Schedule of 1989 inaugural events

Four special events are being planned by the Afro-American Committee of the American Bicentennial Presidential Inaugural Committee. This committee is just one of many official ethnic committees planning events.

The special events are:

Jan. 16 - Prayer Breakfast for Martin Luther King Birthday Celebration - Washington Hilton.

Jan. 17 - International Day, Buffet, Embassy of France for Afro-Americans, Africans, Caribbean and Pacific Islanders.

Jan. 18 - Business Luncheon, networking reception, Washington Hilton.

Jan. 19 - Black Tie Awards Dinner, Washington Hilton
More information may be obtained by calling 898-0744.

Other Events

Jan. 18
Opening Celebration - Lincoln Memorial
Presidential Pageant I - Constitution Hall
Inaugural Dinners - Union Station and Departmental Auditorium

Jan. 19
Salute to the First Lady-Kennedy Center
Presidential Pageant II- Constitution Hall (matinee and evening)
V.P. Reception, Museum of American History
Inaugural Gala-Wash. Convention Center

Jan. 20
Church Service-St. John Church
Inaugural Ceremony
Parade
Inaugural Ceremony
10 Inaugural Balls (various locations)

Jan. 21
George to George, Children's Festival Constitution Hall
An American Tribute to Democracy - Constitution Hall
Young American Celebration, Convention Center

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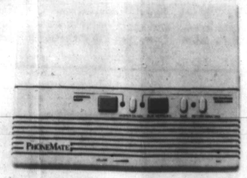

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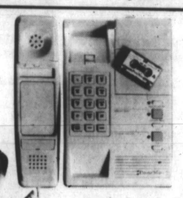

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The Afro-American Section B

METRO PROFILE

■ Lifestyle B4
■ Kids Talk B7

Plight of the Homeless - Part III

Searching for Solutions

By Alisa Samuels
Afro Staff Writer

At night, unlike most Mass Transit Administration buses that stop to carry paying passengers to set destinations, this MTA bus acts as a homeless transporter and a temporary roof-over-your-head.

Seven days a week, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. the homeless shuttle rides downtown, first stopping at the Enoch Pratt Free Library on Cathedral Street, picking up some of the city's 1500 homeless and takes them to 750 available beds in emergency overnight shelters. The bus ends its route at Brown's Memorial Hospital on Belvedere Avenue.

"The bus picks up more than 70 people a night," said Eugene P. Bartell, coordinator for the Mayor's Office of the Homeless Services, which receives $1 million from the state and city to provide support to 32 agencies.

Bartell said the innovative, one-year-old shuttle, in operation from November through March, is marked charter and has a paper sign that reads "homeless shelter" in its front window.

The homeless shuttle, which Bartell said may be the only kind in the country, is one service the city uses to curb its homeless crisis that has swallowed young and old people who have no money and no place to live, into its crude and constricting esophagus.

"There is still a lot of talk about the homeless, but people don't recognize its a deep problem that needs immediate attention," said Shirley A. Belton, acting shelter director for the YWCA on West Franklin Street. The center has provided shelter, food, clothes and counseling to men, women and children for the last six years.

Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke recognized part of the problem last January and implemented a "no-turn-away" city-wide policy for the city's homeless, assuring city agencies find shelter for people on the streets during severe winter weather conditions.

"Being on the streets in the winter is certainly more life threatening, than in the summer," Bartell said. He said an additional 250 beds are made available during the cold months.

Bartell said people are often turned away from shelters and forced back on the streets, because the overflow in shelters is tremendous. Three months is the maximum stay at an overnight shelter.

Bartell said in the winter if there is a lack of beds, Mayor Schmoke opens city buildings to shelter the homeless, who include families, the mentally ill and the unemployed.

Last year, Urban Services opened two shelters -one on North Mount Street and one on East North Avenue for two months, providing 1,000 beds to the homeless as a part of its Emergency Shelter for the Homeless Program.

"We activate the sites to keep people off the streets," said the program's director, Alvin S. Steele. He also oversees Urban Services Project Recovery, a rent assistance program for those who have been evicted.

Although the city and various agencies, both public and private have made conscientious efforts to care for the needy, many people still loom the dark every night searching for a place to rest their heads at night.

