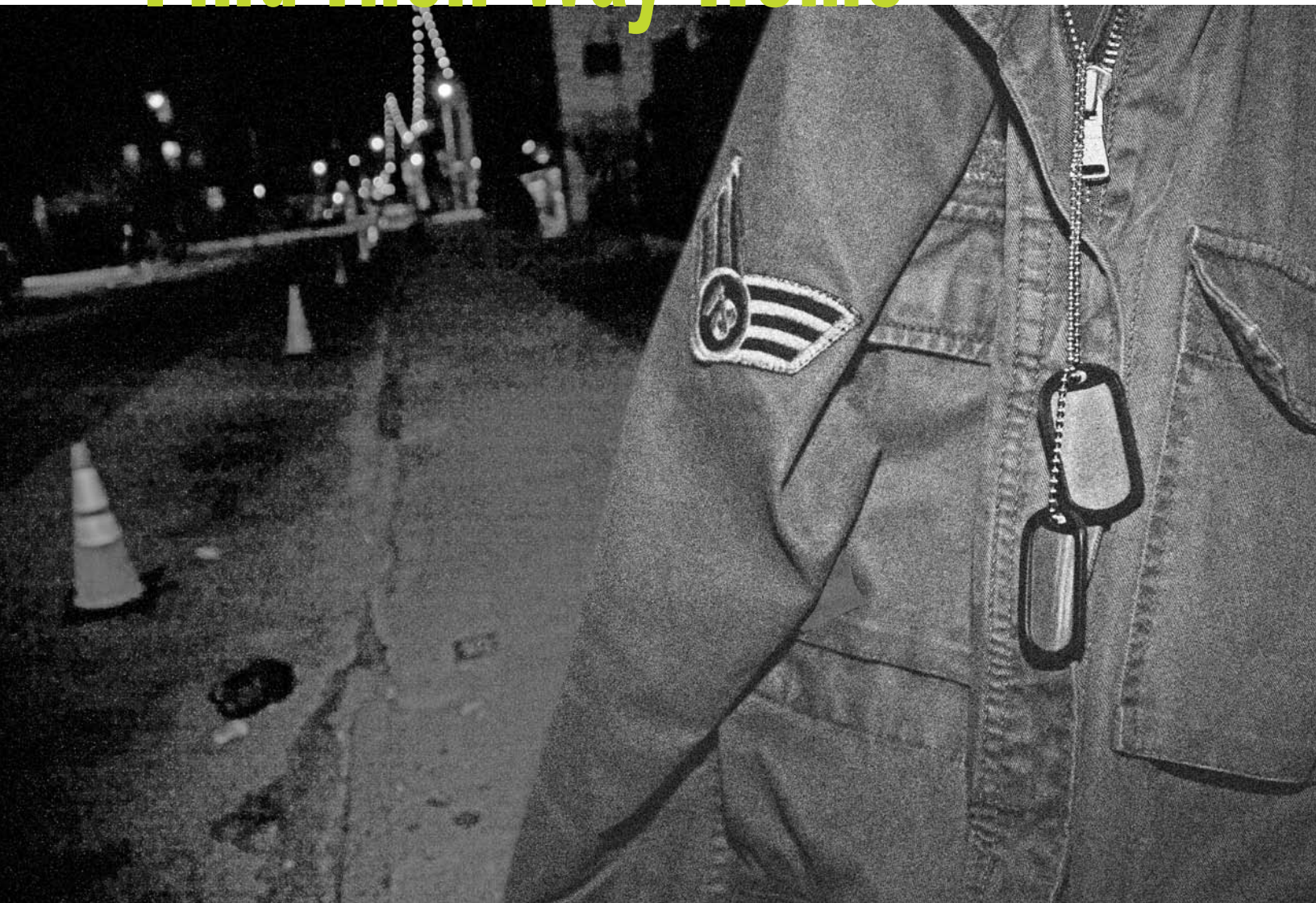


Safety Net

The newsletter of Coalition for the Homeless

Spring 2008

Helping Homeless Veterans Find Their Way Home



A Letter From Mary

I've had plenty of learning curves while working at the Coalition, none steeper than that on veterans without homes. Like most Americans, I thought if someone served their country and was honorably discharged, they would be entitled to an array of services to keep them healthy and safe once back on American soil.

