

HEAR US Inc.



Annual Report  
2010 ~ 2011

July 2011

Dear friends,

Look at the faces on the front cover. They are some of the kids I interviewed in 2006 on my maiden HEAR US journey. They, along with our generous supporters, made this improbable dream project possible.

In the five years since I met these courageous youngsters, much has happened. Our nation's economy was ravaged. Global events upended the world as we knew it. And domestic homelessness and poverty soared, with policymakers and communities stymied, particularly about families and youth, too often invisible and forgotten.

HEAR US. Now more than ever, this unconventional effort is essential. If homeless children, youth and families lose their voice and visibility, their plight will be even more dire, an unthinkable option.

My promise to each of the kids I interviewed on my first trip: *I would make sure their voices are heard and their faces seen by as many people as possible.* That is happening. Audiences from Congress to California are inspired by the kids and appalled by their circumstances in the first HEAR US documentary series, *My Own Four Walls*.

Our new film, *on the edge*, promises to upend traditional thinking about homelessness, challenging status quo, demanding solutions.

HEAR US continues to be a vital force in the effort to give homeless kids and families voice and visibility—to ensure the realization by our nation's leaders of the tremendous resource that these young people represent, and to urge implementation of short and long-term solutions.



I am honored to continue the daunting campaign of “using” these kids and women to inspire a *compassion epidemic*. They demonstrated a tremendous amount of determination to risk sharing their “secret” so others in this same situation will benefit. Their courageous resolve motivates me. Their dire plight, and that of millions of struggling kids and families, spurs me to steadfastly pursue every relief possible, joining with others in this quest.

With gratitude for the incredible support and encouragement from so many good-hearted adults and kids, I humbly and gratefully remain your Sister of the Backroads....

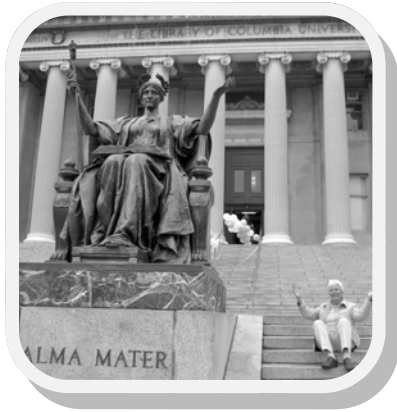
Diane D. Nilan  
President

## ■ Current Programs and Future Plans

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<b><i>My Own Four Walls</i></b>	This banner documentary provides inspiration and information for a vast array of audiences interested in homeless children and their educational rights. HEAR US sells DVDs and provides free discussion/action guides.
<b><i>on the edge</i></b>	Seven women share their riveting stories of homelessness in this award-winning documentary, changing audiences' perception of this growing issue. A comprehensive (free) discussion guide accompanies the DVD (for sale).
<b>It's About the Children</b>	Classic children's stories and evocative images provide powerful reminders about the often-ignored segment of the homeless population. Sales of children's books sets and posters continue to support HEAR US.
<b>REACH</b>	Effective video explains main points about the McKinney-Vento Act, the federal law guaranteeing homeless students access to public education, designed to empower parents and caretakers, especially those incarcerated. Free, online distribution encourages wide circulation.
<b>Advocacy</b>	Inspiring a <i>compassion epidemic</i> , HEAR US continues its successful efforts to encourage policies and practices to ease the conditions causing and perpetuating homelessness. HEAR US cultivates a wide grassroots network and collaborates with like-minded organizations.
<b>Benevolence Fund</b>	Recognizing the need to provide direct support to homeless families and youth, HEAR US set up a very limited fund to provide short-term financial assistance.
<b><i>Littlest Nomads</i></b>	Determined to call attention to the most-ignored of the homeless population, the 0-5 year olds, this film (in production) will arouse this nation's conscience and suggest solutions.
<b>Speaking Engagements, Public Education</b>	HEAR US builds on a reputation for powerful presentations to a wide array of audiences, coast-to-coast, from Congress to colleges.
<b>Social Media</b>	HEAR US continues to maintain a strong, consistent presence in key social media venues, using this powerful tool to raise awareness and develop support.

## HEAR US Photo Highlights



Diane on the steps of Columbia University library on one of her many visits there. She guest lectures at the CU School of Social Work and several colleges and universities across the country.

HEAR US Kydz make a powerful statement in front of the HUD headquarters in Washington DC.



Diane screened *on the edge* at The Women's Treatment Center in Chicago. (photo courtesy Kim Aponte)



Diane and Laura Vazquez in the Northern Illinois University film editing lab. (photo courtesy NIU)



Diane and Pat LaMarche on their "Southern DisComfort" tour in a rural Georgia homeless encampment.

## HEAR US Photo Highlights



HEAR US travel routes are built around conferences, speaking engagements and filming. When feasible, board members help out at the HEAR US table. "Tillie," the HEAR US office, Diane's RV, provides storage and transport for the goods.



Diane commonly finds homeless families in campgrounds.

As local issues and campaigns arise, HEAR US responds, serving as the instrument to empower families and youth.



She called attention to wrongful motel evictions in north Georgia, and focused her camera and blogs on unenlightened soup kitchen policies in Florida.

Diane's travels have taken her through 48 states, over 126,000 mostly backroads miles. She's ready for the next round, wherever duty will call.



