

HOME FOR EVERY AMERICAN

COMMUNITY CHAMPION AWARD: Robert Schwartz, Springfield MA

A Community Champion appointed by a committed Mayor to bring visible and effective leadership from the business community to results-oriented jurisdictional 10-Year Plan initiatives to end chronic homelessness can make all the difference. As Community Champion in Springfield, Massachusetts - a city of 154,000 - Robert J. Schwarz has brought his more than 20 years' of business experience as Executive Vice President of Peter Pan Bus Lines to his role as Implementation Chair for "Homes within Reach," Springfield's 10-Year Plan. Springfield Mayor Domenic Sarno announced a 39% reduction in street homelessness in the city in February 2008.

Mr. Schwarz proves the Community Champion innovation can bring vital business expertise and problem-solving to the needs of the community's poorest neighbors. In his corporate position, Mr. Schwarz has been responsible for initiatives ranging from development of AT&T's largest "800-number" inbound call system in Western Massachusetts, to oversight of a Marketing Department with a budget in excess of \$1 million, to management of a Customer Service Department serving over 4 million customers per year, to coordination of the company employee "Community Program" focused on empowering employees to resolve issues pertinent to the betterment of the company. Mr. Schwarz served for eight years as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce and held Chamber positions related to financial and legislative issues. He also holds community leadership positions with United Way of Pioneer Valley and the Regional Employment Board.

Springfield's 10-Year Plan implementation has included creation of new Housing First permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless people and adoption of the innovation of Project Homeless Connect, the one-day, one-stop engagement to welcome people who are homeless to a broad array of resources. Springfield's PHC event has been strongly partnered with the local business community. The City has created a Homeless Resource Center and initiated a pilot program to provide intensive supportive housing for mentally ill persons being released from jail. In collaboration with the elected and civic leadership in neighboring communities of Holyoke and Northampton in the Pioneer Valley, Springfield has recently created a new regional plan to end homelessness.