

The Price of Independence...

- \$ 50 off-sets the cost of a Texas State ID for 7 clients
 - \$ 100 off-sets the cost of birth certificates for 9 clients*
 - \$ 175 can buy steel-toed work boots for 4 clients starting new jobs
 - \$ 250 can buy 100 round trip rides on METRO
 - \$ 500 can buy 7 clients the bus fare needed for a successful job search, from the first application through the first pay-check (about 30 round trip rides on METRO per client)
 - The cost of a job: Priceless...
- * Many clients need a birth certificate in order to get an ID. All of us need an ID to get a job!

About COMPASS

Since 1981, COMPASS has been giving clients in need – many of whom are homeless – critical support as they look for work or begin a new job. We help with job counseling, bus fare, identification, mail privileges, voice mail, haircuts, hygiene supplies, the cost of work boots, Gold Cards (access to county medical care), as well as information and referrals in a variety of matters, ranging from mental health care and chemical dependency to budgeting. The assistance we give supports the ultimate goal of clients becoming independent individuals who no longer need our help.

If you would like more information about COMPASS, contact Cynthia Brannon, *Executive Director*: director@houstoncompass.org

Or better yet, stop by for a visit. COMPASS is located in the John S. Dunn Outreach Center, on the campus of Christ Church Cathedral, at 1212 Prairie Street in downtown Houston.

A Job: The Ultimate Independence

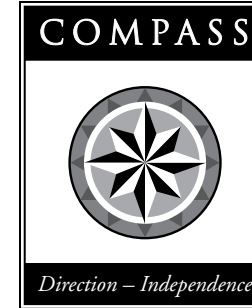
Fireworks! for COMPASS clients who recently started new jobs. Some of the companies that hired them:

- DSI Distributors/TMD
- Dairy Land
- Grocer's Supply
- RAA Hauling
- Discount Muffler Center
- BAM's Auto Express
- J. Steel & Associates
- GCA Services
- Wings 'n' More
- Marjo House
- Rooms' Personal Care Home

Thank you!

COMPASS thanks the generous board members who donated their time and talent to make this newsletter possible.

THE RED DOOR



THE RED DOOR

You may remember the COMPASS house that stood on the corner of Texas Avenue and Caroline for many years. A vibrant red door welcomed our clients inside, and many of them found us because of it. Unsure of the address, they just looked for "the little house with the red door." Although the front door of our office in the Dunn Center is made of glass, we still have a red door inside our offices that the clients see as they wait to visit with a caseworker. We wanted to preserve our past symbol of hospitality in that way, and again with the name of our newsletter.

THE CAUSE IS INDEPENDENCE

CYNTHIA BRANNON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

OUR MEMORIES OF INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS undoubtedly vary, depending on our age, and where we grew up. Urban, rural, eastern, and southern traditions may have all been a little different. A Depression-era celebration typically included a lively parade of children on bicycles, decorated with red, white and blue crepe paper woven through the spokes. The high school marching band joined in with raucous, patriotic music. Civic leaders gave speeches. My memories from the suburban 60's include kids in wet bathing suits, around a pool, and the smell of chlorine and Coppertone. The swimming was followed by an all-American picnic. Once it was dark, we tried to write our names in the air with sparklers. Today's children will look back on mega-watt, big-city fireworks. Despite the varied traditions, my guess is that everyone's memories of the 4th of July are good ones. It's a day of celebration, and the patriotism is always there. Americans feel pride in our independence, even 233 years after the fact.

Independence is something to be proud of. Ours is a great country, comprised of great people. There are about 304 million of us, as a matter of fact. What is your guess as to how many Americans are homeless? One source states between 2.3 and 3.5 million people experience homelessness annually in this country. Tonight in Houston, alone, there will be as many as 10,000 homeless individuals.

It doesn't take much for an individual, or a family, living from paycheck to paycheck, to wind up homeless. An illness, not covered by sick days, is really all it takes. What often follows is job loss, eviction, and repossession of the car. It's an all too common formula for landing in a homeless shelter or under a freeway over-pass. It is shockingly easy to get there, and entirely too hard to get out – without some help, that is. COMPASS offers its homeless clients help in getting back on their feet in small, but significant, ways.

Many of our clients are employable, and want to work. They don't want to be dependent on the homeless shelters, on food stamps, or on free clothing programs. They want to declare their own independence! The notion that the homeless choose to be homeless is a myth, in my experience. At COMPASS we meet clients every day who want to be independent. They just want a job.

