

question

Want to dig deeper into the question of **homelessness?**

homelessness

**Do you believe there's more to the story?
Is homelessness about more than criminality?**

**Join us for a community forum to hear
from people who've been working on
aspects of homelessness for years.**

**Then meet again to explore how we
can work for City and County policies
that address homelessness effectively.**

KNOWLEDGE

**Thursday, June 5 • 5–8 p.m.
First United Methodist Church
203 Wisconsin Avenue • Madison**

*Speakers from St. Vincent de Paul,
Porchlight, Interfaith Hospitality Network,
YWCA and Operation Welcome Home*

**Panel discussion about current issues with
representatives from the Mayor's Office,
the County Department of Human Services
and the Madison Police Department.**

*Registration is requested, but not required.
Call Madison Urban Ministry, 256 0906.*

*No parking in the church parking lot for the event;
space is needed for the food pantry that evening.*

PRESENTED BY THE DANE COUNTY COALITION TO FIGHT HOMELESSNESS AND END POVERTY

POWER

**Sunday, June 8 • 6–8 p.m.
Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center
953 Jenifer Street (at Brearly) • Madison**

**Meet with City and County
elected officials about how local
legislation can address homelessness.**

**Get into Progressive Dane's
efforts to work on homelessness.
Help build the citizen movement
that can bring real progress!**



**Contact Progressive Dane
at 257 4985 or
office@prodane.org**

Supervisors Look to Establish Poverty Cost Exemption for Access to EMP and ATIP

by Ashok Kumar

THE ISSUE OF POVERTY AND homelessness is being addressed in a variety of ways at the county level, primarily through the implementation of a series of progressive reforms to our criminal justice system. Over the course of the last year, the Dane County Board of Supervisors has made inroads in implementing policies based on recommendations from an extensive internal audit.

One of the primary recommendations of the audit includes a four-fold expansion of the Electronic Monitoring Program (EMP) and Alternative To Incarceration Program (ATIP), from 50 individuals on the programs per day to 200. This policy alone saves the county an average of \$56 a day per inmate, in housing and transporting inmates out-of-county, for a annual cost savings of nearly \$3 million.

While the County Board has come a long way in pushing these reforms, sadly, it has also passed highly regressive policies that limit access to these programs. Recently, Supervisors voted to increase the fees to \$20 per day per inmate, which comes out to \$600 a month for incarcerated individuals to participate in these programs. Considering the findings and recommendations of the recently released Governor's Commission on Racial Disparities, we see the relationship in our state between economics, education, income, and race in creating a system where there exists huge racial disparities in participation and access to alternatives to incarceration programs and options.

Also in recent years, Dane County has had an appalling record of black-white disparate incarceration rates, one of the highest in the country (97 black to 1 white arrested for drug crime). Access fees only further institutionalize our existing two-tiered system of criminal justice.

In February a number of Supervisors introduced the Exemption for Persons Living in Poverty for Electronic Monitoring Fees. This ordinance amendment will exempt individuals earning below 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or those in households with members receiving state or federal aid from having to pay to access to the Electronic Monitoring Program (EMP) or the Clerk of Court's Alternative To Incarceration Program (ATIP). A vast swath of this population, some of whom are incarcerated in Dane County jails, cannot afford the current costs especially given the reality that, at most, an individual earns \$850--at or below the federal poverty line. With the increased access, the county is asking poor people to give up nearly three quarters for every dollar in their pocket to participate, or remain in jail. Plus, this may leave only \$250 per month for housing and food, an unreal expectation for poor inmates to participate in this program.

In early March the Public Protection & Judiciary Committee not only passed the ordinance unanimously but also strengthened its language. Since then Personnel & Finance Chair, Brett Hulsey, has refused to place the item on his committee's agenda. It must go through Personnel & Finance before finally coming to the floor of the county board.

The fact is that programs such as EMP and ATIP dramatically reduce recidivism rates, cut down costs by over 80% to the county, and attempt to institute real rehabilitation rather than a system of punitive justice for the poorest members of Dane County. Restricting access to those who need it most only serves to perpetuate Dane County's shameful record of racism and inequality in the criminal justice system. If you would like to know how you can help to pass the Poverty Exemption Ordinance on the Dane County Board please contact Ashok Kumar (arkumarzona@gmail.com).

“STIMULATE” PROGRESSIVE DANE

A reminder to our membership that we are actively fundraising to build our membership and we need your help! Please consider an extra donation to PD when you get your “stimulus check” from GW. Let's show the president that instead of shopping, the best way to support our community and our economy is to support a grassroots local political party. We will gladly accept whatever you can afford but try and give generously if able. Thirty members with the ability to donate at least \$100 will boost our reserves by \$3000 or more. Just include your check in the enclosed envelope and put “STIMULATE” in the memo line (include your donation for the Garden Party as well!)