

"Your newsletter is the best that we receive and we receive dozens. It helps us learn about affordable housing and what's going on in the other districts."

District Director - Office of U.S. Senator Patty Murray

My View

A Unique, "Inside" Perspective on Housing and Community Development

My View is a distinctive electronic journal which focuses on the real-life stories of people and organizations that are involved in the hard work of creating affordable housing and improving communities throughout Washington State. Rather than simply focusing on the internal operations and programs of the Commission, this journal focuses on in-depth interviews that allow the subjects to explain, in their own words, the challenges they've faced, how they've accomplished their successes, the coalitions they've built, the legislative support they're enlisting and the further challenges they see ahead.

My View provides a unique, insider's perspective into the people, programs, events and trends that are influencing affordable housing and community development in Washington and across the nation.

Launched in the fall of 2004, each issue of *My View* addresses current initiatives and opportune topics. The journal draws on the knowledge of Mr. Kim Herman, the Executive Director, the Commissioners and staff members to identify key players representing different constituencies to provide professional perspectives on key programs, events and trends happening in affordable housing and community development. Most important, however, is the participation of real people that are trying to improve their lives by finding affordable housing and quality community services that will make their lives better. It's a coalition of unlikely bedfellows who have many stories to tell.

With more than 45 years of experience in affordable housing and community development programs, Mr. Herman has creatively established a useful electronic platform where all of these voices could tell their stories and be heard. His *My View* journal provides real-world information and insights on the process and challenges of creating affordable housing and better communities. Kim also shares his experienced inside perspective on housing and community development with partners, colleagues and friends across this great nation.

The Successes of *My View*

Reaching Our Targeted Audiences

Since launching this journal in October 2004, our articles have been quoted in newspapers, web blogs, and in the published communications of other agencies. It is the most common outcome of a Google search of the Commission or our Executive Director. Most gratifying is the

consistent level of unsolicited feedback we receive from subscribers. Our readers' comments provide some insight on how much they value receiving *My View*:

"Thanks so much for all your support..! Your newsletter article was very helpful, with Congressional staff members particularly impressed."

From a self-help housing developer in Eastern Washington

"This morning I had the opportunity to review the most recent issue of My View...the articles are excellent!"

From the Director of a rural housing development corporation

"I read the article you wrote about the Coalition for the Homeless for the July issue. Very nice work! You were gracious to do that."

From the Executive Director of an urban housing authority

"Your history of the (Washington state) Housing Trust Fund is wonderful! Thanks for writing this piece."

From an urban homeless program manager

It's Innovative. Traditionally, organizational newsletters look internally; their audience is usually direct stakeholders, so they talk about *their own activities and successes*. The *My View* journal takes a different approach by addressing a broader audience and carries a different mandate by focusing on events and points of view *outside* the Commission. It presents multiple perspectives and then takes a stand, based on the information gathered. Readers can compare different strategies and our conclusions, and decide on their own what applies to their community. This innovative approach helps support the Commission's mission by bringing specific challenges and opportunities to the attention of professionals and advocates abroad and helps build local and long-range partnerships that support our mission.

It's Replicable. Although the Executive Director's vision is unique, this kind of journal can easily be implemented by any organization intent on reaching out to a more diverse group of stakeholders and advocates among its constituencies.

For other HFAs to accomplish this goal, they would simply need to use our journalistic approach on timely key topics. With input from Commissioners, staff and partners, we decide on a topic and determine who to interview. The writer proceeds with interviews and begins to draft the journal. The Communications Manager photographs each participant and the web manager coordinates the layout of the online version with the printable pdf version for posting on our website. The online version is then emailed to our list of readers! *We have fine tuned our collaborative efforts and it has certainly proved to be successful.*

Achieving Our Mission

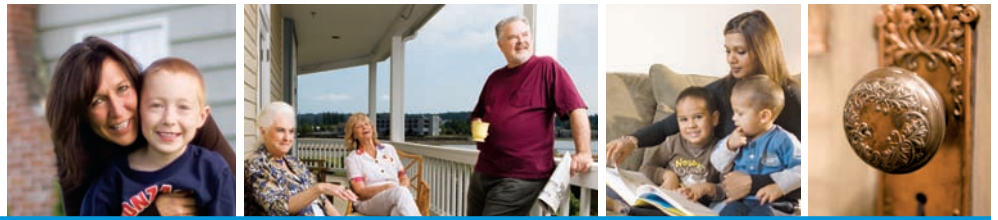
The Commission has two main resources: our staff and our partnerships with colleagues in the affordable housing and community development field. The journal allows the Commission to shine a spotlight on their excellent work, and to achieve this we use many editorial strategies including writing about challenges, successes, failures or controversies. Often we provide a long-term view of partnerships and programs that help readers understand and appreciate them from an historical perspective.

One such example is our July 2010 issue: *The Washington State Coalition for the Homeless: 25 Years of Heroic Efforts and Significant Milestones*. In 2010, at the close of their 20th annual conference, the Coalition for the Homeless sponsored a Celebration Panel of people who had a unique perspective on their history. These 10 panelists gave us an incredible oral recounting of the Coalition's founding and the great strides its membership has made over 25 years. The resulting *My View* article was both a history lesson and an inspiration to new professionals and volunteers battling homelessness.

Every Issue of My View is in Your Hands:

The enclosed CD contains the back issues of *My View* since 2004. After browsing through some of our issues, you will get a sense of why this unique, electronic journal is deserving of an NCSHA Excellence Award.

Thanks for your consideration!



My View

KIM HERMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE WASHINGTON STATE COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS • JULY 2010



A unique, “inside” perspective on housing and community development from the executive director of the Washington State Housing Finance Commission.

The Washington State Coalition for the Homeless: 25 years of Heroic Efforts and Significant Milestones

In May, at the close of their 20th annual conference, the leadership of the Washington State Coalition for the Homeless honored their 25th anniversary year by sponsoring a Celebration Panel of people who have a unique perspective on their history. Eloquent and thoughtful, these 10 panelists gave us an incredible oral recounting of the Coalition’s founding and the great strides its membership has made since that time. This newsletter can’t possibly include all the successes, or acknowledge all the people who have participated, but it’s an attempt to capture the historical legacy, as told on that Celebration Panel.