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## ■ Accomplishments and Highlights (Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011)

### Notable Events include:

- ◆ 2009 - conducted test screenings of the new documentary featuring stories of homeless women (now called *on the edge*) with a variety of audiences nationwide
- ◆ 2009 - filmed short interviews with homeless mothers across the country for *Learning Curve Express*
- ◆ 2009 - released an updated version of *My Own Four Walls*
- ◆ 2010 - enjoyed a benefit concert by recording artist George Winston
- ◆ 2010 - created the HEAR US “Kydz,” life-size photo statues of kids
- ◆ 2010 - released *on the edge* with premiere screenings in Naperville, IL and Houston, TX
- ◆ 2010 - collaborated on the End Child Homelessness listening tour in Florida with the National Center for Family Homelessness
- ◆ 2011 - accepted, with Laura Vazquez, director, the 1st Place award (faculty submission) for *on the edge* at the Broadcast Education Association Film Festival. Other festival invitations granted.
- ◆ 2011 - conducted an 8-state “Southern DisComfort” tour with activist Pat LaMarche
- ◆ 2011 - screened trailers of *My Own Four Walls* and *on the edge* at a Congressional briefing
- ◆ 2011 - screened *on the edge* for Members of Congress and their staff, HUD Secretary Donovan and USICH Director Poppe
- ◆ 2011 - commenced filming for the newest HEAR US project, *Littlest Nomads*, in Eugene, OR and Long Island, NY

Further accomplishments and travel highlights may be found on the HEAR US website, <http://hearus.us/about-us/thetrip.html>

### Notable Media Coverage includes:

- ◆ 2010 - National TV and internet coverage from an Emmy-nominated news story by Mark Saxonmeyer, Fox Chicago
- ◆ 2010 - “The Story,” a public radio broadcast, featured a story on Diane
- ◆ 2011 - Track180.com conducted a series of interviews with *on the edge* director Laura Vazquez and producer Diane Nilan

Complete listings of HEAR US news stories may be found on the HEAR US website, <http://hearus.us/about-us/hear-us-in-the-news.html>

## Financial Report

<b>Fiscal Highlights*</b>	<b>FY 2010</b>	<b>FY 2011</b>
<b>Income</b> (primary line items)		
<b>Benevolence Fund</b>	\$840	\$6,250
<b>Donations</b>	39,550	23,082
<b>Consulting</b>	16,200	10,100
<b>Fundraising</b>	200	1,150
<b>Product Sales</b>	75,590	60,280
<b>Total income</b>	\$135,116	\$102,058
<b>Expense</b> (primary line items)		
<b>Administration</b>	2,681	3,308
<b>Benevolence Fund</b>	238	6,431
<b>Program</b>	105,130	112,356
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$107,047	\$122,095
<b>Total Over/Under</b>	\$28,069	(\$20,037)

This is a rough summary of key line-items, not a financial report.

*The above figures represent highlights of the HEAR US financial operations. Our unique organization and our modest budget relies on a blend of donations, sales, and honoraria so we can continue to raise awareness about homeless children and youth.*

*Our numbers from last year cause us concern, but we will continue doing what we've successfully done, knowing that if we do the job right resources will be there. That's up to you, our supporters.*

*We are grateful for the opportunity to serve. And even more so for the genuine support and response our efforts have received.*

DDN

### **Donations may be made securely online or by mail.**

HEAR US has been determined a nonprofit (501(c)(3) organization by the Internal Revenue Service. Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law. HEAR US complies with IRS and Illinois reporting requirements. Our IRS 990 reports may be requested. FEIN 32-0155015

## ■ Mission, Directors and Advisors

### Mission

To give voice and visibility to homeless children, youth and families.

### Board of Directors

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Diane Nilan	President, Sole Staff
Ken Johnson	Vice President, Technical Director
Maria Wilson	Vice President, Resource Development
Rita Sullivan	Secretary
Helen Jilek, OSB	Treasurer
Marilyn McGowan	Community Outreach and Development
Linda Bonifas-Guzman	Community Outreach and Development
Karen Turk	Community Outreach and Development
Pat Van Doren	Media Advisor
Dr. Laura Vazquez	Media Partner

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Barbara Duffield	Policy Director, National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth (NAEHCY)
Diana Bowman	Director, SERVE, National Center for Homeless Education
Edgar Barens	Documentary filmmaker, advisor <i>A Sentence of Their Own</i>
Judd Lofchie	President, Lofchie & Associates Co-Founder, <i>Streetwise</i> (Chicago homeless newspaper)
Pat LaMarche	Radio co-host, <i>The Pulse Morning Show</i>
Dan Riefstahl	Owner, Pixel Point Interactive
Ellie Nilan	Community Volunteer, Stone Mountain
Markus Redding	Professor, Columbia University School of Social Work, Attorney
Nancy Wiersum	Community Development Director Naperville Community TV, Channel 17

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Retired State Representative **Mary Lou Cowlshaw** reading Pat Van Doren's book "Where Can I Build My Volcano?" to students at the school bearing her name. Mrs. Cowlshaw, a strong supporter of homeless children's rights to education, died June 23, 2010 after a lengthy illness. She will always be fondly remembered by the HEAR US family.



Champion of  
Homeless Children

***Mary Lou Cowlshaw***

1932—2010



## HEAR US Inc.

Established July 2005, FEIN 32-0155105

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Diane and "Tillie,"  
her RV  
(home/office)

