

# HACbeat

A NEWSLETTER OF



on Cape Cod

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460 West Main Street  
Hyannis, MA 02601

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# HACbeat

A NEWSLETTER OF HOUSING ASSISTANCE CORPORATION

VOLUME 15 ISSUE 6

www.haconcapecod.org

JUNE 7, 2006

## HAC Honors New Directions, Heberts at Annual Meeting

by Pamela Larson

Extraordinary community service was the theme of the night during HAC's 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting held May 10 at St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Centerville.

Amidst more than 150 attendees, HAC honored New Directions, the business organization that provided HAC with executive volunteers to support the agency's work with Hurricane Katrina evacuees. Barnstable County Commissioner Mary LeClair presented Carolyn and Paul Hebert with the 2006 Presbrey Public Service Award.

This year's meeting had a slightly less formal tone than previous years. Rather than a sit-down dinner, HAC members were treated to delectable hors d'oeuvres provided by Chef Roland of Falmouth. Following a brief business meeting facilitated by HAC Vice President Sallie Riggs, new members and officers were elected to the HAC Board of Directors.

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## upcoming Events

**jUNE 10 & 11**

### French Yard Sale to Benefit NOAH Center and other Nonprofits

From 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. at the Drummer Boy Park in Brewster. Anyone interested in volunteering the week of June 6 (afternoon of June 6 and every other day from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. to help unload, sort and price yard sale items) or during the sale please call Todd French at 508-896-8500 ext. 162 for more details.

**jUNE 27**

### Jazz Concert for D-Y ECH

7:30 p.m. at the St. Pius X Parish Life Center. Cape Cod Conservatory Jazz Ensemble with Tyler Newcombe. Proceeds benefit Project Prevention, preventing families on Cape Cod from becoming homeless. For more information contact retjake@comcast.net. Phone: 508-362-2393.

For a complete list of upcoming events please visit  
www.haconcapecod.org.

## HACbeat

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Deadline for articles to be published in the next HACbeat Friday, June 23 - by noon.

Articles may be e-mailed to  
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For more information call 508-771-5400.

## HAC Unveils New Executive Team

Executive Director Rick Presbrey has created a new Executive Team to assist him with the management of Housing Assistance Corporation.

The team comprises three senior members of the Management Team. The goal of the restructuring was to reduce the number of people reporting directly to Presbrey, empower these senior managers to take greater responsibility for specific areas of the organization, and to enable Presbrey to focus more on mobilizing community support for housing.

Michael Sweeney will become vice president of Administration and Finance, overseeing the financial health of the organization as well as the front office, human resources, contracts, and other administrative issues.

Allison Rice will become vice president of Operations, focusing on all matters relating to shelters and homelessness prevention.

*Continued on pg. 3*

## BIRTHDAY GIFT



Lexi Gervais of Marstons Mills presents Susanne Norman, NOAH Program Manager, with an envelope containing \$225 earmarked for the NOAH Client Activity fund. Lexi, who has been holding birthday party fundraisers since she turned 7, chose NOAH as the beneficiary of her "birthday benefit" this year. Friends and family made donations in lieu of gifts. The funds will be used for people staying at NOAH to become certified in CPR and first aid. Lexi was encouraged to choose NOAH through her mother's involvement with the NOAH Meal Program. She said that her friends thought it was a "neat idea."

*Building a community where everyone has a safe, stable and decent place to live*

## 1,165 Homeless on Cape Cod

An annual point-in-time count indicates at least 1,165 homeless people are living on Cape Cod. The number represents people living on the street, staying in shelters or hotels, participating in treatment programs and who otherwise identify themselves as not having a permanent residence. It does not include individuals who may be in temporary housing, doubling up with another household or who may be at risk of becoming homeless.

The 2005 point-in-time count, required annually for funding by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, identified 1,228 homeless people on Cape Cod. The event was coordinated by the Leadership Council to End Homelessness on Cape Cod.

The difference of 63 may be statistically negligible because of several variables. First, Nantucket did not participate in the count this year, but last year reported a total of 19 people who were homeless. Second, the 2005 count was held within days of a February blizzard, which may have forced some people into shelter. This year's count was held on February 27 and the weather was clear and mild.