As you read through this issue of The Red Door, I hope you will consider the clients of COMPASS, and how they strive for independence. Consider, too, how our staff and volunteers direct them to that goal, with things like bus fare, voice mail, a mailing address, ID, and job leads. *(Continued on next page.)*

Independence means...to be your best in whatever you're trying to accomplish in life – Amber, COMPASS Client

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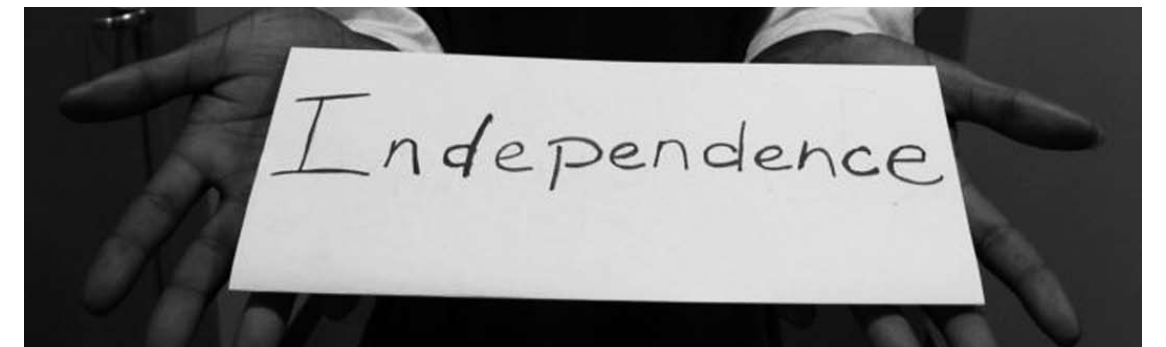


Photo: SUSAN TAYLOR

(Continued from page 1.) Each bit of help they find at COMPASS adds to their sense of autonomy, and gets them closer to the ultimate goal of independence.

And finally, please reflect on how one gift – your gift – will help. I promise you that one gift really does make a difference to the man who just needs bus fare to get to his job interview. Won't you join us this Independence Day, and help COMPASS clients declare their independence? As Will Rogers once said "people are marvelous in their generosity if they just know the cause is there." On this 4th of July, 2009, the cause is there. *The cause is independence.*



Photo: SUSAN TAYLOR

"It's all connected..."

Don't we all rely on our cars, or some form of transportation, for our independence? And doesn't the telephone help, as well as a way to receive mail? What about Identification? We need it to do anything these days. COMPASS clients are no different. As they pursue the ultimate goal of a job, they can get a mailing address, use of the telephone, voice mail to retrieve messages from prospective employers, identification, and bus fare – all at COMPASS. As our client, Amelia, told us, "It's all connected."

Speaking of voice mail...

A critical part of the job search process is having a phone number and being able to communicate with employers. Thanks to the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston, and Houston Community Voice Mail, COMPASS is able to set clients up with a voice mail system, allowing them to connect with potential employers. Staff member, Lori Stokey, and volunteer, Jim Cox, both help clients with the set up process right in the COMPASS offices. When a prospective employer calls the client's number, a personal recorded message is activated, and the employer can leave a message. Clients are able to check their messages throughout the week. We know this service is important to our clients, because we know they use it.

As Scot More at the Coalition shared with us, COMPASS is "in the top 3 of the 145 agencies in 2008 who consistently have high utilization rates. Your yearly utilization rate for 2008 was 97%. This is phenomenal."

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*Thank you
for supporting
the cause of
independence!*

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

We recently asked clients to write about independence and what it means to them.

Tim's definition: "My own four walls. A fridge with food and front door I can lock. A career!" He added how COMPASS helps: "To upright my fallen hopes with resources I can put to great use."

Amber described independence and the role COMPASS has played: "Independence means...to be your best in whatever you're trying to accomplish in life...to have honor and pride. Independence starts with "us," the people as one. COMPASS is helping me by taking one day at a time...to have great intentions and complete whatever you start out to do."

We also received great input from one of our community partners.

Paul Layne, Executive Vice President, Brookfield Properties: Independence means getting back on one's feet. "COMPASS has done an excellent job helping those who cannot help themselves, by giving them the tools to get back on their feet."

WILL YOU GIVE THE GIFT OF INDEPENDENCE?

Please cut and mail this form with your donation.

Yes, I will help COMPASS clients declare their independence! I can offer support at the following level:

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1000 Other

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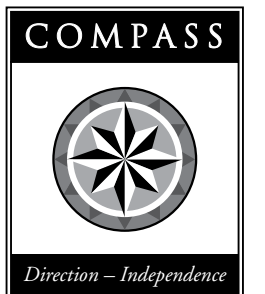
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