

Alfred, ME. On Feb. 15 the ninth anniversary of the National Homelessness Marathon took place at the York County Shelter. Homeless people, local dignitaries, volunteers and consumer advocacy groups broke bread together at the Notre Dame Cafeteria and shared their experiences on one of the most pressing issues facing society: chronic homelessness.

The 24-hour event included a candlelight vigil, a dramatic play about poverty called "Hear Our Stories, Know Our Names," put on by the Maine Council of Churches, a marathon radio broadcast on WMPG Portland and time set aside for sharing and exchanging experiences.

Opening remarks launched the event at 9 a.m. at the Commons Wednesday morning and several workshops were held throughout the day to address issues of general assistance, housing options and consumer advocacy.

This Homelessness Marathon was organized by Sweetser and the Region I Council on Homelessness, a governor established coalition comprised of homeless and formerly homeless individuals, social service providers, government agency representatives and other concerned members of the community.

It was especially at the lunch that much worthwhile contact was achieved and concerned views expressed. Governor John Baldacci spoke to as many involved as he could in the short time he made his appearance. In his speech he touched on several key issues faced by homeless people in Maine and sought to raise awareness about the plight that more than 600 Mainers face every day. He said, "We've got more work to do. I just want you to know that we're all part of the same team."

Dale McCormick, director of the Maine State Housing Authority praised Baldacci's efforts to fight the problem. She said that chronic homelessness is unacceptable and

stated, "Maine has been putting quite a few dollars toward the issue in the past several years."

Participants of the marathon were able to sit in on other workshops held in the Shaker Barn and booths were set up by various groups to speak to the attending homeless. A candlelight vigil gave an almost religious solemnity to the occasion as participants marched from the Shelter to the Shaker Barn.

York County Shelter, Inc which operates the 63-bed shelter at Notre Dame Institute, also runs transitional and permanent housing programs around York County. The organization also offers access to medical care, vocational training at the bakery, transportation services and transitional housing in Sanford and Alfred. Brother Albert Heinrich works at the food distribution center. □

(Journal Tribune)

Alfred ME. On Friday Feb. 17, 60-mile hour wind left the NDI campus and Shaker Hill Road residents without electricity after a branch fell on wires, splitting a pole and knocking out a transformer. For the following 58 hours the campus was without power and the thermometer plunged to zero degrees. Brother David Denicourt with his Shelter crew came to the rescue as they kept water running from the pump house and heating in the campus buildings by moving recently purchased generators from one building to another. Lights were finally turned on late Sunday evening.

On March 7, workers from Bangor, Me. completed their roofing on Denis Hall. Also the four trees in front have been cut down.

Alfred Homeless Awareness Day Sheds Light on Crisis



Governor John Baldacci speaks with Jim DeVine, from Consumer Advocacy Project, a peer lobbying group for homeless people.