Inside this Issue

- The work of many heroes 2
- The first statewide conference 3
- The mothers of ESAP 4
- The amazing WSCH conferences 5
- The Children’s Lawsuit 7
- The Homeless Children’s Quilt 11
- Legislative advocacy 12
- The Washington Families Fund 13
- The Homeless Housing and Assistance Act 14
- Envisioning the future 15



Ending homelessness in Washington was the explicit objective when the Washington State Coalition for the Homeless (the Coalition or WSCH) was founded in late 1984. Twenty-five years later, this remains the Coalition's driving vision. It is a focused and passionate commitment that unites the efforts of hundreds of members. However, what struck me as I sat listening to the Celebration Panel is how much the Coalition has accomplished—and how much is already beginning to slip from our memories.



The work of many heroes

The history of the Coalition is the story of heroic efforts—and heroes. The story begins with the initial inspiration and pioneering efforts of Martha Dilts and Maureen Howard. Martha and Maureen are visionaries: They recognized the need and took it upon themselves to bring together the people who would become the Washington State Coalition for the Homeless.

Twenty-five years ago, except for growing perceptions in urban areas like Seattle, the extent and root causes of homelessness were not well understood by most. “This was a very different time,” Maureen points out. “People did not want to talk about homelessness. There was very little money associated with homeless programs, and because of enormous cuts to domestic federal

programs, communities were reeling.”

In Seattle, the collaboration and support of public officials was making a difference. Martha had been one of the founders of the Seattle King County Coalition for the Homeless (SKCCH) back in 1979. SKCCH was, if not the first, certainly one of the first coalitions of its kind in the country, and still has a very active membership. “But our work was centered around the Seattle area,” Martha notes. “At the same time, there were service providers all around the state working with their local people on homelessness. We might have known each other slightly but we weren’t really working *together*.”

The National Coalition for the Homeless’ Chicago conference in October 1983 was seminal in setting the stage for the Coalition. At that time, Martha was executive director of Seattle Emergency Housing Service,

which provided housing for families; Maureen was executive director of Martin Luther King Ecumenical Center, a community-based organization in Tacoma’s Hilltop area where she had started a number of programs for homeless people. Both Maureen and Martha were at the Chicago conference; Maureen recalls meeting a number of homeless advocates from Washington State for the first time, most of them from Seattle.

As Maureen tells it, there was more than a little irony to this: She had to travel all the way to Chicago to meet these people from her home state. No statewide forum existed to collaborate on homeless issues. When they returned home, “that’s when we started talking about developing a state coalition,” she says.

The first statewide conference: Preparing for launch

What's the best way to bring like-minded people together? Hold a conference. But, as Maureen observes, much of the technology used today to connect people wasn't around in 1984. "These were the days before the Internet, cell phones, email, Twitter, and tweets," she observes. "This gives some perspective about the work it took to pull together the first statewide conference on homelessness in our state."

Led by Martha and Maureen, many people contributed to making this conference a success, including a planning committee of

more than 20 homeless advocates. "We really worked hard," Martha recalls. "We saw the conference as part of an organizing effort to create the state coalition. So we reached out across the state—we got 60 endorsing agencies, including community action councils, nonprofit organizations, shelters, churches. We wanted it to be statewide right from the beginning." Entitled "Homelessness in Washington State: A Conference for Shelter Providers, Church Members, and Other Concerned People," it was held in Seattle on October 12 and 13, 1984.

288 people attended the conference from all over the state. Martha, who has recently retired after decades of public service, has somehow managed to dig up a printed program. She reminded me that I had served

on a panel that discussed working with Washington State agencies—and indeed, it's there in black and white. Seattle Mayor Charles Royer was in attendance, as was then-U.S. Congressman Mike Lowry; they both spoke during the conference's opening session. Mike, in fact, had provided the seed money to bring the keynote speaker from Washington, D.C.: Carol Fennelly from the Community for Creative Non-Violence, who spoke on "The Politics of Homelessness."

All along, the idea was to use this event to build relationships and quilt together an organization that could provide a statewide unifying voice in working to end homelessness. The last act of the conference was to bring the Coalition into existence. "We put the proposal to the plenary group about organizing WSCH," says Martha. "It was a very powerful moment. It was the first time people had come together from across the whole state to talk about homelessness and talk about working together."

An equal voice for every county in ending homelessness

It was a natural fit for Maureen and Martha to take on the leadership of this new organization. They were elected as co-presidents of the Coalition (two years later, in 1986, Martha shifted to the role of vice president; they held these respective roles until 1992). Both shared very clear ideas about how to structure the Coalition to enable it to be truly representative of Washington State.

"We wanted to be a statewide coalition of local coalitions," explains Maureen. "Local communities could set up these coalitions in ways that made sense for them." The communities themselves would select



Martha Dilts



Maureen Howard is currently Executive Director of Habit for Humanity of Washington State.

someone who would represent them on the state Coalition board. The intent was to have a structure that would always be in touch with key concerns and issues in every part of the state. "This also gave us frontline experience on our board. And it gave us a statewide coalition that truly was the face of our state. Whether you came from King County or Walla Walla County, you had a place at the table as an equal."

Adds Martha, "Unlike what happened in some other states where the dominant city would step forward and typically take the dominant amount of funds that were allocated, we tried right from the beginning to be very inclusive. I think that's the real strength of the Coalition." In going after state funding, they knew it was important that homelessness was seen as not just a Puget Sound or Seattle issue. Martha gives the example of the Coalition's first major push for state funding, in the spring of 1985, to establish the Emergency Shelter Assistance Program

"It was a very powerful moment. It was the first time people had come together from across the whole state to talk about homelessness and talk about working together."

— MARTHA DILTS

(ESAP). "We had people from all over the state coming to Olympia to testify. There was great buy-in right from the beginning."

Equally important as the organization's representation and structure was the philosophy it espoused. "We did not create the Coalition to make homelessness more respectable, more manageable or even to ensure as much safety and decency for homeless people in our shelters and programs as possible—although we were absolutely committed to principles of respect, decency, and safety," says Maureen. "We created the Coalition to bring an end to homelessness.

