



# The High School View

The High School View is staffed and prepared entirely by students from the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, and published on their behalf by The Martha's Vineyard Times, with the generous assistance of the sponsors whose names appear below.

## As winter falls, homelessness stresses Island families

BY G. GALEN MAYHEW

*This is part one of a two-part series on the Island homeless. Part two will be published in next week's issue.*

As a new year begins and many Island families celebrate together in warm homes, another Vineyard group is struggling to survive the night. With temperatures recently dropping below freezing, the Island homeless are seeking shelter.

Homelessness on the Vineyard is not a new issue. For many years the number of people without housing on the Island has been rising. According to the estimates of Dukes County Associate Commissioner for Homelessness Connie Teixeira, the Island homeless now number between 160 and 200.

"Until you are there yourself, you can't fully understand what it is like," said Annette Moreis, who has been without stable housing in the past. "You are going from paycheck to paycheck, from hotel

to hotel. You're sleeping in cellars, on couches, on floors. You'd like to have a place to rent, but the cost is simply too high. Sometimes you get a place to stay during the winter, but when the summer crowd arrives, prices rise and you're out." There are currently 80

who live in a car. They had an apartment, but the guy ripped them off—he took the money and didn't pay the landlord, so they were evicted."

Adults are not the only homeless on Martha's Vineyard. There are over 30 young people ages 18-30 years old going to

being unruly. Others seek food from the Boys and Girls Club because their parents simply cannot afford to pay for food and clothing and shelter.

"I've been there," said Ms. Moreis. "I've been where I only had a bag of chips for supper."

outreach program of the United Methodist Church of Martha's Vineyard (UMC of MV)," said Ms. Fiore. "It runs alongside the Island Food Pantry in the Stone Church in Vineyard Haven." Like its name suggests, the program provides free, new, and gently-used clothing to

there asked me to stand in for her one time, and I've been doing it ever since," she said. "I enjoy doing it. I've always been a people person, and people are so happy when they come to Clothes To Go. They come in with their legs showing and searching for some warm clothes, and leave with a new coat, pants, and warm boots. They are so grateful."



PHOTOS BY RICHARD REGO

(Left) The inside of a room in (right) the Stone Church in Vineyard Haven, where Clothes To Go provides clothing for individuals and families in need.

chronically homeless men on Martha's Vineyard. They work in the spring and summer before being laid off in the fall. Two women are living in motels, trying to get into elder housing but facing immense waiting lists. Said Ms. Teixeira, "There is a family of four somewhere

counseling, either for help with homelessness or with additional substance abuse. Some of these young people are made homeless when their parents drop them off on the Vineyard and then return to the mainland without them. Some are kicked out of their homes for

Despite the growing homeless population on the Island, there are very few programs to tackle this issue. One of these is the Clothes To Go mission, founded in 2009 by Jennifer Fiore to meet the needs of the Island community.

"Clothes To Go is an

anyone who needs it. A year-round program, Clothes To Go serves an average of 60 visitors each week and is operated solely by volunteers and through donations to the community.

Brenda Piland is a regular volunteer at the program. "My friend who was working

Ms. Moreis, who also volunteers with Clothes To Go, highlighted the lack of programs for the homeless. "Basically there's just Clothes To Go, the Food Pantry, the Vineyard churches, and Connie Teixeira." **MSV**

## Principal responds to student concerns

BY MARY OLLEN

Regional high school principal Stephen Nixon held a series of brief meetings recently with students in each class grade in order to respond to any questions students may have about some recent events at the school--some a matter of public safety.

Just prior to the winter vacation, Dr. Nixon gave a talk in the Performing Arts Center (PAC) concerning a student who had had a severe allergic reaction to peanuts brought into a classroom by accident, and two other students who had allegedly ingested brownies containing marijuana. In

the wake of these incidents, rumors circulated through the school. Mr. Nixon attempted to address these issues during a short, school-wide assembly called on the morning of December 18.

Mr. Nixon gave a talk that lasted about five minutes, culminating in a request for students to stand up if they respected his school. Although the students did stand, several remained with questions following the assembly.

"I was confused because I did not know the whole story about the allergies and brownies, and I'm sure most of the freshmen didn't either," said junior Megan Hurley.

The lack of information concerning what had taken place was heightened by school and state policies concerning student privacy, leaving many students and teachers unsure about what had actually happened.

To help clarify things, Mr. Nixon agreed to meet with the senior class on Friday, December 20, to explain what had happened and answer student questions. "I can get very passionate about this school," he said during the discussion. "I just want you to know I wasn't shouting at you." Students were encouraged to ask questions and converse with the principal about the issues.

He began meetings with

the freshmen, sophomore, and junior classes on Monday, January 6.

"I'm looking forward to continuing the dialogue with the students," said Mr. Nixon. "I'm working on having monthly meetings with student representatives to improve relations."

Despite initially strong responses among the student body, Mr. Nixon's meetings have alleviated concerns at least a bit. "Although [Mr. Nixon] came off a little strong, it was pretty clear that he was just looking out for us," said senior Tony Breth. "You could tell that our safety and well-being is his priority." **MSV**

## Student moves on



Junior Tamia McGregor recites a poem at the Poetry Out Loud event at the YMCA on December 16. Tamia won first place and will compete in the Cape Cod Poetry Out Loud contest.

PHOTO BY AUGUST WELLES

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