Belton and Bartell said Baltimore needs to offer affordable, safe and decent housing to its residents and allocate more money for transitional housing where people can stay to retard the homeless rate.

Meanwhile, the need for shelter still grows.

At the YWCA, Belton said the number of callers inquiring about shelter at the 65-capacity-bed facility has doubled since last year. "I now get 40 calls a day," she said.

Bill Toohey, spokesman for the Department of Housing and Community Development, said in December the city renovated an elementary school into a 37-apartment complex now called the Rutland Apartments, to provide transitional housing to "get people off the streets and onto a life of independency".

"They move from powerlessness to empowerment," said Toohey.

"Unless the federal, state and local governments provide jobs, job training and methods to prevent people from being evicted who can not afford to pay their rent, the homeless problem might get worse," said Steele, of the Urban Services.

Bartell said the Reagan administration has decreased housing funding by 75 percent nationwide in the last eight years and predicts there will be a "deepening of the problem" if the new Bush administration continues the trend.

Bartell said the Rental Alliance Program, which supplements poor peoples' rents like the Urban Services' Project Recovery program does, needs an additional $1 million to keep people in homes and off the streets. RAP supplements a family's rent up until a year and Project Recovery provides rental assistance for only three months.

Under the RAP program for example, the city pays $250 per month for rent for a family of six, whose total income is less than $13,000.

"We need stronger strategies like this to keep someone from slipping into homelessness," said Bartell.

Earlier this week the 13-member Homeless Relief Advisory Board, established by city ordinance under Clarence H. "Du" Burns, to provide and coordinate homeless services in the city, met to prepare its recommendations for the mayor and the Baltimore City Council.

The group is scheduled to release an annual report soon.

Councilman Anthony J. Ambridge, Second District a board member, who played a key role in the board's formation, said the board's recommendations included standardizing health and safety services for the homeless and establishing a 24-hour resource center for housing providers.

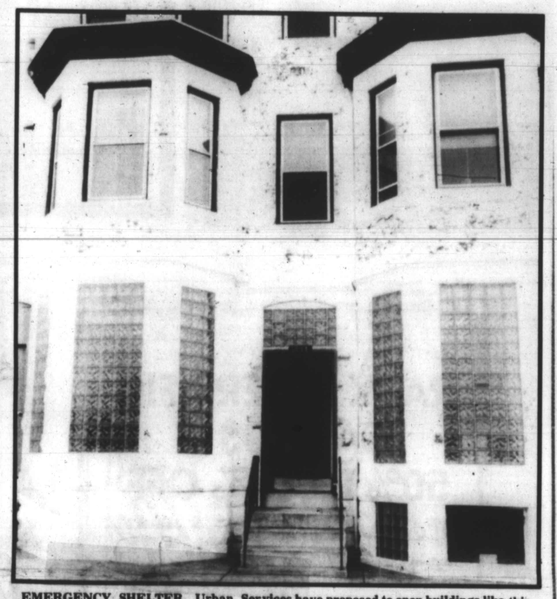
"We have many unmet needs," said Ambridge. "We have more people homeless than we have beds."

Incidentally, Ambridge said the city ordinance also created the Homeless Relief Fund, the nation's only permanent homeless funding program. Five percent of the surcharges on the city's building permits are set aside for the fund, generating an on-going revenue source totalling about $150,000 for Baltimore's homeless.

Nationally, Bartell said Baltimore's homeless situation is much better compared to the numbers of homeless people in other major U.S. cities.

Bartell said the average cost for a two-bedroom apartment in Baltimore is $375. In Boston, Mass., New York City and Washington, D.C. the average is $600 to $700.

Baltimore's low rent and the availability of social assistance, including welfare assistance, make it "possible for someone to make it in Baltimore, but literally impossible in other cities," said Bartell.



EMERGENCY SHELTER. Urban Services have proposed to open buildings like this East North Avenue building to the homeless in the winter when other homeless facilities become overcrowded.

MY SISTER'S PLACE gives homeless women a roof over their heads when they have no other place to turn.

AFRO Photos by Paul A. Greene

SCHOOL-HOME. A former elementary school was converted into an apartment complex in December to provide transitional housing to the needy.