. 15.**

**Median income in our area is \$64,050.  
Low income housing, "Section 8", is  
established under Arlington County's  
Consolidated Plan at 47.5% (up to  
\$30,450) of area median income. Many  
properties use this amount as an income  
requirement.**

### **A-SPAN Chosen as Volunteer Program Kick-Off Site.**

In January of 2002, the United in Service to America Act (USA Act) was signed into law. Sponsored by Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and John Kyl (R-AZ) the Act was created to "remember those lost on September 11, respond to the attacks in a positive and uniquely American way, and rebuild communities through volunteer service." The Points of Light Foundation is coordinating this national effort. A-SPAN was chosen by the Arlington County Volunteer Office to be one of only 14 national kick-off sites for the program. Other sites were located in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Atlanta, Miami, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Kansas City, MO, Seattle and San Jose, CA.

On June 20, more than 20 volunteers gathered for refreshments, were welcomed by Arlington County Board Member Jay Fisette and then got to work. Volunteers sorted and organized more than 50 bags of donated clothing, reorganized A-SPAN's clothing room, assembled and stocked new shelving for supplies and cleared a room where lockers are now installed so that A-SPAN clients can utilize the lockers for short-term storage of their property.

We wish to extend our very great thanks to all the volunteers, the Points of Light Foundation and the Arlington Volunteer Office for making this day a success.

## Stories from the Streets

### Building a New Life

Bernard Carey, Employment Coordinator

We all have fond memories of our families, our children, their friends and our extended family members. Now imagine you live in a country where political instability causes a Civil War. The material things you once owned, such as your house, your car, your business, etc., now belong to someone else because they took it at gunpoint. Family and friends are split up, some never to be seen again. They just disappear. Such was the life of a young girl named Isabel. Her loving home was gone, she was a 16 year old refugee, alone, frightened, confused and abused. She said to me, "Bernard, when I was a refugee, I had lost hope and all my dreams seemed to fade after I kept on waking up in a place that was hell to me. They were gone with the sunshine I once had for life."

Isabel arrived in America under a resettlement plan clinging to the Chinese Proverb, "*The journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.*" She was no longer in danger of losing her life however the mental scars of what she had experienced were still there. Isabel sought help from her pastor at Assembly of God and was referred to A-SPAN. She contacted us and Michelle Hirschman became her case manager. Michelle gained Isabel's confidence in the A-SPAN way, by meeting individuals where they are in every way and working with them for as long as it takes. When Michelle asked Isabel if she wanted to partner with A-SPAN, her response was a very quiet "I would like that." That was April, 2000. Michelle and Isabel then put together a comprehensive case management plan. Thus began



the process of what A-SPAN does so well. We advocated for mental health and counseling services. Isabel was placed in the RPC shelter and A-SPAN advocated for an extended stay. Isabel then was referred to A-SPAN's Transitional Employment Program (TEP).

In TEP we were able to provide Isabel with several opportunities to gain employment skills that helped her to eventually take care of herself. She started working part-time and doing some seasonal work. We then helped her secure a job at Harris Teeter as a cashier. Isabel's section 8 voucher, applied for with Michelle's help over a year prior finally came through. Since Michelle had moved on to sunny California, I was the one to assist her with finding an apartment. She moved into her apartment in the next month in October, 2001. Isabel had no furniture so I put the word out and as always the

supporters of A-SPAN (including some of you reading this) came through. Isabel chipped in as well purchasing a bedroom set that she appointed me to deliver and assemble. Several months later I received a call from Isabel, who said, "Bernard I want to learn how to drive. Everyone in America drives so I want to learn too."

