

A Spark at Home...



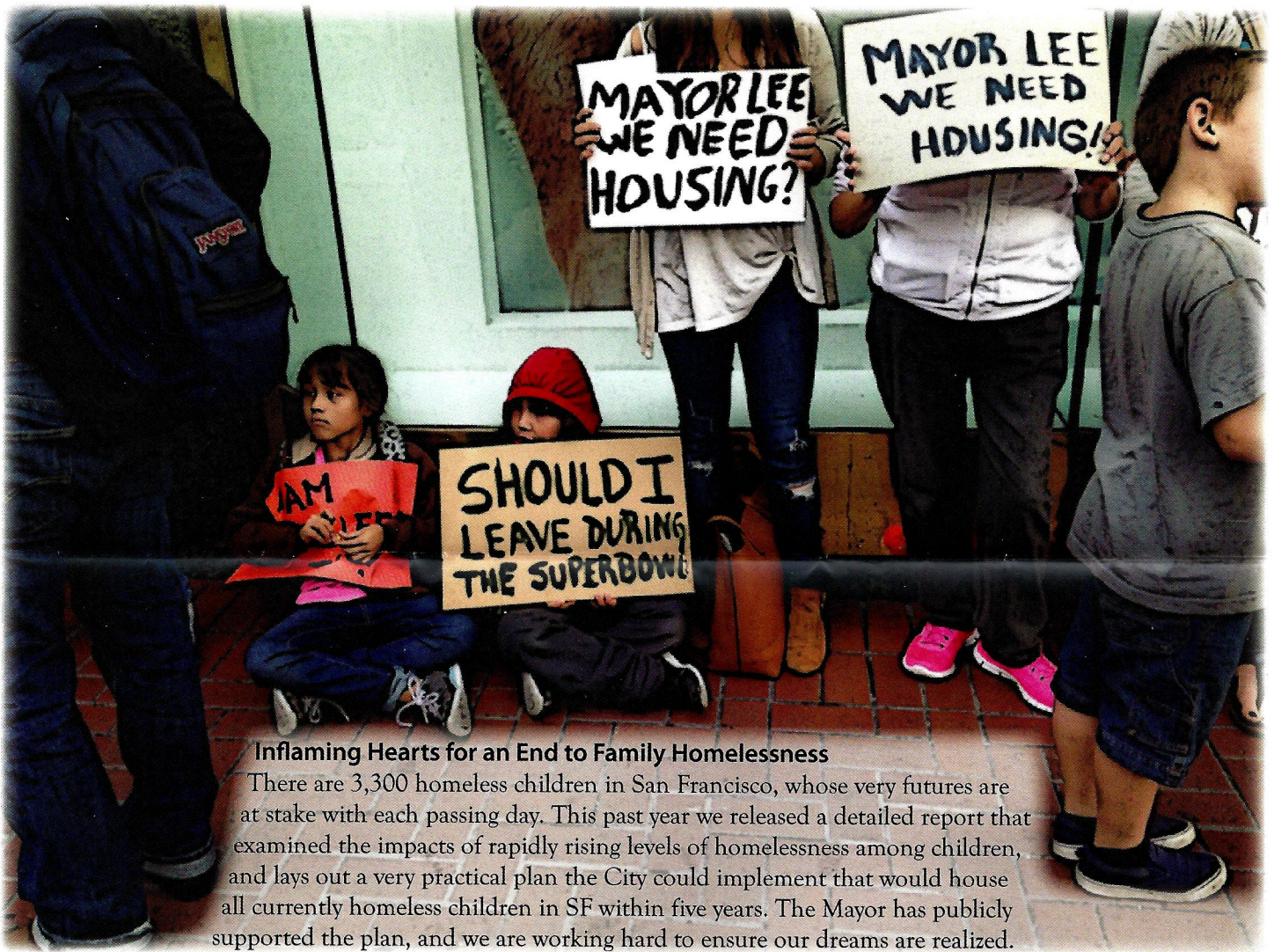
The Coalition on Homelessness unites homeless people and their allies to forge permanent solutions to homelessness while protecting the human rights of those who are forced to remain on the streets. We do this by working hard, thinking creatively, constantly dialoguing with homeless people and service providers, and developing the leadership skills of homeless people to fight for their own solutions. We organize public hearings, we draft legislation, we create media, we produce policy reports, we meet with policy makers, we educate the public, we take legal action, we even sometimes dance and sing. We have been incredibly successful at imagining and creating solutions to the housing crisis.