"We understood ending homelessness was not rocket science—it was a matter of political will and money. We made homelessness a housing issue. We knew income was the structural issue but we thought we had a better chance at gaining support if we focused on housing. Housing was so taken for granted and so clear."



The mothers of ESAP

ESAP was the first major initiative of the brand-new Coalition. The creation of ESAP, which provides funding for emergency shelters statewide, was a tremendous success on a number of fronts: The Washington State Legislature ultimately appropriated \$1.95 million in funding to create this program in 1985. This effort gave the Coalition's member organizations their first major opportunity to work together collaboratively to create a unique statewide distribution system. It drew attention to the massive challenge of homelessness in communities all over the state. And it created an effective model for future legislative initiatives.

Maureen calls the core group of hard-working advocates and program-architects the 'Mothers of ESAP.' These included Maureen, Martha, Corine Knudsen (who would later serve as executive director of the Coalition from 2005-2007), and Beth Palmer. State staff included Kathy Kreidler and Claire Hopkins with the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development (now the Department of Commerce). Together, they hammered out the program. "It was a long summer with amazing results," Maureen says. "I never imagined we would create this incredible system to fund shelters and services and specialized housing programs."

The funding ultimately came into being as a state budget line item. Senator George Fleming had initially sponsored ESAP as a bill. Ron Sims, who is now Deputy Secretary at HUD, was Fleming's legislative aide back in 1985; despite their efforts and strong support, the bill did not make it through to a vote. Instead, Senator Lorraine Wojahn of Tacoma added the

money as a line item in the state budget.

"We had this great opportunity to shape this money," says Maureen. The Coalition's newly minted board had set out key principles to follow. Because homelessness was a statewide problem, it was imperative that the funding formulas reflect that: "It wasn't about who has the best grant writer, it was all about getting the funding out fairly." That meant calculating distributions, arriving at minimum payments to each county, and defining reasonable reporting protocols.

The goal of ESAP, Maureen emphasizes, was not to directly promote the creation of homeless shelters. "We said, 'How can we keep homelessness from happening?' I used to advise communities to look for ways to prevent homelessness, to look at ways to meet emergency needs without having to create shelters. And so when we designed ESAP, these were the kinds of things we talked through. We would say, 'OK, if a small community has an opportunity to rent a room for a week in a motel, will that work?' That often made more sense than building a building unless you absolutely had to. But sometimes you don't have the housing stock—or you need it for safety. So many survivors of domestic violence need a safe place. The point was, 'How do we keep people safe? How do we keep people housed? How do we help them become permanently housed and remain permanently housed?'"

A collaborative model

ESAP's designers created a funding formula that would be distributed directly to county service provider committees. Recalls Martha, "this was also another way for

us to promote coalition-building. People needed to come to the table together, to talk about the funding and develop the relationships and develop the plans for their county. It was very intentional."

In other words, it was the local providers that made the decisions. At that time, Maureen points out, many counties weren't attuned to homelessness, but the shelters were. "And in each county, every shelter that agreed to follow the principles we'd set out was an eligible recipient of ESAP funding. The shelter providers needed to agree among themselves how to distribute their allocation."

By working together, the pie got bigger, as Martha points out. "That was always the goal. Instead of just focusing on dividing up the pie, whether by populations or location, we wanted to increase it, to move everything along together. That was always the vision—both to end homelessness and to do it collaboratively." This strategy, she explains, was then extended to all of the Coalition's initiatives: "Always statewide, always inclusive." Just as an example, the Coalition succeeded in getting the ESAP allocation increased by almost twenty percent two years later, and by 1989, it had doubled to \$5.2 million for the 1989-1991 biennium.

Today, ESAP helps support a network of more than 170 community-based emergency shelters throughout Washington. And this county-focused collaborative model for state funding, first set in motion through the Coalition, has been utilized in a number of significant ending-homelessness initiatives over the past 25 years, including the Homelessness Housing and Assistance Act, which I'll talk about later.

The amazing WSCH conferences

The annual conferences the Coalition has sponsored since 1991 have become a Mecca for people working in this field in our region. Says Martha, "Maureen deserves credit for seeing that we needed to offer these conferences for service providers—to help educate them." Because the early leadership of the Coalition began from the perspective of service providers, "we knew the daily needs. We were helping people to get back on their feet and that was tremendously important. But we also knew we wanted to systemically end the conditions that existed so people wouldn't become homeless."

Maureen remembers it this way: "This is what board members asked for. It was a testament to the people who were frontline staff, who said, 'We want to know how to do this right, we want to do this as well as we can.'"

By any measure, the Coalition's conferences continue to serve its constituencies well. As Martha says, "they've been wonderful, amazing conferences." They're successful in providing a forum for points of view across the entire spectrum, from policymakers to homeless people. In recent years, the conferences have taken place in Yakima. This year, the Spokane location marked a change in venue that was a great success; the 2011 conference will be held in Kennewick May 11-13.

During the Spokane conference, Bob Peeler was tapped to reminisce about these early gatherings on the Celebration Panel. Bob has been a board member of the Coalition for more than 20 years, and

has watched the organization, and its conferences, evolve to meet the needs of its stakeholders. Currently senior lead family development coach at Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners (SNAP), he has been a strong and consistent champion for the homeless in his community and in our state.

“What I really wanted to talk about is the energy that the conferences bring to people,” Bob says. “You always remember your first conference,” he recalls. “We were able to bring six staff persons with us from Spokane” to the campus of Central Washington University in Ellensburg. “We shared college dorms, ate in the cafeteria, and went as cheap as possible, so we could afford to enable frontline people to attend. We were able to whine together and come up with solutions, and get contacts. I taught ‘Case Management 101’ back then. The point was that we all got really excited about what we were doing. We were exchanging ideas, helping to motivate one another to get back to what we all do—which is working with people who are at the most vulnerable point of their lives.”

Staying in the game

Bob recalls that in Spokane County, his local coalition was just getting off the ground. “It helped to see how communities worked together, and how the state ran their coalition compared to what we were doing here locally. I think a lot of people returned home and started their coalitions. Back then, homelessness was just on the verge of being recognized as an issue that involves all levels of government—cities, counties, states—rather than just being the guys on the corner.”

