

# NEW HAVEN INDEPENDENT

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## "Tent City" Hits The Stage

BY **Thomas MacMillan** | NOV 4, 2011 7:40 AM  
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THOMAS MACMILLAN PHOTO

Grande.

Not long ago, New Haven Home Recovery used to field 75 calls a month from families facing homelessness. Now the agency receives 15 calls a night.

That's according to Mary Grande, a development associate at New Haven Home Recovery, a local social service agency that works to fight homelessness.

She spoke at a City Hall kick-off marking the start of the fourth year of Tent City, the campaign to raise awareness of and funds for homelessness in New Haven. This year's campaign has a focus on youth homelessness. Money raised will go toward New Haven Home Recovery and Youth Continuum.

Meanwhile, a new report says New Haven's poverty rate showed among the fastest rises in the country. [HuffPo has #s & 1 man's story.](#)

In previous years, the tent city campaign has featured [an actual tent city on the Green](#), with people camping out overnight in solidarity with the homeless.

This year, one in which the [Green already has tent city intensity](#), the campaign will not feature a camp-out. It's an effort to "diversify" said Chisara Asomugha, the city's community services administrator.

Instead, this year's efforts are taking the stage. Two fundraising performances this weekend will benefit Tent City.

On Friday at 7:30 p.m. at the Shubert Theater, New Haven student singers will compete in "[New Haven Idol](#)," a talent competition modeled after the TV show "American Idol."

On Sunday, Co-op High School will stage a production of "[Home In New Haven](#)," a play written and performed by city students.

People can also support Tent City by simply donating directly [at the campaign's website](#).



Shomo speaks as the mayor looks on.

On Thursday in the atrium of City Hall, Youth Continuum Executive Director Carole Shomo said the need for homeless services continues to rise. Youth Continuum has increased helped 130 percent more homeless youth this year than last, she said. Over half of them are pregnant or parenting, she said.

She asked people to consider the difficulty they may have had recently living without electricity. Then imagine living like that all the time, but also without food, shelter, or heat, she said.

"These youth are worth saving," she said. "They will make decisions about how world will continue in the future."

New Haven Home Recovery's Grande also said her agency has seen a dramatic increase in calls for homeless services. "Our numbers continue to rise at staggering rates."

The agency has seen a 204 percent increase in calls compared to last year, she said. It seems to be a function of the struggling economy, Grande said.

Grande cited a new statistic: 20.5 million people are now living below the poverty line nationwide. "That to me is a national disaster," she said after the press event.

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