



As economy improves, human services should be a priority
VIEW FROM THE HILL:
PAGE 6

United Neighbors of Fall River brings community together
PROVIDER PROFILE:
PAGE 3



Point/Counterpoint: Should the state raise revenue or cut taxes?
VIEWPOINTS:
PAGE 5



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Foreign relations



Providers' Council President Michael Weekes' recent trip to Israel included a visit with Nadav Tamir, adviser to Israeli President Shimon Peres and former Consul-General in Boston.

The Caring Force schedules April State House rally

The ranks of *The Caring Force* continue to swell behind the focused efforts of Providers' Council members, many of them making the initiative an organization-wide campaign and encouraging staff, supporters, board members, clients and their families to join the movement.

The Caring Force will introduce itself and its agenda to legislators and others during a rally and day of action at the State House on April 2. Speakers will address the themes of more dollars for essential human services and better pay for low-paid human services direct care workers.

"*The Caring Force* is a movement! The April 2nd rally is our opening salvo and marks the beginning of a new age," said Sheri McCann, president of the Council's Board of Directors. "I know that we will all be there to demonstrate who we are and that our voices will be heard!" (See Editorial, Page 4.)

The primary goal of *The Caring Force* is to create an environment in Massachusetts that protects the most vulnerable
FORCE, see page 7

Some gain, less pain in budget plan

After years of absorbing harmful budget cuts, many human service providers issued a collective sigh of relief on Jan. 25 as the governor released his Fiscal 2013 budget proposal.

Although the budget failed to include a Salary Reserve for the state's lowest paid direct care staff for the fourth straight year, the majority of human services budgets were level-funded at FY '12 rates or saw slight increases in Gov. Deval Patrick's \$32.3 billion budget proposed for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

"We appreciate Governor Patrick adding additional revenues to the state budget to ensure necessary funding for most human services programs," said Providers' Council President and CEO Michael Weekes. "We were further encouraged to hear his call for jobs dur-

ing his State of the Commonwealth address on Monday, and we hope to work with the Administration and Legislature to secure resources that will help providers retain a well-educated and dedicated workforce."

The Providers' Council had sought a 3 percent salary adjustment for the estimated 31,500 people in the sector earning less than \$40,000 a year, to be funded through a Salary Reserve. The Council will address the issue with the House and Senate as they craft their budgets.

"These dedicated caregivers have gone five years without an annualized salary adjustment," Weekes said. "This is really about supporting jobs in our sector."

Early caution from Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. JudyAnn Bigby during the Providers'

Council's annual convention in November and more recent warnings of a potential billion-dollar budget deficit from the Commonwealth's Secretary of Administration and Finance Jay Gonzalez had providers across the sector bracing for the worst.

Although the news was mostly good, some human service programs were cut, including:

- A \$5.5 million reduction to Family Respite and Support (Department of Developmental Services) that would result in 1,750 families losing services;
- A \$1.5 million cut to Elder Nutrition that eliminates more than 240,000 free/subsidized lunches;
- A \$371,000 reduction in Turning 22 programs (Mass. Rehabilitation Commission)
- A \$43,000 reduction that would

BUDGET, see page 7

Grant for play addressing elder issues



The Center for Human Development's Hawthorn Elder Care program will use a \$10,000 grant from the National Endowment of the Arts to fund performances of "Talking with Dolores," a one-act play that takes a serious look at depression and suicide among the elderly. The grant also enables Hawthorn to fund "Hablando con Dolores" a Spanish-language production of the play. A DVD of the play is available to groups that work with elders - councils on aging, visiting nurse associations, elder service agencies and colleges - by calling CHD's Hawthorn Elder Care at 413.439.2165. Pictured is Steve Henderson as Mo, the 85-year-old widower who considers his life while talking to the portrait of his late wife.

State exploring pay-for-success contracts

In an effort to improve services and save taxpayer money, the state is seeking Requests for Response (RFRs) through March 9 for social innovation financing contracts.

The state Executive Office of Administration and Finance (ANF) issued the RFRs in mid-January for pay-for-success contracts and social impact bonds, calling the move a first-in-the-nation initiative to explore social innovation financing for programs targeting chronic homelessness and juvenile justice.

"While the Providers' Council supports the greater exploration of the basic concepts of social innovation financing in the realm of social and human services, we caution that this model may not be appli-

INNOVATION, see page 7

March 6 is Primary Day!

The Providers' Council's CareVote Campaign is under way in this important election year.

- Feb. 15 is the deadline to register to vote or change party affiliation for the presidential primary
- March 6 is the primary.

For more information, visit <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleidx.htm>

Salary Reserve applications due to state by March 9

Salary Reserve payments should start going out to eligible providers in June, according to the state Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS). Providers applying for funds from the \$10 million allotment must submit payroll information to the state by March 9.

The entire Salary Reserve process will be conducted online, and EOHHS has established through its website a provider data management system (PDM) and Virtual Gateway for submission of salary reserve-eligible payroll information. Applications must be made online and will not be

accepted after March 9.