Through the first conferences, the



Coalition had already established a great working relationship with CTED (now the Department of Commerce) and was moving forward on state plans and programs. ESAP was providing funding for homeless counts but, as Bob points out, “we were all doing them differently.” The conferences provided useful tutorials. “Tedd Kelleher at Commerce has been coming for years. He got the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in place, and educated people about the value of counts. The Coalition, in partnership with Commerce, was very successful in coordinating the counts to make

long-term plans to address homelessness as effective as possible. In our community, these counts were showing us that 50% of our homeless were families with children.”

These workshops, panels and seminars just get better and better. “Early on, we started doing ‘Tracks’—frontline, management, friends of the homeless, legislative, faith-based—so that people could benefit from a full range of workshops. We always offered sponsorships to help people attend; and always organized panels of homeless folks, to share their successes and discuss where we were dropping the ball.”



Bob Peeler has served on the Board of Directors of the Coalition for more than 20 years. He is Senior Lead Family Development Coach at Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners (SNAP).

This year, 350 attendees were expected and remarkably, in a year of shrinking budgets, more than 450 people attended. Many of the people thronging the meeting rooms were under 35. "These are very dedicated folks," says Bob. "The conference is important to them. From the very beginning, it has helped keep me in the game. I think it continues to do that for a lot of people."

The Children's Lawsuit

In the entire history of the Coalition, there is probably no achievement that carries as much emotion and passion, even today, as the 10-year effort to create a just solution for the thousands of children suffering the consequences of homelessness in our state. For almost 10 years during the 1990s, the Coalition and homeless families were represented by Columbia Legal Services and the Seattle law firm of Garvey, Schubert & Barer in the lawsuit known as the Homeless Children's Case. Their lead attorney was Michael Mirra, then with Columbia and now executive director of the Tacoma Housing Authority. The Coalition's determination to see this lawsuit through to fruition truly reflects the character of its mission—and the character of its membership.

For a clear and detailed history of this landmark effort, the Coalition's website offers a compelling history of this period, written by Margaret Maxwell, who was executive director from 1990 to 2002. What kept this lawsuit alive over the years was how much was at stake. This is a picture of those times and those conditions, in Margaret's words:

In the early 1980s, homelessness began to increase among Washington State families with children to an extent not seen since the Great Depression. By FY (state fiscal year) 1987, an estimated 33,000 children with their families were homeless; nearly 20,000 of them were counted when they were turned away from shelter for lack of space. The evidence in the case would show that, as a result of homelessness, children suffer increased rates of acute and chronic illness, infant mortality (death prior to age 1),

mental illness, emotional disturbance, abuse and neglect, and educational and developmental impairment. The Court would later find that "[h]omelessness has a devastating effect on children with significant adverse effects for growth and development."

In 1990, the Governor's Task Force on Homelessness issued its report calling for a coordinated and concerted state response to the growing crisis.

By FY 1991, about 67,000 children were homeless with their families. Nearly 50,000 were turned away from shelter.

The Coalition and others continued to press for a state response, without success.

In 1991, after unsuccessful negotiations, the Coalition filed its lawsuit to determine DSHS's [the state's] duty to respond. The Coalition would seek renewed settlement talks after every stage in the litigation, always without success. ["Washington State Coalition for the Homeless Advocacy for Homeless Families and Children, 1991-1999", <http://homeless.ehclients.com/images/uploads/Litigation.pdf>]

A legal foothold

Hearing the lawsuit's story told personally by Michael Mirra, Phoebe Nelson, and Corky Senecal gives you a very real sense of what a strenuous odyssey this was for the direct participants, along with the support of hundreds of others. Over the decade of the 1990s, Phoebe took over the role of the Coalition's board president from Maureen, and Corky eventually succeeded Phoebe.

The litigation arose primarily under a state law that dated from the 1960s. This law directed the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to devise and implement

'a coordinated and comprehensive plan for the protection and care of homeless children.' "The main purpose of the lawsuit," Michael elaborates, "was to determine what that meant, and whether the state's efforts under that meaning were adequate." The lawsuit posed those questions on behalf of the Coalition, four homeless families with children, and a plaintiff class of all homeless families with children in Washington State.

The lawsuit also represented a subgroup comprised of families who needed housing to prevent or shorten their children's foster care placements. "We didn't fully appreciate this issue until state child welfare workers came to us and grabbed us by the ears, and talked at us long enough to help us understand the relationship between family homelessness and foster care placements," Michael says.

The Coalition and the plaintiff families filed the lawsuit in 1991 in King County Superior Court. Judge Ann Schindler presided from start to finish. In 1994, Judge Schindler issued important rulings in advance of trial. On the foster care issues, she ruled that the dependency courts had authority to direct the state to provide housing assistance when homelessness was a primary factor in causing or prolonging a placement.

On the general homelessness issues, she ruled that state law required DSHS to devise and implement "a coordinated and comprehensive plan" for the protection and care of homeless families with children, and that this requirement was enforceable. She also ruled that a trial was necessary to determine if DSHS had fulfilled this duty. The case came to trial in September 1994.

The testimony in the case illustrated the wealth of expertise and experience marshaled by the Coalition. Among those

testifying for the plaintiffs were Martha Dilts; Kurt Creager, then executive director of the Vancouver Housing Authority; Dr. Richard Kovar, a physician with Country Doctor Community Health Center in Seattle; Dr. Marybeth Shinn, a social scientist then at New York University and a leading expert on family homelessness; and Barbara Sard, a nationally prominent expert on public assistance programs.

The organizations, represented by the law firm of K&L/Gates, that supported the plaintiffs as "friends of the court," included:

- Washington Academy of Family Physicians
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Washington Psychological Association
- The Children's Alliance
- Washington Association of Churches
- Church Council of Greater Seattle
- Northwest Women's Law Center
- YouthCare

In March 1995, Judge Schindler ruled in favor of the Coalition and the families. Summarizing the testimony about the effects homelessness has on children, she found these effects to be "devastating." Relying on the expert witnesses, she found that an adequate plan to address homelessness among Washington State families must provide the following elements:

- Preventive assistance, which is less expensive and more humane
- Shelter to get children out of the cars and off the streets
- Assistance to get children out of the shelters
- A process for its own monitoring and evaluation



Michael Mirra is Executive Director of Tacoma Housing Authority.

Perhaps most importantly, Michael points out, the court ruled that the state's plan must meet professional standards in both its planning and its substantive content. Judge Schindler found that the state's plan did not meet these standards. She gave the state six months to submit a proposed plan for the court's review.

DSHS appealed the ruling to the Court of Appeals. At the plaintiffs' request, and recognizing the importance of the issue, the Washington State Supreme Court agreed to take the case directly. The Supreme Court affirmed the trial court's ruling in 1997, issuing its opinion on Christmas Eve.

Enormous devotion to the cause

Lawsuits take a tremendous toll on participants. The Coalition's role as the state's

premier advocate for the homeless was essential in terms of members' range of expertise and access to information. "As importantly," says Michael, "it gave stability to the lawsuit over nine years of litigation in ways that the individual family plaintiffs would never be able to provide. It helped to sustain those families, find them housing, and screen them from the burdens of litigation. Critically, the Coalition had the statewide support and sophistication to turn a legal victory into a political one."

Maureen Howard was president of the Coalition when the lawsuit began, but as president of the Coalition from 1994 through 1998, Phoebe Nelson carried a huge weight in moving the lawsuit forward. In the annals of the Coalition, her dedication is legendary: As director of the Yakima County Coalition for the Homeless, over the course of the lawsuit and settlement, Phoebe would drive over the mountains from Yakima to Seattle and Olympia and then drive back home – countless times. Corky Senecal took up the presidency following Phoebe. Throughout this time, Margaret Maxwell served as the Coalition's Executive Director. "Representing them was one of highlights of my legal career," says Michael.

Corky has a strong recollection of the moment when the Supreme Court issued its opinion. "As soon as we got the word, Michael told us, 'We can celebrate for just a few minutes. Now the real work has to begin.'"

The Supreme Court decision came just a few weeks before the 1998 Legislative Session. DSHS's response was to draft legislation that would have repealed the law that had formed the basis of the lawsuit. "It is important to understand DSHS's position,"



Phoebe Nelson, a board member of the Coalition for more than two decades, is currently Executive Director of the Wenatchee Women's Resource Center.



Last month, Corky Senecal retired from her role as Housing Director at NeighborImpact in Central Oregon. During the years of the Children's Lawsuit, she was Housing Director at Kitsap Community Resources.

Michael explains. At the time, Lyle Quasim was the DSHS Secretary. "Lyle's position was a completely understandable and honorable response to the court's ruling. Lyle had to account for the fact that DSHS did not have the resources to fulfill this new obligation. And being an advocate and head of the state's main social services agency, he fully appreciated that family homelessness was a serious problem that needed a serious response."

The Homeless Children's Plan

During the 1998 Legislative Session, the Coalition and its representatives worked with the Governor's office and legislative leaders "mainly to hold things in place, and spend the interim, between the 1998 and 1999 session, to explore a settlement,"

Michael recalls. "Representative Suzette Cooke led the effort to allow the parties time to work things out over the interim." At that time, Rep. Cooke was Chair of the House Children and Family Services Committee.

Everyone envisioned a settlement that would come in parts. The State wanted the law changed to place the primary responsibility for the plan on CTED. "We didn't have a strong preference where the primary responsibility lay, but we wanted DSHS to remain in the mix, because it is the primary anti-poverty agency in the state. You can't talk about homelessness among children without enlisting its expertise and help," Michael says.

Broadly, this would become the ultimate settlement: restructuring the statutory responsibility, and appropriating additional funds. But it would not be an easy road.

"That's when the real momentum picked up," Corky says. "DSHS was charged to put together a plan for how they would serve homeless children and homeless families with children. They submitted it to the Coalition for review before they sent it on to the governor and the legislature. From our perspective it was not acceptable. There was no *how to* or *how much* or *how many*. And so that was when we really began the in-the-trenches work."

The Coalition and its representatives were charged with working with DSHS to hammer out the settlement. The Governor provided a mediator. Dave Knutson, a staff member with the House Children and Family Services Committee, was assigned to try to bring the two parties together. The bill was heavily negotiated, line by line. "The meetings were typically on DSHS turf," Corky recalls. "But we stuck it out and had strong representation from people all around the state. We typically had a team of about six or seven and there would be about the same number from DSHS, and we'd just start through it, chapter and verse." Corky remembers these meetings as being intimidating, but "Michael would lead the whole thing and we got through it. He was a rock."

Once the team had negotiated a plan that was a worthy compromise, they submitted it to Governor Locke for review. In order to successfully move it through the legislature, Corky, recalls, "we formed a strategy team of like-minded people and organizations, including The Children's Home Society, the Washington Low Income Housing Congress [now the Low Income Housing Alliance], the Fremont Public Association [now Solid Ground] and the City of Seattle. There were quite a few of us; we would hold our

meetings in Fremont. Though not yet Speaker, [former Solid Ground Executive Director] Frank Chopp was a State Representative at that time, and Tony Lee [now Advocacy Director with Solid Ground] was one of our great champions. We came up with a piece of legislation and we also developed a strong grass roots organization. We had people from every county in the state who were chomping at the bit to get it passed."

Now we can celebrate

The settlement was presented during the 1999 Legislative Session. During this period, Seth Dawson was hired by the Coalition to be their lobbyist, a role he holds to this day. "Seth is first-rate legislative lobbyist," Michael says. "I don't think the legislative settlement could have happened without him." There were many contributions to this effort, including a part-time staffer made available by Seattle's Mayor, Paul Schell, to rally public support for this effort.

"We were in Olympia almost every day," recalls Corky. "Seth was down there working every committee, and we were getting testimony on a daily basis. We were in legislators' offices. I've worked a lot of pieces of legislation and worked a lot of them really hard—but this one was classic. If you ever wanted to write a textbook case on grass roots organizing ... it was just poetry in motion."