This past year, our considerable experience was put to the test. We both sparked change locally and undertook efforts that caught fire across the nation. We are really proud of the work we have done to house San Franciscans and to keep San Franciscans housed, as well as our progress in ensuring the dignified treatment of those who have no choice but to risk their very well-being by sleeping on our streets and in our parks.

2015 at a Glance

1. Released *The Roadmap: A Five-Year Plan to End the Crisis of Family Homelessness in San Francisco*—a practical plan for the city that the Mayor publicly endorsed.
2. Garnered \$4 million in housing subsidies from the Mayor and the Board for 218 housing subsidies for homeless seniors, peoples with disabilities, single adults, and families with children.
3. Collaborated with UC Berkeley Center for Human Rights to release *Punishing the Poorest; How the Criminalization of Homelessness Perpetuates Poverty in San Francisco*.
4. Released in collaboration with SRO Families United ally organizations an SRO families report entitled *Living in the Margins: An analysis and Census of San Francisco Families Living in SRO*.
5. Worked with ally organizations to bring "Right to Rest" legislation to the California legislature.

Fire Across the Nation



Inflaming Hearts for an End to Family Homelessness

There are 3,300 homeless children in San Francisco, whose very futures are at stake with each passing day. This past year we released a detailed report that examined the impacts of rapidly rising levels of homelessness among children, and lays out a very practical plan the City could implement that would house all currently homeless children in SF within five years. The Mayor has publicly supported the plan, and we are working hard to ensure our dreams are realized.

Blazing Quest to Keep San Franciscans Housed

For the past few years, we have worked hard to ensure that every preventable displacement in SF is halted. We have examined the causes, and researched best practices. We found that many tenants have no access to legal counsel, others need bridge rent in the event of economic catastrophe, while others need information about their rights so they don't get pushed out illegally. Our work last year with ally organizations led to \$250K awarded for these purposes in the Mission District.

