

## More homeless families seek help

By Mark Cumutte • mcumutte@enquirer.com •  
December 21, 2010

Malesia Lyle and her four children, including 2-year-old twins, slept in her 1989 Crown Victoria for several consecutive weekends last summer and fall.

"Parking lot, Mount Airy Elementary, no one was there," she said.

The 32-year-old single mother's living arrangements with an aunt and uncle had fallen through. Another lead to a house in Over-the-Rhine didn't work out because it was inhabitable.

She could not find work. The \$680 a month in child support from her children's father wasn't enough to get an apartment.

Lyle's story is becoming increasingly common, say advocates for the homeless, who held a news conference Tuesday under a Fort Washington Way overpass Downtown to call attention to the problem.

"We have mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, sleeping in cars and under bridges," said Josh Spring, director of the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless. "This is a new problem. The face of homelessness in Cincinnati is changing."

The coalition has formed a Families Committee to research the problem further and come up with possible solutions. No numbers are available yet.

Here's what they do know. It's not the supply of beds for homeless families that's changed. There are still 200 available through four primary agencies.

The demand spiked.

Parents are losing jobs and can't find new ones.

Housing providers have noted a few middle-class families coming to them because of foreclosures.

Other families are on the streets because landlords that once rented to them have had their properties go into foreclosure. Some people's credit is so bad that they can't rent an apartment.

Other families that had stayed with relatives have been kicked out by landlords because it is not on the lease.

The 26 emergency beds at Bethany House Services in South Fairmount are filled. The agency has been paying for another 10 families to stay at a low-cost hotel, said client services director Darlene Guess.

There is no room with the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Cincinnati. It consists of 29 host churches, mosques and synagogues that provide places for homeless families to sleep and another 61 religious organizations that provide support in the form meals, cots, blankets and hygiene products. The network is at capacity each night - eight families, 32 beds, which includes cribs. The average length of stay has

Advertisement



**USA TODAY**  
**AutoPilot** 

The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®

Presented by: 

**SEE HOW IT WORKS >>**

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics

increased from 23 days during the winter of 2008-09 to 29 days currently.

"Last week, we had 16 children under the age of 3," director Georgine Getty said.

Some homeless are even younger.

From August 2008 through May 2009, Staci Hairston, now 31, slept Downtown under a bridge at Third and Eggleston. She was pregnant toward the end.

"It was scary. There were never enough blankets," said Hairston, in recovery from a crack-cocaine addiction, as she held Jonessa, 19 months, in her arms.

Over-the-Rhine Community Housing helped her get clean and find a small apartment.

"I've made a lot of mistakes. I stole my parents' checkbook. I never had a parking ticket and then I had a felony," Hairston said. "I was so afraid I didn't know what to do."



[Zoom](#)  
[Buy This Photo](#) The Enquirer/Joseph Fuqua II  
**Stacie Hairston with her daughter Jonessa, 19 months, talked about being homeless.**

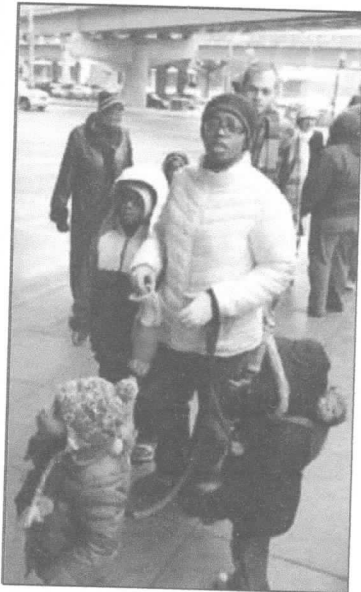
**Getting help/How to help**

**For help:**

Call the Central Access Point at 513-381-7233 for access to Bethany House, Interfaith Hospitality Network, Mercy Franciscan at St. John's and the Salvation Army. Domestic violence calls are transferred to the YWCA's Battered Women's line for help.

**To contribute:**

- Bethany House: 921-1131, ext. 125, if you are landlord with low-income housing available); 921-1131, ext. 119, if you want to donate cash



The Enquirer/Joseph Fuqua II

**Malesia Lyle of Bond Hill with her four kids talks about being homeless, at the corner of Central Avenue and 3rd Street near the parking lot under an overpass.**

[Zoom](#)  
[Buy This Photo](#)

Advertisement

**USA TODAY**  
**AutoPilot** 

The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®

Presented by: 

**SEE HOW IT WORKS >>**



- Interfaith Hospitality Network, 471-1100, ext. 13
- Mercy Franciscan at St. John's, 981-5800
- Salvation Army (Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky), 513-762-5660

**Other cities share problem**

The number of Americans needing help to put food on the table is growing, according to city officials and the federal government. The U.S. Conference of Mayors reports that trips to food banks are up 24% this year in 27 cities it surveyed. And food stamp use is at near record levels. "

Advertisement

**USA TODAY**  
**AutoPilot** 

The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®

Presented by: 

**SEE HOW IT WORKS »**

The advertisement shows a smartphone displaying the USA TODAY AutoPilot app interface. The screen shows a flight schedule for USA TODAY, including flight numbers (A6, 73), destinations (BNA to SFO, Washington, D.C.), and flight times. The app is presented by Hampton.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics