

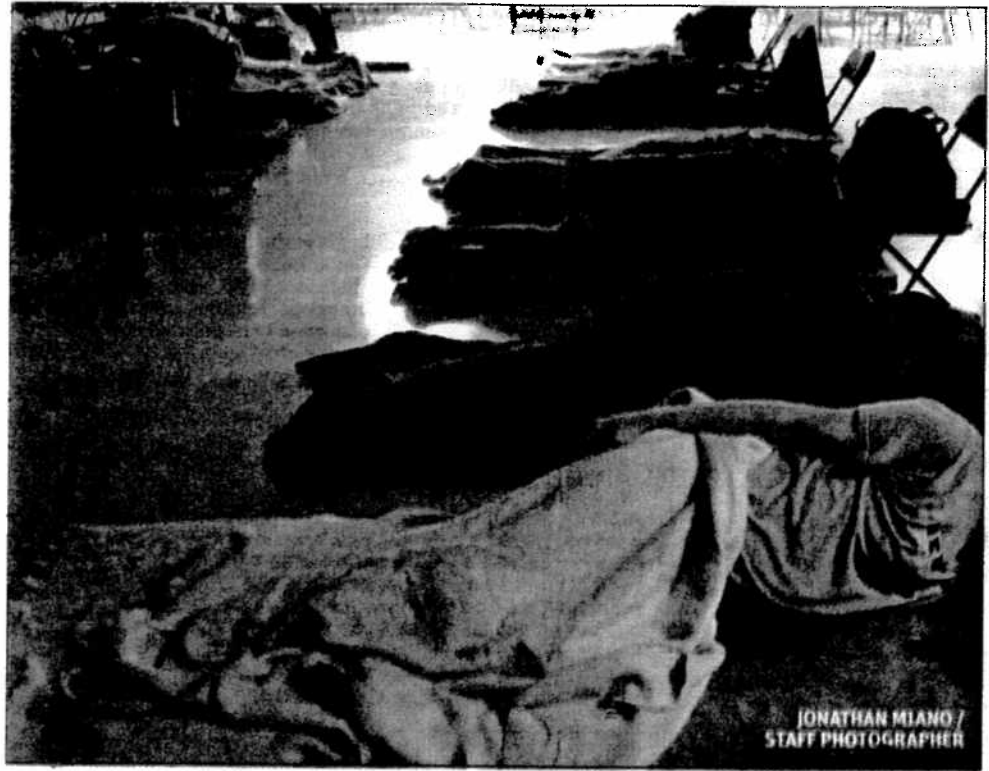
NCC WINS BIG IN HOME OPENER SPORTS, 41



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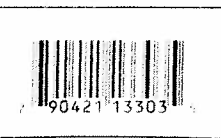
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NO PLACE TO CALL HOME



JONATHAN MIANO / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Yes, there are homeless in Naperville, but they prefer to remain in the shadows **PAGES 6-7**



RESALE STORE OFFERS SECOND CHANCE TO STRUGGLING WOMEN, TOO STORY, PAGE 4

PARTLY CLOUDY
83 / 57 



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HOMELESS AND HELPLESS

Napervillians who have lost their homes tell those who are about to that it's tough to rebound

By Susan Frick Carlman
SCARLMAN@SCN1.COM

Note: Concerned about the lingering stigma of homelessness, the people spotlighted in this story declined to be photographed and asked that their real names not be published.

It was job loss that triggered Donna's downhill spiral.

Laid off at the end of April after many years in the Naperville business community, she was evicted from her apartment a month later.

None of the local agencies she contacted was able to find her a place to live in her hometown. Feeling out of options, she went to live with her parents in Florida while she began putting the pieces of her life back together.

"It's not what I want to do, but it's what I have to do," Donna said.

With professional roots that stretch throughout the city, she just couldn't bear the thought of her former colleagues reading her name in a story about homelessness in her hometown newspaper.

"I think they would kind of be shocked," she said.

The prospect of homelessness never crossed Ivan's mind. The limousine driver and his wife, a bank employee, owned a comfortable home in south Naperville near Neuqua Valley High School, where their two kids were enrolled.