Another notable change in the count is with the number of homeless families, down 73 from 2005. Allison Rice, director of Family Housing Services for Housing Assistance Corporation, attributed this decrease to assertive prevention efforts targeting families. State programs such as RAFT (Residential Assistance to Families in Transition) and Toolbox have been integral to the success of those efforts.

Livia Davis, director of the Individuals Department at HAC, which oversees the NOAH Center, said that efforts implemented under the council's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness may be shifting people off the streets and into shelters, but those people are still homeless, nonetheless.

"We can see that service and support to the homeless in our community makes a difference, but it is one person, one bed, one home at a time," she said. "There's no easy answer and no quick fix to address the problem of homelessness on Cape Cod."

HAC Executive Director Rick Presbrey said it wouldn't take much to set the homeless count number on the rise again. "Housing prices remain high everywhere on the Cape. Utility costs are unbelievable," he said. "And policies such as one adopted in the town of Barnstable that would severely limit the number of individual adults living in a single family home could force more people out on the streets."

## Cape Renters Comprise Mostly Working Poor

An annual study conducted by the county shows that 59% of renters living on Cape Cod earn \$15,000-\$29,000 a year and meet federal designation as "working poor."

The study was part of Barnstable County's annual "Monitoring the Human Condition on Cape Cod" report. Data were collected from 870 households last November and December. The results of the report were released by the county Human Services Committee on May 25.

Of the 870 survey respondents, 81% were homeowners and just 19% rented. The median income of renters is half of the median Cape Cod household income.

Although 35% of the renters are receiving some sort of financial help in the form of rental assistance, food stamps or Social Security, 39% reported that they were at financial risk of becoming homeless.

"The extraordinary thing about the report is that it clearly supports anecdotal information that says many working men and women of Cape Cod simply cannot afford to live here anymore," says Rick Presbrey, executive director of HAC. "The study also shows that the expense of housing depletes an individual or family's ability to pay for health care, buy nutritious food and otherwise maintain a basic quality of life that we all need."

*Continued on pg. 6*



At the ceremonial groundbreaking for The Homesteads in Sandwich, Rep. Jeff Perry presented Ben and Lucile Fleets with a citation from the state House of Representatives in recognition of the Fleets family's support of affordable housing. The Fleets gave HAC 15 acres of land to build 16 single-family, affordable homes.

## Staff Spotlight

### Introducing Marguerite von Elfenau: Archer, Seamstress, Realtor

by Pamela Larson

Do you know Marguerite von Elfenau? Maybe you can't quite place the name with the face, but Marguerite has been associated with HAC for more than 12 years. Most people know her, however, as Ruth Bechtold, a housing specialist and Realtor in the Consumer Education Department.

For four years Ruth, her husband Jack, and her son Sam have been involved with the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. (SCA), a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to researching and re-creating the arts and skills of pre-17th-century Europe. It includes over 30,000 members residing in countries around the world, from the U.S. to Australia, and Sweden to Japan. Members, dressed in clothing of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, attend events that may feature festivals, tournaments, arts exhibits, classes, workshops, dancing, feasts, and all manner of arts and sciences you would find in the culture, such as dance, calligraphy, martial arts, cooking, metalwork, stained glass, costuming, and literature.

Ruth first became involved in SCA while on a camping trip in New York with her family when Sam noticed an event taking place. "We were in Warren County and Sam saw these people and said, 'What is going on over there?'" They decided to stop to see what it was all about. After donning the medieval garb and walking around a bit, Sam was all the more excited. "So we decided to stay involved because he enjoyed it so much. Everybody in the SCA picks a name and I chose Marguerite," says Ruth. It could be something simple and familiar like John of Wardcliff, or something elaborate and exotic like Oilskin Dub MacLachlan. Some SCA members try to create a "persona" who could have lived in some time and place within the scope of the SCA, and fit their garb and activities to that persona. Ruth is Marguerite von Elfenau, her husband Jack is Johannes von Huegel, and Sam, Willam Stafford.

When it is hard to find activities to do with your kids these days, the SCA has been a way for Ruth and her husband to stay close to their son. "There are not many things the three of us can do together as a family and this has been wonderful. In a time when we think of chivalry as being dead, this is a family environment where everyone is kind and honor is an important rule to follow, on and off the battlefield."

There are many guilds you can join, Ruth says, "like culinary, or weaving, or some kind of skill you can

learn." The family has taken up archery as a skill together and enjoys it very much.