Recent national studies, based on information from the Census Bureau and the Department of Veterans Affairs, estimate that on any given night over 200,000 men and women who are veterans are homeless. Over one year's time, that number swells to 336,000 – and the numbers are on the rise.

On our mobile feeding program and in our daily Crisis Intervention offices, we see men, women – usually single, but increasingly with children, who have endured unimaginable delays and deterrence when trying to get basic health or disability benefits. Many are on the verge of homelessness and others, who have fallen onto the streets or into emergency shelters have even more difficulty fighting a system that is overwhelmed and under-funded.

Although most of the vets we see served in Vietnam or in the post-Vietnam



Recent national studies... estimate that on any given night over 200,000 men and women who are veterans are homeless.

era, what is particularly troubling are young men and women returning from active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan who become homeless almost immediately upon discharge. Recent media reports underscore that while most older homeless vets have alcohol or substance abuse issues, younger vets have a much higher chance of suffering from psychological problems, including depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Not surprising, given the longer tours of active duty and multiple deployments they've seen in the current conflicts. There is also tremendous stigma attached to soldiers reporting mental health issues while still in the service and delaying help only compounds their problems.

When FDR signed the G.I. Bill of

Rights in 1944, he called it "a soldier's right to fair treatment from a grateful nation." Regardless of where you stand on whether or not our troops should or should not have been sent to Afghanistan or Iraq, it's truly a scandal that we don't have in place a system to give genuine, effective help to them when they return. Despite the all the chest thumping and rhetoric blowing in daily from Washington, the federal government has largely abandoned its role in providing for these men and women – leaving local and state governments, along with private

agencies, like the Coalition, to step in.

What's unique about the Coalition for the Homeless is that we work on both fronts – shaping governmental policy while also helping New Yorkers who are struggling to get back on their feet. In visiting last week with the staff of Congressman Jerry Nadler, and Senators Clinton and Schumer, it's clear that they "get it." They get that our vets have been abandoned and while we work to secure more housing and services in the near future, the men and women we see today need far more help right now. They also understand that what we are seeing today is the tip of the iceberg in terms of future need, with so many thousands more waiting to return to the States.

You'll meet a few of the courageous vets you've helped us assist in this issue of *Safety Net*. On their behalf, thank you so much for lending a hand!

Sincerely,

Mary E. Brosnahan
Executive Director

Safety Net

is published by

COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

129 Fulton Street
New York, NY 10038
Telephone: 212-776-2002
www.coalitionforthehomeless.org

MARY E. BROSNAHAN
Executive Director

Editor
RICHARD GELBER

Cover and Page 2 Photos
ADAM WISSING

Design
CLARE MANIAS

Spotlight on the Board: David Giffen

By Richard Gelber

Rock bands have long championed socially progressive causes. But unlike those musicians who remain passive, demanding others take action, David Giffen, the Coalition's newest Board member and guitarist/vocalist of the legendary band Alice Donut, believes in taking a more direct approach. "I never understood how young people with any degree of intelligence can ignore glaring social injustices," says David. "It was always clear to me, the need to help others less fortunate."

A New York native, David first



"Since we now have an entire generation of people who've grown up with mass homelessness as an accepted fact of life, it's tremendously hard to elicit the outrage needed to get the government to take proper action. The problem is no longer ignorance; it's complacency."

became involved with the city's music scene in the mid-1980's while attending Columbia University. There, he met his fellow band mates (including bassist Ted Houghton, now Executive Director of Supportive Housing Network of New York) and, after graduation, began recording albums and playing concerts at clubs such as CBGB's. Soon after, the band's mix of hardcore punk and psychedelic pop caught the attention of infamous punk rock pioneer and free-speech activist Jello Biafra, who quickly signed Alice Donut to his record label, Alternative Tentacles.

It was also at this time that David became involved in helping New York's homeless population. One day while getting off of a train at Grand Central Terminal, a homeless man approached David for some food. He didn't have



**Top: David Giffen, right, with Kazakhstan's Minister of Justice in Washington, DC.
Above: Onstage with Alice Donut in Vienna.**

any, but went into a nearby deli and bought the man a sandwich. "He was completely surprised and asked me 'Are you from New York?' He couldn't believe it when I said yes, because in his experience, New Yorkers never reached out to help in that way."

David wanted to change that. He began volunteering with the Coalition's Grand Central Food Program (GCFP), one of our first direct services which, to this day, continues to offer life-saving meals to over 1,000 people throughout Manhattan and the Bronx every night of the year. Between touring and recording with Alice Donut, Dave volunteered as often as possible. In 1989, he joined the Coalition as a full-time employee – first as Director of the GCFP, and later, as NY Director of the Coalition.

In 1998, David transitioned to the Mercator Corporation, a small private company that advises the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. While undertaking projects such as reforming that country's Constitution and helping to enact democratic reforms, he still found time to record and tour with Alice Donut, even forming his own record label, New York based Howler Records, in 2003.

As former NY Director of the Coalition for the Homeless, David is intimately aware of the hardships, and necessary solutions, facing New York's most vulnerable citizens. "Under Mary Brosnahan's leadership, the Coalition has done an outstanding job helping the homeless men, women, and children of this city," David says. "However, since we now have an entire generation of people who've grown up with mass homelessness as an accepted fact of life, it's tremendously hard to elicit the outrage needed to get the government to take proper action. The problem is no longer ignorance; it's complacency." Every night, 35,000 people, including 15,000 children, still sleep in New York City shelters. "We can, and will, do better."