Documents required for accessing the PDM and Virtual Gateway, including a deployment checklist, services agreement administrator designation form and PDM user request form, are available on the Salary Reserve website at www.mass.gov/salaryreserve.

This website and the Salary Reserve timeline are regularly updated.

The applications received by March 9 will be reviewed by the appropriate state agencies and will be submitted to EOHHS by March 29 for final review. The agencies will be

APPLICATIONS, see page 7

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Raising revenue to invest in the Commonwealth's communities

By Andi Mullin

Over the next five months, the state Legislature will focus on crafting the Fiscal 2013 budget, and we already have been warned by both the Patrick Administration and legislative leaders that, despite some modest growth in the economy, we can expect another year of budget cuts. This has become a familiar refrain – we hear it every single year.

Why? Because during the 1990s Massachusetts enacted some 40 tax cuts, eventually costing the Commonwealth about \$3 billion annually.

This has left Massachusetts with a persistent “revenue deficit” – a deficit that predates the current recession. This gap between the revenues we collect and the cost of the services we all want haunts us year after year, whether the economy is good or in a slump.

We have muddled through the past few years largely by relying on assistance from the federal government. The federal stimulus provided the Commonwealth with funding that helped to preserve critical services. But that money is gone now, and indeed Washington is focused on forcing us to cut our way out of deficits instead of growing our way out of the recession.

In FY '13, Massachusetts' deficit is estimated to be between \$1 billion and \$1.5 billion. If the federal government continues to cut spending, that gap will only grow in the coming years.

For those who receive and provide human services, a sector which is perennially on the chopping block, this is distressing news.

The human services sector is vital to a healthy economy in our state. That portion of the sector represented just by the Providers' Council serves one in ten Massachusetts residents and employs nearly 200,000 people.

Furthermore, taking care of our most vulnerable citizens is part of what makes our Commonwealth a good place to live for all of us.

Forcing this sector of our economy – along with education, public safety, environmental protection and a host of other public services – to continue to absorb funding cuts year after year is

not the way to grow our economy.

There is another approach we could take. Massachusetts didn't become a leader nationally in public education, health care coverage and job growth by relentlessly cutting public services.

We got there by investing in our communities, strengthening our economy and improving the quality of life of Massachusetts families.

The Campaign for our Communities believes that we must continue that investment by passing legislation that raises substantial new revenue while holding down increases for low and middle income families.

“An Act to Invest in Our Communities” (HB2553/SB1416) is an example of legislation that would accomplish these goals. This bill, sponsored by Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz and Rep. James O'Day, would raise more than \$1.3 billion in revenue by increasing the tax rate on ordinary wage and investment income, while simultaneously increasing the personal exemption to hold down tax increases for middle class families and seniors. The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Revenue last spring, and is still in the committee awaiting action.

The solution it presents is a far better solution to our revenue deficit than continuing to cut the services that make our communities strong.

We all want the same things: good schools, thriving neighborhoods, a strong economy and services for those who need them.

But we can't get there by continuing to cut away at the programs and services that accomplish those goals. We must invest in our communities.

We all have a stake in the future of Massachusetts. We need to decide what we want it to look like.

Andi Mullin is the campaign director for Campaign for Our Communities, our-communities.org.

Taxpayers against waste, not services for most vulnerable

By Barbara Anderson

Perhaps an orientation to unlimited growth, an awareness of complexities and a fascination with a vast array of dazzling statistics, charts and graphs have calloused and conditioned our minds, causing us to forget such basic values as simplicity, smallness, respect, freedom, and order. Prop 2½ responds to such values.” – Martha D. Dunn, New England Journal of Human Services, 1981

It has been over 30 years since Martha Dunn visited my office to do an interview about Proposition 2½, the property tax limit which voters had just passed. We featured this quote from her article in our Citizens for Limited Taxation (CLT) flyer, as she became one of the few people outside our own circle of activists who “gets” it.

CLT's mission: The Commonwealth should raise enough taxes to provide essential services, avoid high levels of state debt and set aside money for reasonable pension and health-care benefits, while not indulging in what we call WIMPAC -- waste, inefficiency, mismanagement, patronage, abuse (of power), and corruption.

Instead, the Commonwealth carries the fourth highest per capita tax burden and one of the highest levels of debt and unfunded liabilities in the country, while insisting it can't afford to maintain the transportation infrastructure or provide basic services.

I've never heard a taxpayer complain about paying to care for individuals with mental illness or developmental disabilities. Yet these areas are usually the first cut when the state spends itself into another fiscal crisis.

The political establishment would rather argue for a tax increase to deal with non-controversial, even favored expenditures, than admit it needs hike taxes for its usual priorities. Few hard-working taxpayers are willing to pay more for extraordinary salaries and benefits for university administrators, for incompetent public housing and special education “managers” in Chelsea and Lawrence, for Probation Department pa-

tronage, for fat-cat pension rip-offs, for free health care for non-Massachusetts residents, just to mention the most recent scandals.

After we limited property taxes, CLT supported more state aid for local communities until we noticed that the new state money was being given by local officials to local public employee unions in high, unsustainable levels of benefits.

The money earned by Massachusetts citizens is divided three ways: one part for them to spend on their own needs and charitable giving; one part to pay for essential government services; and one section for WIMPAC.

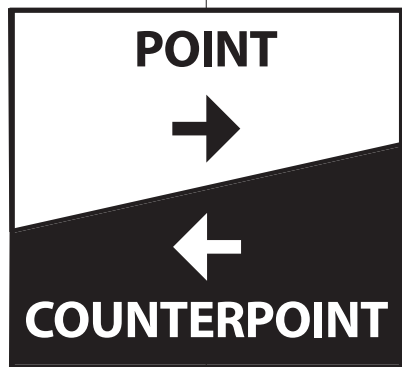
Human service providers should join with taxpayers to attack that third, inexcusable expenditure. The difference between our two groups may be that providers are willing to tolerate a larger amount of waste than we are. Starting in 1980, the taxpayers have been in revolt against being robbed and used.

Of course there will be some different definitions of “waste.” Taxpayers have little tolerance for many areas of welfare, either human service or corporate; we discourage bad incentives or moral hazard. We dislike anyone feeling “entitled” to what we earn. But we like to help those who really need assistance, we want to create incentives to become productive and we are happy to pay our share of services that benefit the commonwealth as a whole.

As for the recent income tax rate cut from 5.3 to 5.25 percent: This is the result of a 2000 ballot question that voters passed in order to make the state keep its promise that the “emergency” tax hike of 1989 would be “temporary.” We voters told our elected officials to cut that rate back to 5 percent as promised. We are the employers, and legislators are the employees; we expect them to do what we say.

So the tiny tax cut that began on January 1 has little to do with the amount of money we get to keep, and everything to do with what Martha Dunn might call “respect.” If we can get the state to respect those who fund it, perhaps someday it might actually do its job and provide good services at a price we're willing to pay.

Barbara Anderson is the executive director of Citizens for Limited Taxation (CLT).



Ending homelessness is an attainable goal

By Lyndia Downie

There was a time when most of society assumed that someone like “Walter,” a chronically homeless man struggling with depression and addiction, had few alternatives to (or perhaps even preferred) life on the street. Walter would stay at a shelter like Pine Street Inn on the coldest of nights, require frequent trips to the emergency room with ailments that started small and ended big and would often require costly inpatient hospital stays.

The costs of this approach – both for Walter personally, and in hard dollars spent on emergency rooms visits and hospital stays – were high. There seemed to be few options for people like Walter, other than a revolving door in and out of shelters, hospitals and prisons.

Groundbreaking research done by Professor Dennis Culhane at the University of Pennsylvania tracked how long

people stayed in shelter. His research showed that most people used shelter for less than a month and quickly moved on. However, a small group – less than 20 percent of those in shelter – used 80 percent of the bed nights over the course of a year. These “chronically” homeless people grapple with alcoholism, persistent and serious mental illness, often in combination with other serious health problems.

How do you create a strategy that targets these people for housing and services when many people view their problems as intractable? Housing First, pioneered by Sam Tsemberis at Pathways to Housing in New York, does what its name implies. People get housing and support services first, greatly contributing to the person's stability. The permanence of a home and the consistent and reliable follow-up from case managers changes the game.

Emergency room and inpa-

tient stays are reduced by over 50 percent when we look at data before and after people were housed. Pine Street placed a group of long-term shelter and street dwellers in this type of housing four years ago with a retention rate of 84 percent. Not bad for a group of people that many deemed “un-houseable.”

This strategy of targeting the longest-term shelter occupants and creating barrier-free housing has contributed to a six-year, 30 percent decrease in the number of homeless individuals on the streets and in shelter in Boston. There is no question that this innovation has been successful; we at Pine Street are committed to this approach so that we can truly meet our mission of ending homelessness.

Although best known as a shelter, Pine Street Inn has embarked on a strategy to create greater numbers of permanent housing units and decrease emergency beds.

While both are needed, the shift towards permanent housing with support services is a critical step forward.

There is a growing realization that individuals who may never be able to live without a range of support services can be better served in permanent, stable housing that provides an improved platform from which to treat mental illness, address addiction or teach individuals how to live with a disability.

Truth be told, when communities hear that a supported housing program may be in their neighborhood, they often raise concerns about safety, quality of life and property values. But with 34 residences in and around greater Boston, we can attest to the fact that our programs typically integrate seamlessly into neighborhoods.

Today, Walter lives in one of Pine Street Inn's housing locations, where he has a room and shared common space with several other individuals. A case worker has helped him

access services for his depression and addiction. He has a part-time job, using skills he learned in one of our job training programs. Breaking the cycle of inevitability gave Walter the freedom to try a new approach that transformed his life.

We have clearly found a better way to address the issue of homelessness that is also more cost-effective. In fact, there is documented evidence that shows a \$10,000 per person annual savings in emergency care and public safety systems with this approach. In this time of tight budgets, we must think carefully about how we spend funds to help homeless individuals. The investment in a long-term solution pays off in a big way, both from a financial perspective and a societal one.

Lyndia Downie is the president and executive director of Pine Street Inn.