Besides being involved with SCA, Ruth has worked with the Community Leadership Institute for four years and has been involved with the Barnstable High School Drama Department as a seamstress for three years, where she is known as one of the "drama mamas."



On June 16-18 at Camp Greenough in Yarmouthport, the Barony will be holding their annual Vinland Raids. To attend the event you do not need to join the SCA. The only requirement is that you make some attempt at pre-1600 costume and most groups have "loaner" costumes. If you would like more information about this event, loaner garb, or SCA, contact Ruth at (508) 771-5400 ext. 284.

Starting this month, HACbeat will put the spotlight on a HAC employee or volunteer who is interesting even when not at work. Watch this space or send suggestions for the spotlight to [vryan@haconcapecod.org](mailto:vryan@haconcapecod.org).

### Dates for Key HAC Fundraisers

Mark your calendars today for these very important events:

**September 17**  
21<sup>st</sup> Annual  
Cape Walk to End Homelessness

**November 17**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Thanks-Gathering Benefit Gala

**December 20**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Annual NOAH Telethon

For details on these and other events and community fundraisers visit [www.haconcapecod.org/Calendar.asp](http://www.haconcapecod.org/Calendar.asp).

Annual Meeting - continued from pg. 1

Rick Presbrey presented an overview of the organization's past and continued work with evacuees from Hurricane Katrina, describing how – with New Directions' help – HAC mobilized hundreds of volunteers from across the state to assist in the management, coordination of services and housing placement of the evacuees.

“New Directions helped us move from crisis to project mode,” Presbrey said, recalling how New Directions Foundation coordinator Mary Westropp had recruited volunteers resulting in the arrival of Lou Cimini, Betsey Seeley, Dave Slattery and others on the scene within hours of HAC’s call.

HAC staff, colleagues on the Cape and in other housing agencies statewide, and volunteers worked countless hours at what became know as Otis Village, disrupting their lives for more than 6 weeks to help the 238 whose lives had been so dramatically changed by the hurricane.

In his comments, Cimini – who became the director of operations at the base for HAC, said that his new friends at HAC illustrated to him that “there is more to success in life than success in business.” Cimini was “amazed and honored by the dedication of HAC.” He said he “would love to meet everyone’s parents and tell them what wonderful, special, children they have.”

Presbrey presented Dave Corbett, CEO and executive director of New Directions, with a hand-blown glass

starfish created by Sandwich artist Paul McDermott.

Next on the agenda was a review of the workforce housing initiative, featuring a report on two community meetings that were held with local employers and what the agency has planned for the coming year. Already the agency has hired a workforce housing coordinator and has established a task force on workforce housing. The task force has been charged with creating a community action plan by the end of July.

“HAC is here to respond to community needs and we have to do something about workforce housing. We cannot find out what will happen if we do nothing.” With that, a cast of staff and friends presented a dramatization of what will happen if we, in fact, do nothing. The piece portrayed some of the housing situations that exist on the Cape – providing real stories of working men and women or retirees and where and how they live.

The evening concluded with the presentation of the Presbrey Public Service Award. This year’s award was presented to Paul and Carolyn Hebert to honor their outstanding dedication to community service. The Heberts were clearly moved by receiving the award and spoke for a few moments, sharing just a few of the experiences they have had. “Compassion needs to lead us, not the numbers,” Paul Hebert said when talking about doing what is best for each individual person.

**HAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- Edgar Mangiafico, *President*
- Sallie Riggs-Corgan, *Vice President*
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- Margaret Hayes
- Maureen Linehan
- J. Bruce MacGregor
- Patrick Murphy
- PJ Rainwater
- Amy C. Reed
- Dorothy Savarese
- Connie Souza
- Lenka Ward
- G. R. Weir
- Christopher D. Wise
- Dan Wolf

Renters- continued from pg. 2

For example, 36% of the renters said they did not have enough money to pay the doctor, dentist or for prescriptions and 32% said they did not have enough money for food. Among the most needy renters – those who identified themselves as having some sort of major financial problem – 63% said they did not have enough money to pay for a doctor, dentist or for prescriptions. Seventy-eight percent said they couldn’t afford basic recreational activities.

Among the renters, 38% were receiving some kind of public financial assistance, but that assistance still did not allow them to adequately meet the needs of themselves or their families.

Steve Brown of the Barnstable County Human Services Department is scheduled to present the study at community forums across the Cape in June, including the first on June 8 at Housing Assistance Corporation.

# Editorial

## Demand the Truth, Tell the Truth

by Rick Presbrey



What a mess we are in.

Incomes are flat, prices of anything petroleum based is way up (almost everything manufactured is transported using petroleum), housing costs remain up, and people are leaving the Cape and Massachusetts seeking refuge in lower-cost areas.

Health care costs continue to rise, school programs are being cut, secrecy and deficits are at an all-time high in Washington, we are torturing prisoners, ignoring global warming, building more nuclear weapons and forcing military personnel to buy their own armor. In case anyone doubts the last one, HAC’s own Michael Sweeney learned that his son-in-law, a lieutenant colonel in the marines, needs to spend over \$2,000 to buy his own body armor before heading off to Afghanistan in October.

If we can’t make sure all our military personnel facing combat have body armor available, if we can’t create a system where anyone who needs health care gets it, and we can’t make housing affordable for our people, then we are doing something very wrong. We need to turn things around starting now.

Despite the divisions presented to us through polarized politics, most Americans, I believe, would agree that things must change.

Our government and private sectors are wracked by corruption and self-interest. Our press is too often

afraid to alienate readers and advertisers when faced with presenting the inconvenient truth.

And perhaps worst of all, religious beliefs are being used as shields to hide our wrong-doings. Let’s not forget for even a minute that the key tenet of most major religions is love: love of God and love of each other.

We can and must talk about using public and private subsidies for housing and the need for zoning changes and sewer systems and so forth, but until we are trusting and trustworthy and act out of love for one another, there is little hope that this country can achieve the special place in the history of civilization that we were all promised.

None of this is new. What is new, I think, is the growing belief that we are failing. All of us know that failure needs to be followed by change.

The first and simplest step may be volunteerism; helping out anywhere and everywhere. In schools and town halls, organizations of all types, and in the political process. HAC needs your constant help and so does every other organization. Find out what is going on and let people know.

Demand the truth and tell the truth.

Management - continued from pg. 1

Nancy Davison will serve as vice president of Operations focusing on consumer education, leased housing and energy programs.

The Executive Team will continue to work with the Management Team, which also includes Livia Davis, Marjorie Sanson, Joe McLeish, Gisele Gauthier, Virginia Ryan and Hilary Greene.

In announcing the change to the board, Presbrey said, “Adding members to the Management Team, while it has brought fresh ideas and new skills, has given me more people to supervise. The new element to our mission keeps me out of the office more of the time. The result is that we needed to modify our system to adapt to these changes.

“My intention is that the level of autonomy that the

present departments have will be maintained, which will minimize the need for additional staff, and that our ability to influence community change will increase.”

Presbrey has been working with the Management Team on a structural change for several months.

“I have great faith in the talents of those serving on our present Management Team. It was not without a great deal of thought and concern that this change is being adopted particularly as it affects all of those involved,” he said. “There is also no question about the ability of the three people whom I have chosen for added responsibilities. The three have a combined 61 years of successful experience working at HAC.”

Presbrey was scheduled to present the new structure to the board on June 7.

## Our Priceless Volunteers

by Pamela Larson

What is the value of a volunteer? If you received an invitation for the volunteer recognition dinner, then you may have wondered what the answer is. And at the dinner, you found out the answer: priceless!

During an evening of thanks, food, and smiles at Our Lady of Victory in Centerville, volunteers were recognized for their outstanding service to HAC and its many programs. One of the highlights of the evening was a tribute to the volunteers, performed by Rick Brigham, Pam Parker and a handful of helpers who revealed that volunteers are indeed priceless. Over 500 volunteers give of their time and talents at HAC and the "What is the Value of a Volunteer?" tribute highlighted many of these ways:

- The 30 board members who volunteer their time
- The local professionals who teach at workshops
- The 30 different organizations, many faith-based groups, who give of their time
- NOAH volunteers who cook, shop for and serve over 22,000 dinners
- Volunteers who help at the main office
- Village of Cataumet volunteers who bring clients to appointments, shopping, and school
- D-Y Ecumenical Council for the Prevention of Homelessness and the Barnstable Interfaith Council members who raise money for homelessness prevention program by selling grocery store food certificates and who since 1994 have raised over \$1 million
- Event helpers and organizers who plan walks, yard sales, concerts, bake sales, dances, and golf tournaments
- Carriage House volunteers who baby-sit so mothers can attend workshops, drive clients to church, school and shopping, organize parties and cook for the families