You know what happened next! I helped her with that as well. After a few lessons, Isabel tired of my insistence that she master the parking lot before we took to the public roads. So, I went to my supervisor Marte Birnbaum, Director of Opportunity Place, and she approved funds for Isabel to take driving lessons. Do you know that her driving instructor allowed her to drive to Falls Church on her first lesson? Anyway I must admit that he taught her well. Isabel now wants to go on interstate 95. Do we have any volunteers out there? (Hahahaha)

It took over two years to accomplish independence for Isabel. She is now an American citizen with all the rights that come with citizenship simply because she had the support of an organization that believed in her, worked with her and never gave up on her. As Isabel said to me, "Bernard, A-SPAN has given me my dreams and hope back." I got a call last week from Isabel asking me to come pick her up to take some pictures of her life here in America so she could send them home to her family to help inspire them. As Oliver Wendel Holmes said "The greatest thing in this world is not so much where we are, but in what direction we are moving."

***All Rudy needed was a little help!!!***  
*Bernard Carey, Employment Coordinator*

Here at A-SPAN we hold as a core belief - a commitment to taking whatever time is required to move an individual from a state of homelessness and all of its conditions to the reality of self-sufficiency. At any time there are individuals out there who are a paycheck away from being homeless. Maybe it's your neighbor, a church clerk who is on a fixed income, the school bus driver who picks up your kids every day or maybe it's you. My buddy Rudy falls in that category.

Outside of being homeless, Rudy had no major problems, and had been working at his job for over three years until he got laid off, indirectly because of 9-11. I've been working with Rudy for over a year and for the life of me I always wondered why he was homeless and living in a shelter. The answer to his homelessness is closer to home than most of us want to admit.

As I got to know Rudy, I discovered a very proud and reserved human being who was trying to make sense out of what had happened to him. The truth of the matter was that Rudy was like thousands of other Arlingtonians who can't afford the rent and

all the other stuff that one needs to survive while making \$9.00 an hour. Rudy had no idea of what to do. Both of his parents had passed away and being a proud introvert, Rudy suffered in silence. He had to figure out by himself what services were available for him. So one day Rudy showed up at our Oakland Mini Park Homeless Bagged Meal program. After coming steadily for a while, some of the old timers took him to the side and showed him how to take care of himself on the streets. Rudy set forth what he considered to be a survivable existence. He would spend two weeks in a shelter and two weeks in a motel. He did this for three years, resigned to this life. Then came 9-11 and suddenly Rudy's life, as he knew it, was in chaos. He was suddenly forced to ask for more assistance from us. He needed a job. You know what they say, when you are ready to learn, a teacher appears. Well, Rudy was ready and so were we.

He was referred to our Transitional Employment Program. With my help he secured a job and then I referred Rudy to Dan Figg, A-SPAN's housing guru. Dan worked his magic and we were able to find him a room. It is surprising what a little help can do!

In conclusion, I ask the question: what if all cities had a rule that every individual who works 40 hours a week is guaranteed a roof over their head at an affordable price?

At any time  
there are  
individuals out  
there who are a  
paycheck away  
from being  
homeless.

A-SPAN seeks Executive Assistant for variety of functions including database, HR and special projects. Excellent computer and communications skills necessary. Fax resume to (703)820-4405.

## EWS Shelter News

Linda Coats, Director of Shelter and Transitional Services

Last season our numbers increased to 330 consumers receiving overnight shelter from November 5, 2001 to April 8, 2002. With maximum capacity of 40 consumers, 6,200 hot meals were served along with other emergency services: clothing, personal hygiene items, showers, over-the-counter medication and transportation tokens. Other services included case management, mental and physical health assessments and referrals. A big thank you to each of you for helping out in the trenches (front line service work) and going the distance in making our entire season successful. Thank you also to other homeless service providers who pitched in with supportive shelter when the EWS was full.

Arrangements are underway for our next shelter season with volunteer projects and events planned into early fall. We are looking for volunteers to join our Oversight Committee (to make overnight visits to check on things) and Food Committee (shop for items at our local supplier - the National Capital Area Food Bank) to strengthen operations next fall. **Mark your calendars ahead of time to help this season or call Linda Coats at 703-820-4357 x15 to have your name added to the volunteer list.** A-SPAN appreciates your continued efforts and support to help make each season the best one yet.

**Thank you to Randy Swart who donated a minivan for an A-SPAN client.**

A car can make a tremendous difference in the life of a homeless person. If you would like to donate a vehicle in good working order, please call (703) 820-4357.