Helping Homeless Veterans Find Their Way Home

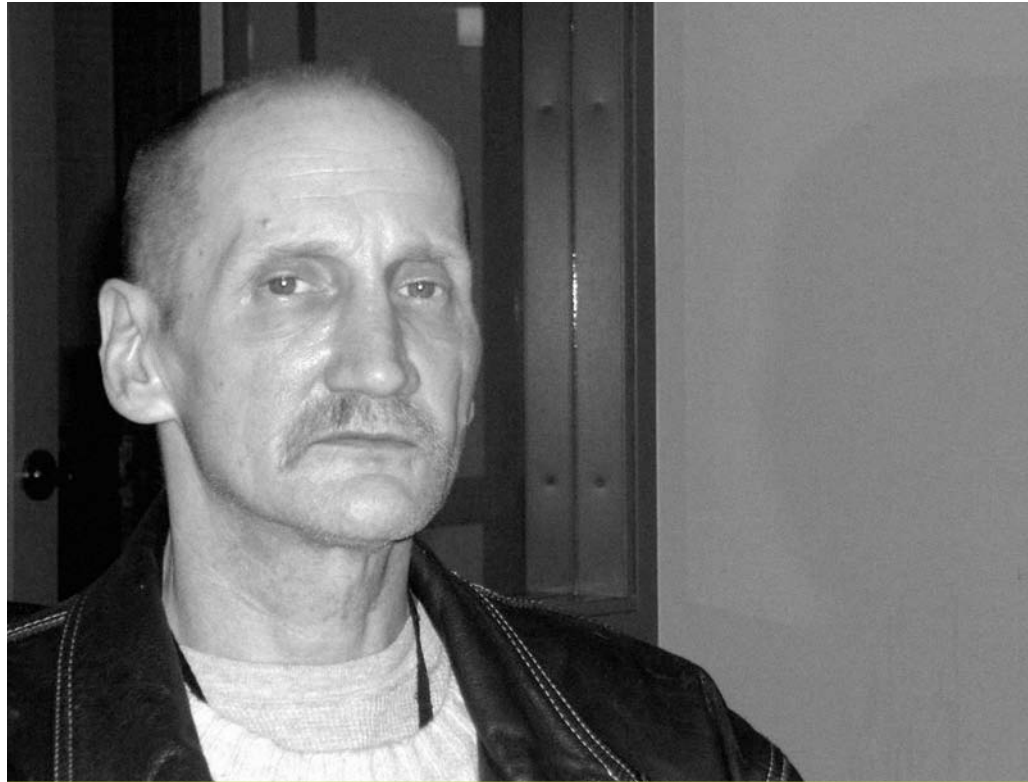
By Richard Gelber

Fifty-four-year-old Michael Bleavins is a veteran of the United States Military. From 1975 until 1981, Michael served as a medic at a U.S. Army base in Germany, delivering babies, flying helicopter missions, and providing medical care to other soldiers wounded in training operations. “I loved taking care of the people serving with me,” Michael said. “I was able to be part of something – part of the greater good.” Unfortunately, today, Michael is the one who needs care, finding himself in a situation shared by approximately 200,000 other veterans: he is homeless.

On a blisteringly cold day in early February, Michael came to the Coalition for the Homeless. He moved slowly, having just arrived from a West Harlem methadone clinic. For the last 20 years, Michael has been battling a number of debilitating diseases as well as substance addiction, the result of years spent self-medicating in an attempt to combat severe depression. “I couldn’t cope with life after the army. I didn’t know how to relate to people. The army was the only life I knew.”

Sadly, Michael’s situation is not unique. According to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ statistics, “about one-third of the adult homeless population has served their country in the Armed Services.” Approximately 45 percent of homeless veterans suffer from mental illness, and over 70 percent suffer from substance abuse or alcohol problems. Although most homeless veterans are male, the number of female homeless veterans has significantly increased in recent years. As of July 2007, approximately 8,000 female veterans, many with young children, are homeless in the United States.

Since our inception over 25 years ago, the Coalition for the Homeless has



“I loved taking care of the people serving with me,” Michael said. “I was able to be part of something – part of the greater good.” Unfortunately, today, Michael Bleavins is the one who needs care, finding himself in a situation shared by approximately 200,000 other veterans: he is homeless.

helped hundreds of the men and women who have served their country get back on their feet. Our staff is intimately aware of the diverse range of issues facing homeless veterans.

Manny Mangual, director of the Coalition’s Scattered Site Housing Program – which provides permanent housing, social services, and intensive case management to families and individuals whose lives have been devastated by the dual tragedies of HIV/AIDS and homelessness – is a veteran of the Vietnam War. Only twenty years old when he shipped off to Saigon from his home in the Bronx, Manny saw firsthand the severe mental, emotional, and physical strain combat places on young

soldiers. “There was no diagnosis for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in those days – people still called it ‘shell-shock,’” he said, referring to the mental disorder which has affected thousands of young men and women and contributed to the high level of homelessness among veterans.

After completing his service, Manny returned to New York. Every day on his way to work, he would come across scores of homeless people. “When I would stop and talk to them, I discovered that many were veterans. I would think ‘these are the guys I served with.’” In an effort to help fix the problem, he became involved with the Coalition. Now, as director of one of the

Coalition's most successful programs, Manny, like all Coalition staff, works to ensure that no New Yorker, veteran or otherwise, has to endure the ordeal of homelessness.

The Coalition is a particularly valuable resource to those veterans who have fallen through the cracks of government benefit systems. In 2006, David Green and Annette DeJesus, two Marine Corps Veterans, and their two children, two-year-old Alyssa and three-month-old Dante, were evicted from their apartment. They looked to the City

paperwork and delays prevented Michael from receiving his full benefits. "Free programs, like the methadone clinic or City shelters, help, but they are not enough – not nearly enough for me to get back my feet."