Guest speaker Rich Brothers, president of Cape and Islands United Way, spoke of the value of volunteers and how he could not do what he does without them. "I'm humbled to be in a room full of such wonderful people who have done so much for others." He then went on to say how volunteers embody the messages found in a book close to his heart, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* by Robert Fulghum. The book speaks of the simple rules that we should follow and how "volunteers are all of these things." Share everything - your time, talent, and treasure. Don't take things that aren't yours. Clean up your own mess. "Volunteers give back and try to make the community a better place than how they found it." Hold hands, stick together, and finally, be aware of wonder.

Board Vice President Sallie Riggs spoke of how she became a volunteer as a young child, beginning with her church choir. "We joked that I only joined the choir so I wouldn't have to sit next to my father and hear him sing." Finally, Rick Presbrey spoke of how "we are desperately in need of change" and volunteers are the people that are going about making that change through their actions. "We need to turn things around starting now."

As a show of how much volunteers are appreciated, each person received an oversized tote bag with the HAC logo embroidered on the front. This evening to honor volunteers would not have been possible without the help of other volunteers, especially the NOAH Kitchen Team for preparing and serving the food, those of you who baked desserts, the FYI Band, and the volunteer committee. Thank you to everyone who helped make this evening such a success.



The NOAH Kitchen Team, made up of residents, past and present, and NOAH staff, are learning to work together as a team to prepare food, create recipes, practice food safety and feed people. The Team prepared and served the meal to HAC volunteers.



Rich Brothers, president of the Cape and Islands United Way, and HAC volunteer addresses the crowd.



Volunteer coordinators present a special skit for the annual Volunteer Recognition on May 24th.

## Your Trash is NOAH's Treasure

When we think of heroes, we tend to think of the big guys. But what about the everyday heroes in our lives who go about doing great things with little fanfare? Todd French is one of those heroes. For the last three years, Todd French has been saving the contents of homes being sold through Kinlin Grover GMAC Real Estate in Brewster, collecting them throughout the year, and having a yard sale, with the proceeds benefiting NOAH Center and other nonprofit organizations.

"So often we'll see a house change owners and all this great, usable stuff goes to the dump," French said. He saw a possibility for something else to happen with all of the items.

This year the yard sale will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Drummer Boy Park in Brewster, June 10 and 11 rain or shine. This year's yard sale promises to be as large as ever, with two 18-wheel trailer-load trucks full. Other businesses in the area have become involved making this event community wide, including Latham Centers, Undercover Tent and Party, Cape Cod Trailer and Storage and many volunteers from Americorps. This "on-a-lark idea" has become an annual event with items ranging from birdbaths to two motorcycles this year.

This has become a family event, with French's mother, Wendy and his sister Jessica also helping out. When asked who or what inspired him to begin this, he says, "My mother inspired me by her donations to NOAH, because for 20 years she's donated part of each sale commission to organizations that help homeless people."

In its first year the yard sale grossed \$5,500 and last year made about \$20,000. This means that the event generated enough funds to provide 5,500 hot meals and 244 overnight stays at the shelter. "This year I hope we can make about the same," French says.

Housing Assistance Corporation extends its deepest gratitude and thanks to French, his family and all the volunteers who have made this event such a success. French has spent an immeasurable amount of time working on this event, which truly makes him a hero among us who deserves a little fanfare.

If you would like to volunteer at the yard sale, your help can be used from June 6 on, so please call French at (508) 896- 8500 ext. 162.



Artist Joan Harvey shows off the whale she painted for HAC that is featured in the Whale Trail. Entitled "Sharing the Ocean Home," HAC's whale is on display on the Village Green in Hyannis. This is just the temporary home for the whale, which will be auctioned off in September to the highest bidder at the "All's Well that Ends Whale" auction. Here's hoping it's a whale of a big fundraiser for HAC!

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Students at the Horace Mann Charter School are proud of the dollhouse they rehabbed and furnished. The dollhouse will be auctioned off for the NOAH Center during the E-Gasp auction in June.