

# The Washington Times

HIGH 44, LOW 34

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PRICES MAY VARY OUTSIDE  
Washington

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The cold, wintry winds make us long to return to the warmth of our cozy homes each day. "Will work for food" signs and huddled forms wrapped in old blankets at Metro stations are especially poignant images. Three local charities are turning our natural empathy for the homeless into practical solutions. Most important, they make giving — especially in our troubled economy — affordable and easy.

The first is Community Lodgings Inc., based in Alexandria. This group helps mostly Latino low-income and homeless families get back on their feet and off the street through housing and basic-skills workshops taught at the group's Fifer Family Learning Center. Community Lodgings ([www.communitylodgings.com](http://www.communitylodgings.com)) relies on its

## Charities let altruism bloom

volunteers to spread the good will of the organization. Volunteers are required to work just two hours a week, but those two hours go a long way.

"The remarkable thing is that we fulfill such a range of needs for formerly homeless families and disadvantaged children. Because of this, our volunteers can choose just how they want to help," says Executive Director Bonnie Baxley.

Volunteers, also known as mentors, conduct workshops on how to meet a monthly budget, how to use a computer and how to speak English. It doesn't stop there; Ms. Baxley explains that in 2008,

volunteers did everything from renovate apartments to teach swimming.

"[Volunteers] logged in well over 5,000 hours this year. They help with our programs each and every day,

**Random acts**  
Stephanie Green

coming from all walks of life. The common thread is that they want to help. We are extremely grateful," she says. Thanks to these mentors' contributions, seven families

will have completed Community Lodgings' Transitional Housing Program by the end of this month. Through after-school programs, Community Lodgings also helps at-risk youths stay away from gang violence. Beginning Monday, the Youth Education Program will begin to coincide with the back-to-school calendar.

About 75 elementary, middle and high school students are expected to attend.

District-based Ready, Willing & Working (RWYW) targets a group frequently entangled in homelessness — formerly incarcerated men. According to RWYW ([www.rwywdc.org](http://www.rwywdc.org)), about 2,000 men returned to the District in 2002 after

serving their time. Many of them owed child support but could not get jobs because of their criminal record. RWYW offers a residential program that gives participants nine to 12 months to get their lives back on track through job-skills training, substance-abuse rehabilitation and wage earning.

Modeled after New York City's Ready, Willing & Able (RWA) model, RWYW is commended by local officials. One of them is D.C. Council member Tommy Wells.

"RWYW takes homeless men who are often viewed as a problem in our communities and enrolls them in the solution for eradicating urban blight. In America, we

generally measure by our ability to two pull our own weight Willing & Working i dignity to those who fallen behind and a ready to return to p lives," he says.

It's also worth rearing that homelessne gets its claws in our legged friends. Taki out of animal mistre the Homeless Anim cue Team (HART). 7 ganization in Fairfax is a rescue-and-supper for stray and abu and cats.

Every Saturday in HART is hosting pet events at Petco local Fairfax and Burke. I recruiting volunteers ([www.hart90.org](http://www.hart90.org)) to with family screening gistics to make the ac Saturdays successful