Fortunately, the Coalition is ready to help. Because of his chronic health challenges, we enlisted Michael in the Coalition's Client Advocacy Project (CAP). The CAP program assists single adult shelter residents to secure social security disability benefits through clinical support, intensive

"I consider myself a New Yorker," Michael said, "New Yorkers know how to take care of each other. I don't know how I could have survived without the Coalition's help."

for relief, but were denied emergency shelter on three separate occasions. The Coalition's Advocacy team helped them navigate the lengthy appeals process and provided shelter for the family until David found



Craig Moncho, Director of the Coalition's Client Advocacy Project, works to secure disability payments and permanent housing for disabled homeless New Yorkers.

steady employment. To bolster the odds of their success, the Coalition enrolled the family in our Rental Assistance Program, helping to bridge the gap between their limited income and the cost of affordable housing.

Back at the Coalition offices on that cold February day, Michael Bleavins explained his frustrating familiarity with the failures of government benefit systems for veterans. Like many veterans we have worked with, after receiving an honorable discharge at the completion of his service, endless

case management, and benefits advocacy to obtain housing. As a result, Michael is well on his way to finding a place he can call home.

"I consider myself a New Yorker," Michael said, "New Yorkers know how to take care of each other. I don't know how I could have survived without the Coalition's help."

Please join us in helping the men and women who have selflessly served our country. With your support, we can help keep our veterans where they belong – at home.

Did you know...

Today, there are approximately **200,000** homeless veterans in the United States.

33% of the total adult homeless population are veterans.

8,000 female veterans, many with small children, are homeless.

45% of homeless veterans suffer from mental illness.

70% of homeless veterans suffer from substance abuse.

*Source:
United States Department of
Veterans Affairs*

Help Raise Money for the Coalition for the Homeless – Get Involved in the Evans Team Initiative

In a special effort to raise ongoing financial contributions for the Coalition and its programs, we have formed a strategic partnership with Wendy Friedman and Pauline Evans of the Evans Team at Sotheby's International Realty. Together we created the Coalition for the Homeless-Evans Team initiative.

The way it works: Wendy and Pauline will donate a percentage of their income from any property bought or sold by them at Sotheby's International Realty through a referral from a Coalition friend or supporter.

"It's a win-win for everyone," said Wendy Friedman. "It's a nice way for us to offer our financial support. And it'll be great when we can write big checks to the Coalition."

Get Involved

If you or someone you know is in the market to buy or sell real estate here in Manhattan or anywhere in the world there is a Sotheby's International Realty office (460 active offices worldwide) in any price range, please refer them to Wendy or Pauline.

It's two-fold. You'll be helping a friend by providing them with the expertise and experience of the Evans team and Sotheby's International Realty – a company known for setting a higher standard for the marketing and selling of distinctive residential properties – while also making a difference in the lives of New York's homeless community.

"We are all excited to make this effort successful," said Kim McCall, Director of Development at the Coalition for the Homeless. "In addition to their volunteer support, this program is a very generous gesture made by Pauline and Wendy."



Wendy Friedman and Pauline Evans of Sotheby's help distribute meals on the Coalition for the Homeless' Grand Central Food Program.

To get involved in the Coalition for the Homeless-Evans Team Initiative and raise money for the Coalition and its programs, please contact Wendy Friedman at 212.606.7761 or email wendy.friedman@sothebysrealty.com or contact Kim McCall, the Coalition's Director of Development, at 212-776-2050 or email kmccall@cft homeless.org.

13th Annual ARTWALK NY Raises over \$700,000

By Rachel Edelman

The 13th annual ARTWALK NY, held on November 27, 2007 at the Metropolitan Pavilion, was a huge success. More than 700 people attended the event, featuring a cocktail party and live and silent auctions, which raised over \$700,000 for the Coalition's direct service programs.

The evening's guests of honor – renowned artist Donald Baechler and longtime Coalition friends Alice Kramer and the late Arthur Kramer – were on hand throughout the evening to lend their support. Baechler's donated art-

work was the highlight of the live auction, raising \$40,000.

The live auction, with Stephanie Landess at the podium, was a fantastic and lively success. Co-chairs Richard Gere, Carey Lowell, and Kayce Freed Jennings welcomed guests and spoke on behalf of the Coalition's important work. Actors Richard Kind and Alec Baldwin provided comedic relief as Master of Ceremonies and award presenter, respectively.