"Things were OK. I wasn't making much, but I was able to pay for my house and provide for my family," he said.

When he began to make less — in large part because the economic downturn cut airport trips way down, taking away much of Ivan's bread and butter — the mortgage payments moved beyond the family's reach. The bank foreclosed



Volunteers from Naperville Christian Church prepare food for guests Thursday at a DuPage PADS overnight housing site at St. Margaret Mary Parish in Naperville. JONATHAN MIANO / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

in March.

With help from Naperville CARES and the congregation at St. Raphael's Church, Ivan and his family were able to hold on. But now they're trying hard to hang onto the rented house that is their home.

"Things are very tough," he said.

It is all but impossible to escape the strain.

"We have been through such a tough period that my wife has problems with anxiety," Ivan said. "It's not only that you're not going out to dinner. If you cannot pay your bills on time, there are problems with your personal life.

"We are trying to help each other out as much as possible, but with all the stress that is on your head, sometimes you just lose your temper."

■■■■ Cathy's dire situation came to a head the night her relatives got into a brawl at Edward Hospital.

She already had lost everything she owned in a house fire, and health problems had curtailed her ability to continue working in Naperville as a private investigator. She was trying to protect her dying mother's estate, she said, when cousins showed up at Edward to see what might be left to them.

The melee that ensued closed off any channels that might have led to a helping hand from family members.

Desperate for support, Cathy tried all of the local agencies she could think of. All she got was "the run-around," she said.

"Now I'm living in a hotel. I'm (sick) and crying all the

time," she said. "All these places that say they'll take care of you, that they'll be there for you, they're not."

Rhonda always thought she'd be able to take care of her kids.

After she and their dad parted ways four years ago, she realized all those years as a stay-home mom had left her unprepared to compete in an ever-tighter job market. Unable to take over as breadwinner, she was evicted from her Winfield apartment and found herself staying with a sister in Orland Park while she struggled to get her bearings. The boys remained in the family's comfortable Wheaton house with their father, near their Wheaton-Warrenville District 200 schools.

"They could not come with me, nor would I drag

them with me," Rhonda said.

She was struggling with depression and undiagnosed diabetes, and things only seemed to worsen. Jobs and temporary living arrangements came along, but none lasted very long.

"I couldn't function right. I couldn't find a job. I cried all the time. I missed my children all the time. They were my whole life," she said. "It was becoming increasingly painful. Slowly but surely, everything was going away."

'Nouveau homeless'

For a lot of people, when home loss arrives on the doorstep, it's not tangled up in substance abuse, mental illness or chronic poverty; it's simply riding in the wake of profound misfortune.

Such events translated

to a 34 percent increase in the in-client load for the Wheaton homeless prevention agency Public Action to Deliver Shelter during the final quarter of 2008.

DuPage PADS Executive Director Carol Simler said through the end of June, they saw homeless families increase by 119, or 49 percent, over the previous fiscal year. That included 152 children, a 43 percent increase from the previous year, and 75 of those children were under age 5.

"That's heartbreaking," Simler said. "I have a grandson who's 3 now."

Other recent statistics are equally grim: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development says the number of homeless families in the nation's suburbs shot up 56 percent last year. DuPage County unemployment nearly doubled during the past year, from 5 percent last September to more than 9.6 percent in June, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics says. And the DuPage County sheriff's department Web site currently shows more than 1,200 foreclosed properties available for purchase.

Job loss and home foreclosures are primary factors in what activist Diane Nilan calls the "nouveau homeless."

Nilan, the former associate director of Hesus House in Aurora and one-time program director at PADS, today crisscrosses the country in the motor home she bought four years ago after selling her house and nearly everything else she owned, talking to people who have lost the roofs over their heads.

She has seen many families stunned by the abrupt plummet into a system they never expected to see up close.

"I'd have to say it's a very

TURN TO **HOMELESS**, PAGE 7

HOMELESS

FROM PAGE 6

scary place for people to be. They find out suddenly that once you're not one of the 'haves,' then others don't want anything to do with you," said Nilan, president and founder of the homeless advocacy entity Hear Us Inc.

As 'have-nots,' newly homeless people are often shocked to see how thin their safety nets are.

"Once you fall off the merry-go-round, you're not going to get back on — especially if you don't have family, friends or community resources," Nilan said.

She thinks a blind eye has been turned to the demise of social service networks, with budget cutbacks leading to an "abysmal" lack of affordable housing in Naperville and a scarcity of low-cost health care that puts many in peril.

"The nouveau poor are finding that the network they thought existed wasn't there," she said.

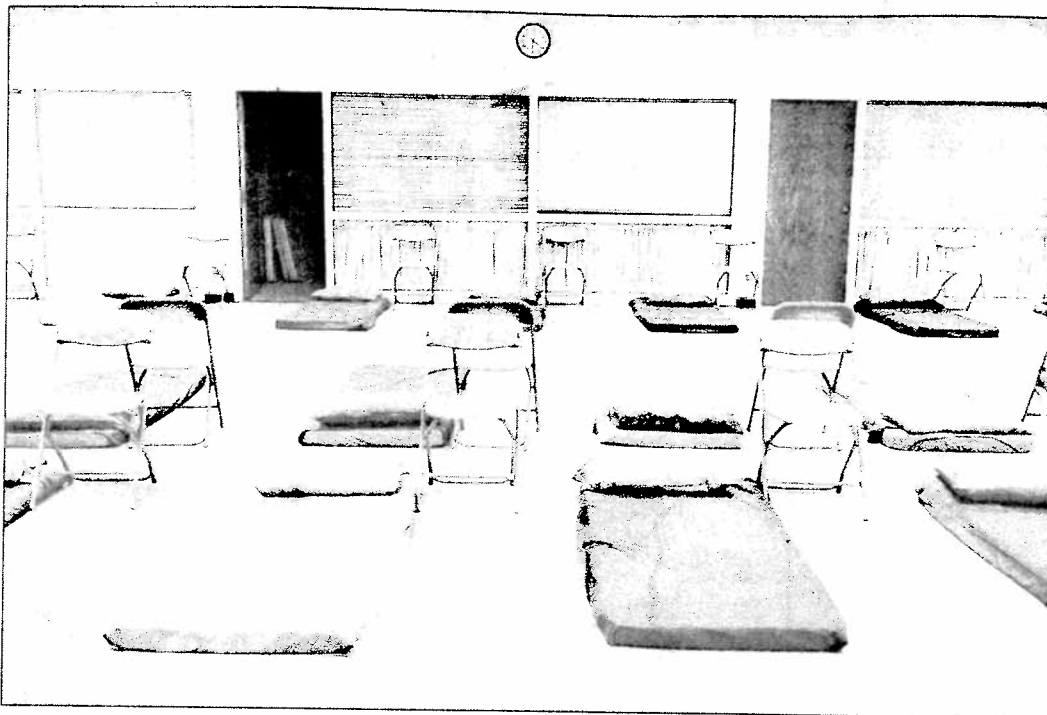
On the radar

Nilan describes the period leading up to home foreclosure as a vortex. The eye-opening scenario came up during a conversation she had not long ago with a fire department official in Lisle.

"He said, 'You wouldn't believe what my firefighter teams and EMTs (hear) on their emergency calls,'" Nilan said, relating how the responders report finding belongings packed and standing in heaps in the front foyers of stately homes, ready to leave at a moment's notice. "They are absolutely in a state of stress that people can't imagine ... They are living in total chaos, knowing that the other shoe is going to fall."

Vicky Joseph used to hear it said more often that homelessness just doesn't exist in Naperville.

"Something tells me that our perceptions are changing, because of foreclosures and lost jobs," she said, noting that many who still work



Sleeping pads lay ready for guests Thursday at a DuPage PADS overnight housing site at St. Margaret Mary Parish in Naperville. JONATHAN MIANO / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

are making less. "All of a sudden it's on our radar."

To prove the point, Simler noted that PADS has four overnight housing sites at churches in Naperville: Our Savior, St. Margaret Mary, First Congregational and Community United Methodist.

"Naperville has been tremendously generous with us," Simler said. She added that one of her goals for this year is to expand resources in Naperville, with its Metra stations, so more people in need can be served. Once they get to their doorstep, she said, they do an assessment to get people back in housing as soon as possible.

The need is great

On a weekday morning during the summer, the founder of the private Naperville transitional housing nonprofit Families Helping Families was on the phone, counseling a client who was having trouble fitting together some of the puzzle pieces that comprise a life of work, a secure roof overhead and stability. The client's car had broken down, keeping her from being able to look for a

job.

"Have you tried Rent-a-Wreck?" Joseph asked gently.

While Families Helping Families is fortunate to have a firm network of private donors, the organization is one of many local relief agencies struggling with a greatly increased need for their services.

Joseph works mostly with people on the brink of homelessness, often referring clients to Naperville CARES, which provides emergency aid and intervenes to try to delay evictions and foreclosure proceedings.

"There are times when somebody knows that in 60 or 90 days, their new job starts," Joseph said.

Janet Derrick, volunteer coordinator for Naperville CARES, is seeing a lot of families in dire economic straits — by far the most in the eight years she has been affiliated with the nonprofit.

"I have never seen it where our appointments are completely booked a week out," she said. "We just can't keep up."

The organization counsels families about cutting out noncrucial spending, and how to access social services such as food

BY THE NUMBERS

\$1.5 billion

Federal stimulus funds earmarked for short-term rental assistance, housing relocation and stabilization services for families who may become homeless due to the economic crisis.

3.5 million

Americans likely to experience homelessness in a given year. Of that number, 1.35 million are children.

56 percent

Increase in the number of homeless families in the nation's suburbs during 2008.

Sources: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, change.org

stamps, fee waivers and free school lunches.

"These are clients who've never had to do this before," Derrick said. "I think for the most part they handle themselves as gracefully as possible ... and these are people who are doing everything they can to find a new job."

No-tell shelters

Joseph noted that lately, it has been taking a lot longer to find a way to restore lost income — and the jobs people do finally find are paying significantly less than what they used to make.

"We see people who are working two jobs, and they still can't make ends

meet," she said.

The outcome, advocates say, is a need for broader understanding that home is a precarious thing.

"We see families that you would never believe are on the verge of homelessness, or about to lose their houses. People don't realize that," said Debbie Carr, who runs the Cornerstone shelter for homeless teens, one of the programs of NCO Youth and Family Services in Naperville.

In those circumstances, Carr said, everything may look perfectly normal from the curb, while inside the house, the homeowners are up all

Downtown ordi

Nearly a month after to draft an ordinance certain activities on sidewalks, the Naperville Council will conduct a reading of the document.

Critics of the ordinance is specifically target individual: Scott Huber the last eight years has staying at a protest site one of the city's parks. But city officials have ordinance is not aimed but meant to preserve of the downtown area business owners have concerns about Huber city said.

A draft of the ordinance: "No person shall camp upon a public way, including upon a blanket, chair, within a temporary structure functions as a shield to conditions or, any other placed upon a public way the downtown."

It also indicates, "N shall store, accumulate together and maintain property such as supplies clothing, personal effects public way within the city."

In the ordinance, the downtown is defined as bounded on the north by Avenue, the east by Ell Street, the south by Avenue and west by East Avenue.

The ordinance defines camping as, "The use of property or public way accommodation purposes as sleeping activities, or preparations for sleeping, storing personal belongings making a fire or using a to provide heat, or using tent or other temporary outdoors."

Anyone who violates provision of the ordinance be subject to a \$50 fine court date for the first offense within a 12-month. A \$100 fine will be given a third or subsequent of within that one-year period a violation continue be considered a separate distinct offense. Those found in violation have seven days to remove personal items from the public property. If it removed, the city can re and it can be claimed within days.

City staff has recommended council conduct the first Tuesday and table action Oct. 6 meeting. If the council approves the ordinance, become effective 30 days approval. The City Council at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Center, 400 S. Eagle St.