Fueling Justice by Housing San Franciscans

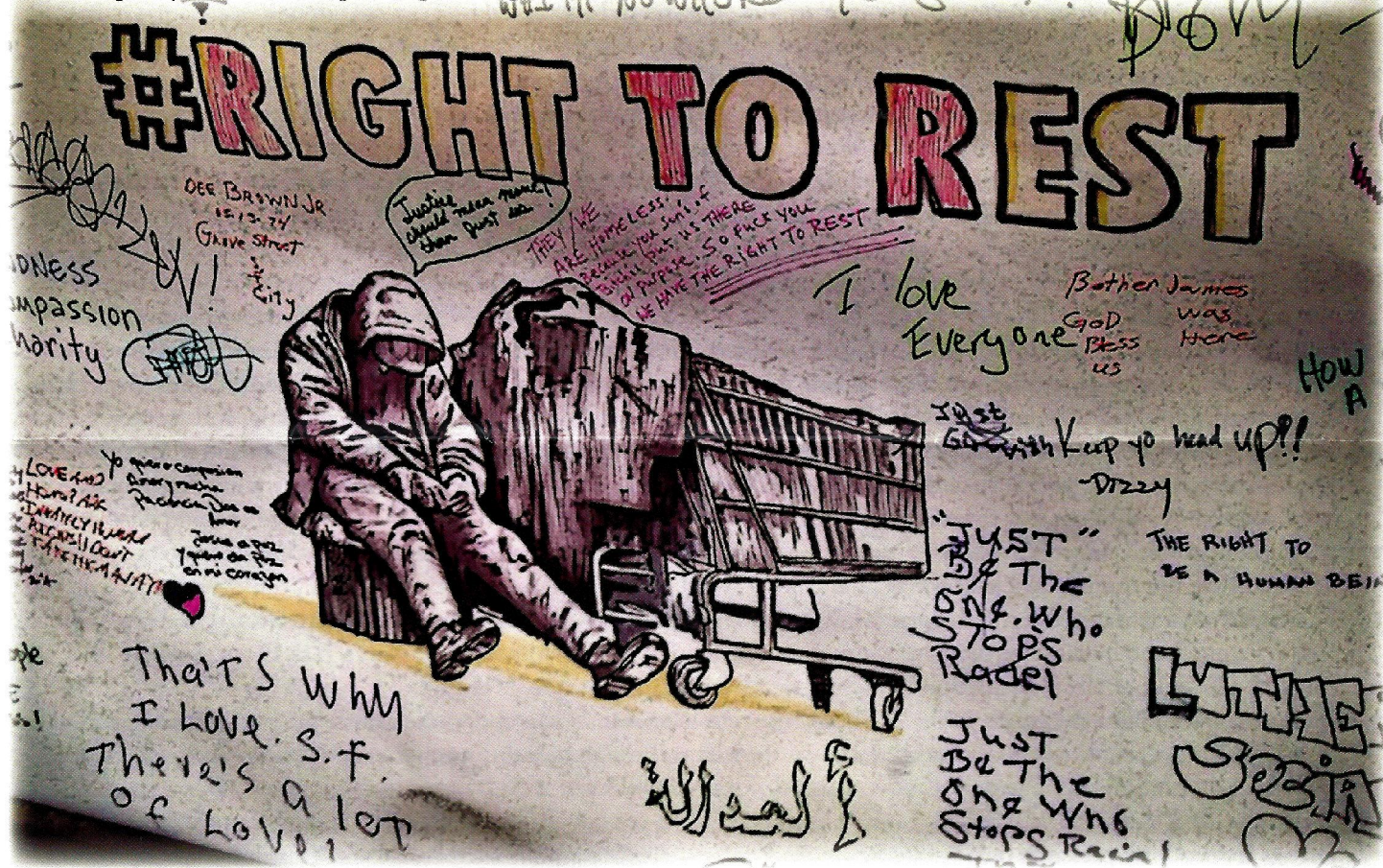
We have looked under every rock, and turned over every stone to uncover housing opportunities for homeless San Franciscans. This past year, we led efforts to garner \$4 million in a variety of housing subsidies from the City to house homeless people from all walks of life. In addition, our work to move homeless people into vacant public housing units came to fruition, with the housing of just under 200 homeless households in units rehabbed with funding we successfully fought for.

Right to Rest Catching Fire

There are very few things as necessary for human life as sleep. Yet for homeless people, this basic function is almost impossible. This past year, homeless people received over 11,000 citations simply for resting. SF is not alone, which is why we have united with homeless organizations across the state to pass a "Right to Rest" in California. Led by the Western Regional Advocacy Project, last year we succeeded in getting this important bill introduced in the Senate, and organizations in Colorado and Oregon did the same. Meanwhile, the Justice Department issued a brief in a Boise, Idaho case calling the criminalization of homeless people when no shelter or housing is available "cruel and unusual" punishment. The US Interagency Council on Homelessness followed suit and released guidelines that discouraged localities from conducting homeless sweeps under the same conditions. HUD then announced that local governments would be dinged in their Federal homeless funding applications when they failed to take steps to decrease criminalization. After years of work on this issue, the dial is finally moving towards the protection of civil rights for homeless people.

Sparkling Change by Developing Leadership Skills of Homeless People

Core to our mission is ensuring that homeless people themselves are at the forefront of forging solutions. This past year, we recruited new members and developed the skills of homeless people. We held a "Free School" that covered civics, public speaking, community organizing, and many more topics. Homeless people became effective media spokespersons, crafted homeless policy, worked on reports, spoke in public and met with public officials.



Torching Human Rights Abuses

In 2015, we partnered with the UC Berkeley Center on Human Rights to carry out a major research project documenting the impact of criminalization on homeless people. We conducted a survey, led by homeless people, and had a peer research team that videotaped intensive interviews with their homeless brothers and sisters. The results were staggering and we found the current City practice of addressing the homeless crisis by sending out police is actually perpetuating homelessness and poverty, wasting valuable public resources, as well as violating fundamental rights. The report, entitled *Punishing the Poorest: How the Criminalization of Homelessness Perpetuates Poverty in San Francisco*, has detailed findings and recommendations we have brought to policy makers and community groups, and shaped the public policy debate.