The bill was HB 1493. "Representative Kip Tokuda was our champion," says Corky. "He was eloquent and passionate... I caught the end of his comments on the House floor and then they took the vote and it passed unanimously. And then it went to the Senate and it passed the Senate unanimously. It passed both Houses, with



Seth Dawson is Lobbyist for Washington State Coalition for the Homeless.

not one dissenting vote. And that was just beautiful. And so then, once again, we all said, 'Oh, now we can celebrate!'"

There was still much more work to be done on the implementation of this bill, but all parties had come together to create a solution. "The benefits are obvious and the benefits still exist, in terms of the legislation, the budgeting, appropriations, services, the families, the kids—but there was another wonderful thing that came out of this," says Corky, "the relationship between DSHS and the Coalition. It moved from adversarial to being very, very strong and supportive. We ended up serving on each other's advisory committees; we ended up traveling together to different statewide meetings and conferences; we worked legislative issues together. And I think that piece tends to get lost. How two very large, very strong entities who went at each other,

literally, came out the other side with such a strong and supportive partnership.”

At the end of the 1999 Legislative Session, \$22.5 million was budgeted for what was originally called “The Homeless Children’s Plan.” That was later changed to “The Homeless Families’ Plan.” In addition, that session made substantial companion increases to the Housing Trust Fund. This additional funding has remained remarkably stable over the intervening time, supporting existing and new programs for homeless families.

Ultimately, this is a story of so many exceptional acts of generosity and courage. One that should not be overlooked was the contribution of Columbia Legal Services. As Michael points out, “A legal effort of this scope and duration requires a stable, committed, and sophisticated organization like Columbia, which steadfastly devoted the needed resources to the case for nine years while facing threats to its own funding and survival. It was a remarkable example of what sustained advocacy requires and what it can accomplish.”

“The struggle continues, but we’re learning things all the time.” — PHOEBE NELSON

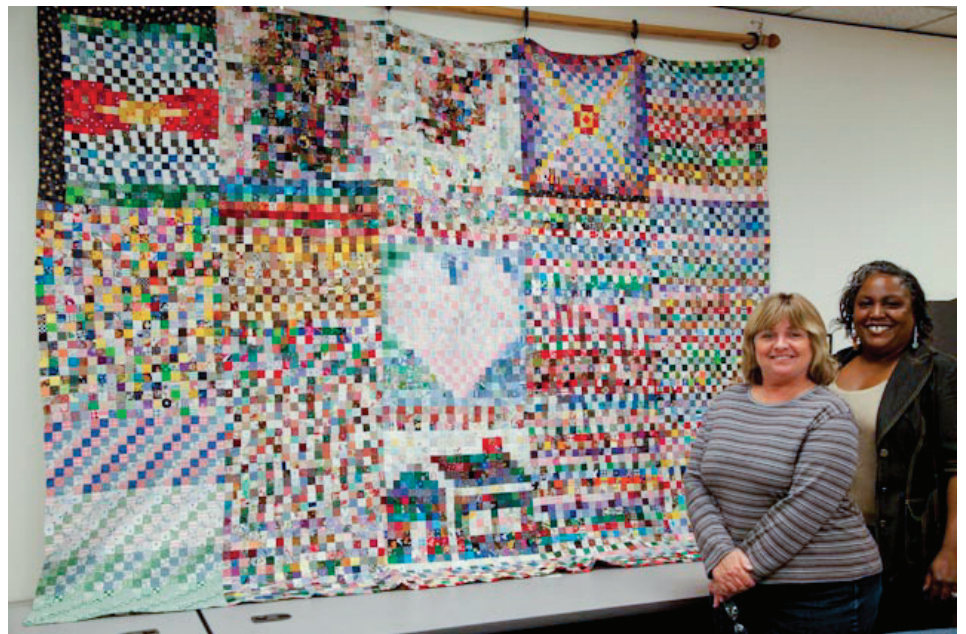
The Homeless Children’s Quilt

It was estimated that the \$22.5 million appropriation represented less than 10% of the need. Yet, as Margaret Maxwell wrote in her history, “it would be a significant step in the right direction to begin to assist our state’s growing number of homeless children.” *[ibid.]*

It was Margaret’s inspiration to see a quilt created that would represent the 7,500 homeless children who would be helped by this groundbreaking legislation. Margaret is a master quilter; with the help of several churches and faith-based organizations, she and other volunteers sought out and secured 7,500 donations of two-inch fabric pieces—from every county in the state. Nine Puget Sound volunteers did the design and stitching.

Rep. Tokuda made arrangements for the completed quilt to hang in the Capitol Rotunda during the week of April 19-23, 1999 in honor of HB 1493. The quilt was then presented to Michael Mirra at the Coalition’s annual conference as a gift to Columbia Legal Services for the vital role they played in seeing the Children’s Lawsuit through. The quilt, which still hangs in Columbia’s Seattle office, was lent to the Coalition for display at the Spokane conference this past May.

The Homeless Children’s Quilt now hangs in Columbia Legal Services’ Seattle office.



Legislative advocacy

Bringing in Seth Dawson to lobby for the Coalition's interests in 1998 was a huge step forward. Seth's first job was to help see the Homeless Children's legislation successfully through to passage and on to implementation. During the past decade-plus, his efforts have been critical in helping homeless issues get the attention they deserve in our legislature.

"Every session we've had an agenda, of course, pursuing different policy items and funding," Seth says. "Probably the biggest single item has been the funding. Governor Locke promised that if we reached agreement on the compromise bill back in 1999, there would be \$30 million allocated for addressing homelessness in addition to that—and he followed through with that. I think we've moved way beyond the Children's Lawsuit and the court decision. I don't think our legislature feels a need to act on behalf of the homeless because of a lawsuit. They feel a need to act because it's the right thing to do."

The Coalition has continued to pursue new funding sources in the fight to end homelessness. "It took many years to identify a vehicle that was achievable," says Seth. This of course turned out to be an increase in the fees for recording local real estate documents. In 2002, the first document recording fee of \$10 per document was enacted that was targeted specifically to addressing homelessness through new funding for homeless shelters.

The 2004 and 2005 sessions were especially notable for the Coalition. These milestones, two of which I'll discuss in greater length in the following pages, were achieved:

- **Washington Families Fund (WFF).** In 2005, WFF was enacted by the legislature, which had appropriated \$2 million to this end in 2004. The funding is awarded in the form of grants to local organizations that provide service-enriched housing to help families transition out of homelessness.
- **Statewide Plan to End Homelessness.** Two bills were passed and signed into law to address plans to end homelessness. SSB 5767, sponsored by Senator Rosemary McAuliffe, called for each county to appoint a task force to develop and implement a 10-year plan to end homelessness.
- **HB 2163 (Homeless Housing and Assistance Act).** Sponsored by Representative Timm Ormsby and championed by the chair of the then-newly formed House Housing Committee, Mark Miloscia, this bill was originally envisioned as capable of raising close to \$20 million per year to help implement local plans to cut homelessness in half by 2015. The funding source is an additional \$10 surcharge on recorded real estate documents. Counties and CTED (now Commerce) were required to develop 10-year plans to address housing needs. There have been many initiatives, and many victories over the years. The Coalition has paid increasing attention to people with a particularly high risk of becoming homeless—youth exiting foster care and people released from prisons and mental health institutions are strong cases in point. The Coalition's relationships with other advocacy organizations have gone a long

way in ensuring that its legislative agenda gets the maximum support and exposure each session. During the last decade, Seth and the Coalition have worked closely with many allies, including the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance (WLIHA), to secure and maintain adequate funding for programs like ESAP, the Washington Families Fund (WFF), and the Housing Trust Fund (HTF).



"Undeniably, the Washington Families Fund wouldn't be here without the Coalition's grass roots support in coming together with the housing authorities and the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance. That was the real power of it." — ALICE SHOBE

The Washington Families Fund: Extending the successes of Sound Families to all corners of the state

There are so many reasons why, in 2004, the Washington Families Fund was able to swiftly take shape and garner significant support from legislators and philanthropic partners. Chief among them is the continuing great need for homeless families to get access to social services—such as job training and parenting classes—to become self-sufficient and break the cycle of homelessness. In addition to this, the Fund presented an incredible opportunity for private philanthropy and the public sector to join forces in committing funding. But it also didn't hurt to have so many strong voices from the Coalition making the case and saying: "We need this."

The August 2006 issue of My View was devoted to telling the story of the Fund's beginnings—of extending the benefits of the Gates Foundation's Sound Families program into all parts of Washington State. That history can be accessed here: <http://www.wshfc.org/Newsletter/2006.08.index.htm>. What is mentioned but not emphasized in that history is the critical role the Coalition played in helping transform the Fund from a compelling idea to a persuasive legislative strategy. That is the story that Alice Shobe, formerly director of Sound Families and now deputy director of Building Changes, told on the Celebration Panel last May.

As Alice points out, about halfway through the Sound Families program, the first evaluation results began to emerge, and they were very positive. Through pairing

housing with services for homeless families, incomes were rising, children's lives were being stabilized—all sorts of benefits were revealed, and they were far-reaching. "The Gates Foundation had until that point been the sole funder of Sound Families" says Alice, "but there was an understanding that the state would ultimately need to play a bigger role in assuring that housing and services could be combined over the long term."

When the decision was made that a legislative approach was the best strategy, that's when the Coalition truly stepped up to the plate. Sound Families had subcontracted with the City of Seattle Office of Housing to help administer the program. And Maureen Kostyack, Seattle Office of Housing's Housing Program and Development Manager, was asked to work with state-wide advocacy organizations on advancing the proposal to the legislature. Maureen reached out to Corky Senecal, who, in addition to serving as President of the Coalition, was Legislative Chair for many years.

"Corky helped to bring together the service providers from around the state to shape what would become the Washington Families Fund, and how it should be pitched to the legislature," Alice says. "Under Corky's leadership, the Washington Families Fund became a lead agenda item for the Coalition in 2004."

What Alice and Corky both emphasize is how important it was that the successes seen in Sound Families, which had been limited to King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties, be made available more extensively in Washington State. "Even though I worked and lived in the I-5 corridor [of Western Washington] I worked hard for the Coalition to be the voice of the whole state," says Corky. Adds Alice, "There was



Alice Shobe is Deputy Director of Building Changes.

a hunger and an interest in having these kinds of resources statewide. And that's just been a huge part of the Washington Families Fund—reaching all corners of the state."

Repeat successes

In 2004, the state approved what was provisionally called the Homeless Families Services Fund. "At that point it didn't even have a name," Alice laughs. "It was widely assumed that a proposal would go forward but would take years to get through the legislature. And to everyone's surprise, \$2 million was allocated by the legislature in that first-year request as a budget authorization."

The Coalition's contribution, Alice says, "was that they took this great idea and then helped expand the partnership to work closely with the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance and the state housing

authorities. This effort, and the great support and leadership shown by Rep. Ruth Kagi, are truly what got the Washington Families Fund through that first legislative round. Undeniably, the Fund wouldn't be here without the Coalition's grass roots support in coming together with the housing authorities and the Alliance. That was the real power of it."

The Coalition continues to prioritize funding for the Washington Families Fund on its annual legislative agenda. And the Fund continues to prove that it can attract matching funding from the private sector. To date, it has drawn \$13 million in funding from the State of Washington and more than \$14 million in matching grants from 23 private philanthropic partners. Building Changes, the organization that leads the Washington Families Fund, recently published a five-year report on the successes it has brought in 15 counties throughout Washington: <http://www.buildingchanges.org/results/data-and-evaluation>. More than 1,000 families have been supported in transitioning from homelessness since 2004.

The Coalition has helped the Fund garner four allocations from the state legislature by making it a legislative priority. "What we're most proud of," says Alice, "is the recent \$1 million dollar allocation during this last budget session, where so many deep cuts and some incredibly tough choices had to be made. The \$1 million was a big win for us. Being a priority for the legislature had a lot to do with the Fund's ability to show positive outcomes and to demonstrate ongoing support from the private sector."

The Homeless Housing and Assistance Act: Drawing on WSCH's legacy

Like WFF, the Homeless Housing and Assistance Act (HHAA), passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2005, represented an enormous victory for the Coalition in its advocacy for the homeless. HHAA was uniquely crafted to create a funding source for counties to have the means to create and implement 10-year plans to end homelessness. Thanks to HHAA, local organizations involved in the work of ending homelessness and county governments committed to creating plans and documenting results are continuing to implement solutions that work within their local communities.

