

# Drop-in Center for Homeless Mentally Ill May Close

## John Heuss House in Lower Manhattan Possible Victim of Budget Cuts

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By **Carl Blumenthal**

John Heuss House occupies the basement of 42 Beaver Street in the financial district of lower Manhattan but it is filled with the commotion of an extended family on many floors. Since 1988, some 35 staff have served an average of 150 homeless, mentally ill clients at this 24/7 drop-in center.

Chances are 50/50 that by June 30 John Heuss will close its doors, the very doors which sheltered the public during the 9/11 disaster. Now that the terrorist tide is receding, John Heuss House faces another kind of attack-the Bloomberg Administration is threatening to eliminate the house's \$2 million budget. The irony is that while City Hall has subsidized Wall Street firms to remain in lower Manhattan, one of the reasons such firms have threatened to leave is homeless people on the streets. The other Catch 22 is that as tax revenues fall in a recession, affordable housing construction grinds to a halt. Then John Heuss House is blamed for not housing the homeless.

John Heuss House has the following mandate: "to break the vicious cycle of homelessness and re-home the homeless, especially those most frail, vulnerable and resistant to services. We interrupt a person's homelessness at whatever level they can be reached and then tenaciously, unflaggingly, move that person at whatever speed and by whatever means possible toward becoming a full, contributing member of his/her community, empowered to help and be helped by others."

### **Art Therapy Saves Souls**

With her Friday afternoon theater group, Bronwyn Rucker strives to "interrupt a person's homelessness at whatever level." She bounds around the room in her paint-spattered lab coat like a pinball, trying to make contact with clients who are alternately cooperative, indifferent, or antagonistic. Most of all, she must contend with the weariness of the homeless mentally ill. The combination of psychotropic