Heating Up the Public

This past year, we came out with a fresh new design for the *Street Sheet*, timed to correspond with our 25 year anniversary of the paper. We raised the price to \$2 and provided vendors with logo-printed T-shirts and aprons. The paper enjoys the largest circulation in North America, and serves not just as an alternative to panhandling, but a creative outlet for homeless people with poetry, hard-hitting news, and artwork. The paper has become the go-to source for news about poverty and homelessness here in SF. In addition, the organization maintains a solid presence in the mainstream media through monthly published editorials, and dozens of news stories generated by our work. In addition, we have a vibrant group of public speakers that have inspired to action and raised the analysis of over 1,000 community members this past year.

Hot Sun on the Struggle for Dignified Shelter

The City's emergency shelter for homeless families was filling up and families had to be there by 3:00 in order to get a bed. However, they could not leave once they entered, causing children to miss enrichment activities and sometimes even school. We succeeded in getting that system changed to a call-in system. However, the same shelter has no showers, so families were accessing a women's drop-in center, which cut its hours back. We worked successfully to get those hours restored so families could send their children to school shiny and clean.

28 Years of Resistance, Re

For decades, the Coalition on Homelessness has developed the leadership skills of homeless San Franciscans to forge true solutions to the housing crisis and beat back mean-spirited attacks against them. This list represents highlights of our collective accomplishments.

1987–1990

- A ragtag group of community activist and homeless folks, fed up with the lack of a response to homelessness that addressed the root causes, formed the Coalition on Homelessness.
- The Coalition pulled together a collaborative of community organizations to establish the most progressive welfare income disregard programs in the country, whereby cash aid recipients could retain funds to move into permanent housing.
- The Coalition founded the *Street Sheet*, now holding the double distinction of being both the oldest continuously published street newspaper in North America, and the paper with the largest circulation.

1991–1995

- The Coalition created the first supportive housing for homeless people in San Francisco in the form of Community Housing Partnership, which now provides close to 1,000 units of permanent affordable supportive housing, and employs homeless people in the construction, maintenance, and support services at those housing locations.
- The Coalition designed and advocated for the McMillan Center, an innovative 24-hour drop-in facility for substance users, as an innovative strategy to reduce the number of street deaths.
- We developed the Uniform Grievance Procedure with other organizations to ensure shelter residents have due process rights and are not unfairly evicted from shelters.
- The Coalition advocated for and designed A Woman's Place, a drop-in center, shelter, and transitional housing program now assisting mentally disabled women, through the convening of the Homeless Women's Task Force.
- Fought back another electoral attempt to deduct rent from welfare recipients checks.
- Succeeded in passing a resolution at the Board of Supervisors to demand an end to the Matrix program, which broadly persecuted homeless people who were forced to live on the streets through ticketing, property confiscation and police sweeps.

1996–2000

- Thanks to Coalition pressure, the District Attorney dismissed 39,000 tickets issued by the anti-homeless Matrix program.
- The Coalition's General Assistance Rights Union became an independent organization: People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER). This eventually led to single adult welfare recipients earning a living wage while conducting workfare in exchange for their checks. POWER went on to win free Muni for youth in SF.
- We spearheaded the campaign for substance abuse treatment on demand, which resulted in over \$12 million dollars in new treatment funds, and the development of a grassroots community planning process for funding priorities and contract awards.
- Low-income mothers organized by the Coalition designed the concept and garnered funding for a community-based 24-hour drop-in treatment center for families with children living in the Tenderloin, called Oshun, after the Yoruba orisha of healing.
- The Coalition wrote and successfully campaigned for adoption of a "No Turn Away" policy for families seeking emergency shelter in San Francisco.
- We organized for and wrote legislation to create a single standard of care, whereby uninsured mentally ill people are afforded equal access to mental health treatment as those who are insured.
- Released groundbreaking report entitled *Locked Out*, which—through hundreds of interviews with mentally ill homeless people—found that contrary to popular opinion, homeless mentally ill people were by and large attempting to access mental health treatment, but were either denied access or subjected to a cumbersome process they were unable to navigate.

2001–2005

- Together with community partner organizations, we formed the People's Budget Collaborative, which identified alternative City budget savings and revenues and over the years has staved off tens of millions in cuts to poverty abatement programs. The group was active for more than nine years, and staffed by the Coalition on Homelessness for five of those years.
- The Coalition led the work that created the Mission Neighborhood Resource Center (MNRC)—the first resource center in the Mission District. Everyday, the MNRC provides critical services to over 100 clients, most of them Latino.
- The Coalition identified hundreds of San Francisco Housing Authority vacant units and successfully pushed the Housing Authority to place 300 homeless families in those units.
- The *Street Sheet* was inducted into the Northern California Society of Professional Journalists.

Resilience and Rebuilding

2006–2010

- Our work led to the creation of the Shelter Monitoring Committee, which tracks conditions in shelters and reports to the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor. This has resulted in exposure and correction of countless problems in the shelter system.
- We protected 1,700 uninsured people from losing their psychiatric treatment.
- The Coalition passed legislation that ensures vacant publicly owned surplus City property be turned over for the use of housing for homeless people. This has led to two large affordable housing projects targeting homeless veterans and families.
- Organizing work aided by the Coalition's Right to A Roof project, led to the creation of the San Francisco Community Land Trust, a nonprofit that will acquire land and preserve affordable housing in San Francisco.
- Together with organizations in the East Bay, Los Angeles, Portland, and Seattle, we collectively founded the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP).
- Homeless families organized by the Coalition on Homelessness campaigned for a local rental housing subsidy and increased eviction prevention funding. We eventually won \$1.3 million for the subsidy and \$700,000 for eviction prevention—protecting hundreds of families from homelessness and enabling hundreds more to exit homelessness.
- We released *Shelter Shock*—a report on human rights violations in the shelter system, revealing that 55% of all shelter clients reported experiencing some form of abuse, and bringing media light and legislative action to these problems.
- The Coalition pushed through legislation to mandate minimum standards in the shelters. For the first time, our shelters have enforceable minimum standards around health, hygiene, and the human rights of shelter residents.
- Halted the practice by the City of spraying homeless people with high powered hoses in the middle of the night.
- The Coalition handled more than 3,000 civil rights cases per year, connecting homeless folks who have received “quality of life” citations to pro bono legal representation through the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights.
- The *Street Sheet* increased circulation to twice a month, allowing for more current news and increased sales for vendors.

2011–2015

- We passed legislation to still the runaround associated with accessing shelter, by lengthening shelter stays and reducing wait times.
- Settled a lawsuit that led to greatly improved access and conditions for people with disabilities.
- Homeless families brought attention to the dramatic rise in family homelessness and won a \$1.5 million match of private funding for new housing subsidies, and the release of 77 vacant public housing units to homeless families.
- We gutted legislation that would have criminalized the very act of being homeless in two plazas in the Castro.
- We initiated a working group to move away from a system that requires individuals to stand in line for up to 17 hours. This led to a new very successful call-in system.
- We beat back the implementation of Tasers, which are known to increase fatalities at the hands of the police, and instead worked to get the police to implement a crisis intervention model to address people in psychiatric crisis.
- We won a local stimulus package of \$3,000,000 for new jobs in shelters and resource centers, as well as funding for back rental assistance for those who have recently lost their jobs.
- Ensured all homeless people in San Francisco would receive preferences for public housing.
- We secured \$4,000,000 over two years in new homeless prevention funds, staving off displacement for over 2,000 households.
- Fought for and won an additional \$1,000,000 to ensure safe and dignified emergency services for homeless people.
- After 25 years, reached the mark of over \$9,000,000 transferred into the hands of destitute vendors selling *Street Sheet*!. We celebrated with a re-design of the *Street Sheet*, increased the sales price to \$2, ran an powerful advertising campaign, and distributed vendor aprons.
- The Coalition won 175 housing subsidies for homeless families with children, elderly and disabled adults over two years.
- Secured \$2.7 million to fix up vacant public housing and turn them over to nearly 200 homeless households.
- We halted San Francisco Library policies that would have excluded homeless people and trained Library staff.
- We released *The Roadmap: A Five Year Plan to End the Crisis of Family Homelessness in San Francisco*: a practical plan that the Mayor publicly endorsed.
- We collaborated with UC Berkeley Center for Human Rights to release *Punishing the Poorest: How the Criminalization of Homelessness Perpetuates Poverty in San Francisco*.
- Released in collaboration with SRO Families United ally organization an SRO Families report entitled *Living in the Margins: An analysis and Census of San Francisco Families Living in SROs*.
- We won \$4 million in housing subsidies for 218 housing subsidies for homeless seniors, peoples with disabilities, single adults, and families with children.
- Worked with ally organizations to bring “Right to Rest” legislation to the California legislature.