The funding for these efforts comes from real estate document recording fees. To date (through June 30, 2010), approximately \$133 million has been raised to fund efforts to end homelessness in Washington State; approximately \$94 million has gone directly to the counties, and an additional \$39+ million has gone to broader, state-allocated programs and initiatives. Lynn Davison, executive director of Common Ground, spoke on the Celebration Panel about the Coalition's involvement in putting its strategic weight behind HHAA's passage.

In her 13-year tenure with Common Ground, Lynn has worked with the Coalition in a number of roles, including working in concert with the Alliance and the Coalition in what she calls "collaborative advocacy"—working alongside the lobbyists for these two organizations in advocating for critical legislation. She is an astute strategist and

consultant on organizational effectiveness and community development, and has worked with the Coalition's board over the years.

"HHAA is a wonderful example of how two advocacy organizations, the Coalition and the Alliance, teamed to make some amazing things happen," she says. "The Coalition has had a wonderful history of big successes." As with WFF, an entire issue of *My View* is devoted to this legislation (<http://www.wshfc.org/Newsletter/2006.06.index.htm>); *My View* also revisited the topic of the progress of HHAA and 10-year plans in February 2008 (<http://www.wshfc.org/Newsletter/2008.02.index.htm>). If you're interested in learning more about this legislation and its continuing impact on homelessness, it's a great place to start.

Certainly one of the legacies of the Coalition has been the passage of these ground-breaking pieces of legislation that are making a difference in ending homelessness. But not only did they "win" legislation, they laid the groundwork for success. Lynn points to the legacy of the Coalition's organizational structure, and how that structure worked to make things happen.

Think back to 'The Mothers of ESAP'—that intentional approach made by Martha and Maureen and ESAP's other creators to structure funding to give counties autonomy and to further collaboration at the local level. The beauty of that model is how effective it is in enabling local governments and organizations, who know their challenges and capabilities better than anyone, to take ownership. And, as Lynn points out, to have some resources with which to work. All of this is a mirror of the Coalition's own internal structure, with its board also a quilt of counties that choose their own representatives.



Lynn Davison is Executive Director of Common Ground.



Mia Wells is Executive Director of Washington State Coalition for the Homeless.

Envisioning the future

“The Coalition is like a big family,” Lynn observes. “The interaction among members has been very important to them. The organization is structured in an unusual way. It has served as a particularly strong voice in parts of the state outside of Puget Sound with smaller populations. That has been a real plus.”

This is an extremely tough climate for nonprofit organizations, and to the Coalition’s credit, its leadership is examining how they can best meet the future. They believe that there continue to be opportunities and energies in terms of advancing their mission of ending homelessness in Washington State.

Mia Wells is the current executive director of the Coalition, a role she’s held since 2007. “We’re looking at how we can best position the Coalition to advance our mission,” she says. “Last week, our Board of Directors met in Wenatchee for our annual board retreat where they elected a new slate of officers, including a new board president, Troy Christensen. Troy works for Pierce County and is leading the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s tri-county initiative to end family homelessness there.

“We remain committed to advancing our mission to end homelessness in Washington State, and are looking forward to accomplishing this in new and exciting ways.”

Getting smarter

“Like most nonprofit organizations,” Mia says, “we’re facing challenges with funding in the current economy. We have so many goals and aspirations for our organization, but limited capacity. There’s so much more we’d like to do in terms of advocacy and engaging our grass roots network, in influencing legislation—and in supporting 10-year plans.”

She brings up the point that, as with so many homeless issues, systemic challenges continue to perpetuate the status quo. One challenge, as Maureen Howard voiced earlier, is the structural issue of living wages. If affordable housing remains out of reach even for many people who hold jobs, then homelessness will never be solved without tackling this imbalance.

Another systemic issue is that of discharging people from institutions into homelessness: “The problem is huge and complicated and involves many different players,” says Mia. “There is one piece of legislation that we’ve been trying to move forward that would ask the state to figure out what it would take to stop discharging people from mental health institutions, the criminal and juvenile justice systems, and the foster care system into homelessness.” What the Coalition is asking for is simply what would be involved in solving this societal problem. But in a year of austerity and hard choices, it’s a path which many legislators are not eager to explore. “We’re trying to figure out a way to accomplish this that doesn’t frighten people so much,” she adds.

If your goal is to end homelessness, it goes without saying that you have to be ready for a difficult, protracted fight: There are so many barriers. And that’s

what the Coalition has been doing for the last quarter century, attempting to eliminate those barriers, one after the next.

"The struggle continues," says Phoebe Nelson, "but we're learning things all the time. And I think we're smarter about how we do shelter—we're smarter about getting people into housing as quickly as we can. We're smarter about making sure that the services go with the person and that they're not having to 'graduate,' to get into housing. As a result, we're seeing better long-term results."

You could say that the Coalition has changed the course of history in our state, in working to change attitudes towards homeless people and in ongoing efforts to change the patterns that perpetuate homelessness.

This has truly been the work of many heroes, working in coalition: This is their story. As Lynn Davison says, "with advocacy, it's never a person. Individual relationships and efforts really matter, but to make these kinds of big changes, you have to have a broad effort and be able to work in coalition to make it all work."

"I take pride in the accomplishments of the Coalition," Bob Peeler says. "We're volunteers who are working in our communities in so many different ways. Our Board is represented by executive directors, frontline staff people, managers, attorneys—but we all come back to the same thing: How can we provide the best answers for the people who we have the chance to represent and speak for?"



The Washington State Housing Finance Commission is a publicly accountable, self-supporting team, dedicated to increasing housing access and affordability and to expanding the availability of quality community services for the people of Washington.

The photographs of the homeless individuals featured in this issue are part of "Faces of Homelessness," a series of 62 black-and-white photographs originally organized by the Coalition's first executive director, Sylvie McGee. Available for display free of charge, the photos were taken by 12 professional photographers in 10 Washington State communities. For more information about bringing this exhibition into your community, contact Washington State Coalition for the Homeless: info@endhomelessnesswa.org