Featured artists in the live auction included Baechler, Jeff Koons, Jenny Holzer, and Torben Giehler. Guests also had the opportunity to bid on items such as a luxury vacation to Bermuda, a pri-



From left: Richard Kind, Kayce Freed Jennings, Richard Gere, Carey Lowell, Mary Brosnahan, Donald Baechler, and Andy Kramer



2007 ARTWALK NY Event Honorees, Arthur and Alice Kramer

The Coalition will greatly miss the late Arthur Kramer, a longtime friend and advocate of the Coalition, who tirelessly supported our efforts. The impact of his support was invaluable, and our thoughts and prayers are with his family.

vate tour at the Museum of Modern Art, and a luxurious getaway at the Winvian resort, as well as sponsor specific Coalition programs.

The silent auction included works by Yoko Ono, Louise Bourgeois, Mark Di Suvero, and Christo & Jean-Claude. Guests mingled among the artwork as they enjoyed cocktails courtesy of Skyy Vodka and Barefoot Wine, chatted with artists and fellow art-lovers, and bid on works.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of ARTWALK NY's sponsors, patrons, supporters, participating artists, and volunteers, for helping to make the evening a great success, and for lending their support to homeless New Yorkers.

Sponsors:

Gail & Al Engelberg
Alice & Arthur Kramer
Helen & Lou Lowenstein

Advocates:

Nardello & Co.

Patrons:

Candice Bergen & Marshall Rose
Crozier Fine Arts
Draftcb
Wendy Friedman of the Evans Team/Sotheby's International Realty
Andrew & Julie Kramer
Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP
LMD floral events interiors
George Loening & Kimbrough Towles
Victor Ozeri & The Bensonhurst Foundation
Skyframe
Troutman Sanders LLP
Martin & Lois Whitman

Associates:

Bestype Imaging
Judy & Howard Berkowitz
Henry M. Buhl
Deerfield Management
Fross Zelnick Lehrman & Zissu, P.C.
Nina Bogosian Quigley & Matthew W. Quigley
Sony Corporation of America

Supporters:

Adam & Elizabeth Gold
Philip Koether
Scharff Weisburg, Inc.

Friends:

ANSAC
Art Crafting, Inc.
André Balazs
Wendy Diamond/Animal Fair Media, Inc.
Shelly & Vincent Fremont
Lucy Bondi Grollman
Agnes Gund & Daniel Shapiro
Janet L. Hoffman
Isabelle & Jerome E. Hyman
Roslyn & Elliot Jaffe
Erik & Deena Katz
Richard H. Lewis & Joan M. Sapinsley
NYMEX Charitable Foundation
Ira M. Resnick Foundation
Sanky Communications, Inc.
Ann & Tom Scheuer
Mara & Baron Silverstein

Liquor Sponsors

Amstel Light
Midori
Möet & Chandon
Sheckys.com

Wine Sponsor

Barefoot Wine

Food Sponsor

Tom Cat Bakery

Water Sponsor

Fiji Water

A Thank You from a Fellow New Yorker

Dear Coalition for the Homeless -

I thank everyone so very much for helping at a bad time in my life. I was homeless and saw no way to escape my fate.

But help did come to me via your agency. I am now working and trying very hard not to fall behind. I know I can succeed thanks to all you have given me. Please continue to help people, it's a wonderful thing. The tears of happiness I cried after realizing there was hope for me were heartfelt and true.

I hope to volunteer in 2008 and give back to the Coalition. Bless you, everyone, and thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Always,

Jessica

Coalition for the Homeless invites you to the 14th Annual
Women Mean Business Luncheon 2008
Benefiting the First Step Job Training Program

Honoring Hughes Hubbard LLP
and Gay Men's Health Crisis

Tuesday, April 15, 2008
11:30AM - 2PM

The Pierre Hotel
Fifth Avenue at 61st Street, NYC

Cocktail Reception followed by
Luncheon and Awards Presentation

For further details and ticket information, please contact Rachel Edelman, Manager of Special Events, at (212) 776-2056 or email at redelman@cftohomeless.org.