Our Vision for 2016

Ignite Human Rights

Homeless people are being arrested and cited simply for being too poor to afford a place to live. As a city, our primary response to homelessness continues to be policing. This past year, homeless people received thousands of citations just for resting—fines they cannot pay, which destroy their credit, turn into warrants and weaken their prospects for exiting homelessness. In 2016, we are on a trajectory for a 30% increase in the number of citations homeless people receive. Our Human Rights workgroup honors its vision of universal human rights, where dignity, respect, compassion, and equality are standard in communities and policies of San Francisco, by empowering poor and homeless people to become politicized, organized, and mobilized. In 2016 we will:

- Visit Sacramento legislators to ensure the passage of Right to Rest legislation in California. Organize committee hearings, press conference, and legislative visits at California state legislature.
- Develop budget proposal that identify savings in the City budget by reducing criminalization efforts, such as prosecuting homeless people for “quality of life” crimes. Propose the application of those savings to solutions to homelessness.
- Implement recommendations from our report *Punishing the Poorest*, including amnesty for homeless related tickets.
- Work on reforming single adult shelter access: gather input from homeless people and complete recommendations for change.
- Beat back current mean-spirited attacks on recyclers, homeless youth, vehicularly housed people, and folks in encampments.

Inflame Support for Housing Justice

The Housing Justice workgroup is made up of homeless people and allies, struggling to ensure that every San Franciscan have a safe and decent place to call home. They are led by homeless and formerly homeless parents, and dialogue constantly with families living in residential hotels, the streets, and in shelters. The number of homeless children in San Francisco has doubled in the past five years, primarily as a result of a lack of attention and investment in housing by City leaders. But we are gaining power. In 2016 we will:

- Get the support of the City to implement our five-year plan to end family homelessness, housing every currently homeless child, and restoring our emergency system to a place where families can be sheltered the same day and housed within 90 days.
- Research housing placement practices to ensure equitable access and ensure homeless households have the information they need to be successful.
- Evaluate and make changes to local private market subsidies.
- Increase the number of housing subsidies, and placements in public housing for homeless households.
- Ensure dignified shelter for families and single adults, by working to ensure all shelter residents have basic needs met, along with access to housing to exit shelter.
- Improve conditions in residential hotels where families reside and ensure access to decent housing.

Kindle Homeless Leadership

- Design and conduct nine-week “Free School” leadership training series on organizing, media, outreach, public speaking, state and local policy and civics.
- Create direct access to power for homeless people through meetings with local and state legislators.
- Conduct large mobilizations and creative actions to draw attention to the need for true solutions to homelessness and the end to human rights abuses.



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Stay Involved

Become a Sustainer:

By giving as little as \$20 a month, you can ensure the Coalition retains an independent voice unrestricted by government funding. Go to www.cohsf.org and click "Donate Now" to place a donation through Network for Good.

Spread the Word:

Host a house party or birthday party and invite our staff and/or volunteers to come speak and donate the proceeds to the Coalition on Homelessness. Contact our Development Coordinator at (415) 346-3740 x303 for more details.

Donate Goods:

Donate your old car through Vehicles for Charity in the name of the COH. Call 1-800-574-0888 for more information. Donate items to Community Thrift Store and pick COH as your charity of choice. Call (415) 861-4910 for more information.

Join the Struggle:

We always need more people to join our campaigns, conduct outreach, contribute to Street Sheet, or help out in the office. You can also join a workgroup; Housing Justice meets on Tuesdays at 12 noon and Human Rights meets on Wednesdays at 12:30, both at our office. Call our Volunteer Coordinator Miguel at (415) 346-3740 x319 for more details.

Stay Informed:

Keep up to date on homeless issues and policy in San Francisco by purchasing the *Street Sheet*. Educate your friends, family and co-workers on poverty issues in San Francisco.



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