**A-SPAN is now a part of the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC). Remember #3146 if you are part of this campaign.**

### Upcoming Events Mark your calendars!

Annual A-SPAN Yard Sale  
Saturday, September 7, 2002  
(see enclosed flyer)

Fresh Fields Grilling Day  
Wednesday, September 25, 2002 - 6:00pm  
Join us for some good food and support A-SPAN.

Help The Homeless Walkathon  
Sunday, November 23, 2002 (see enclosed flyer)

**\*Call (703)820-4357 to volunteer for any of these events\***

### Wish list

#### For clients

Queen size bed  
TV/VCR  
Bed linens (all sizes)  
Microwaves  
Small kitchen appliances  
Clock radio/alarms

#### For A-SPAN

Large refrigerator (for Opportunity Place)  
Commercial washers and dryers (for Opportunity Place and EWS)

### Volunteer Thank Yous

It is only through our volunteers that we are able to accomplish as much as we do.

To Hope Worldwide volunteers for their efforts at the Emergency Winter Shelter clean-up day in April.

Melissa Steele and Tiffany Buland for their help with the A-SPAN 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner silent auction.

Opportunity Place Volunteers Cesar Arevalo, Alan Dierksen and Janeen Oshaben.

In June, Greater DC Cares organized two groups of AOL employees to prepare bagged meals for the Homeless Bagged Meal Program and sort and organize clothing and blankets for the Emergency Winter Shelter. Thank you to Greater DC Cares and the volunteers from AOL.

All the volunteers who work with the Homeless Bagged Meal Program.

### Bon Voyage

A-SPAN wishes to extend our heart-felt thanks to Emilio Monzon for all his dedication and hard work. Emilio has been with A-SPAN since March 1998 and has decided to pursue his goals and training in education by taking a position teaching spanish to children from Kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Emilio's contributions to A-SPAN have been numerous and he will be greatly missed by A-SPAN staff and clients.

Best wishes and good luck Emilio!

### Board of Directors

Andy Keyes, President

Mike Timpane, Vice-President

Andrea Walker, Treasurer

Mary Ann Moran, Secretary

Laurie Duncan

Beronica Salas

Tom Leckey, Jr.

Alexandria Silva

Jorge Osterling

Joan Wadelton

Chris Rea

Margaret White

### Staff

Executive Director.....Lora Rinker  
 Director, Opportunity Place....Marte Birnbaum  
 Director of Shelter Services.....Linda Coats  
 Director of Resource Development  
 .....Lana Bilyeu  
 Finance Manager.....Robin Broder  
 Employment Coordinator..... Bernard Carey  
 Homeless Bagged Meal Program Coordinator  
 .....Marianne Moerman  
 Case Manager.....Dan Figg  
 Outreach Workers.....Emilio Monzon  
 .....Arnold Forte  
 .....Wilbert Shaw  
 Executive Assistant.....Vacant

Mailing Address: A-SPAN, P.O. Box 1554,  
 Arlington, VA 22210  
 Opportunity Place, 2708B So. Nelson Street,  
 Arlington, VA 22206  
 (703) 820-HELP (4357) fax (703) 820-4405  
 Shelter (703) 528-3082  
 Shelter Infoline (703) 228-3935  
 info@a-span.org \* www.a-span.org

TO DONATE TODAY, GO TO [www.a-span.org](http://www.a-span.org) AND CLICK ON DONATE NOW!!

# Please Join Us

A-SPAN invites you to join with us to work with and for Arlington's street homeless to secure needed support, services, jobs and housing.

Please add me to your mailing list.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

- Suggested amounts:
- Individual (\$35)
  - Family (\$50)
  - Organization (\$65)
  - Corporation (\$500)
  - Major Individual Donor (\$250+)

Please make checks payable to A-SPAN

Mail to: A-SPAN, P.O. Box 1554, Arlington, VA 22210-0854

Arlington Street People's Assistance Network  
P.O. Box 1554  
Arlington, VA 22210-0854

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Arlington, VA  
Permit 5201



#8404

Address Correction Requested