

# Dwight Hall at Yale

In November, the Yale Hunger and Homelessness Action Project, a Dwight Hall group, mobilized the Greater New Haven community and raised awareness and funds on



behalf of some of society's most vulnerable members for a basic human need – shelter. As a result, a homeless shelter threatened with closure will remain open.



State and municipal budget cuts forced New Haven officials to announce that the City could not operate the emergency overflow shelter for homeless men as it had done for 20 years. This shelter housed upward of 75 men in the coldest months of the year. The City restored some funding, but a daunting gap of \$100,000 remained. Dwight Hall sponsored a week of activities for the Shelter Now campaign that included these important events:



#### **SATURDAY, 11/15/08 – SUNDAY, 11/16/08 – THE SLEEPOUT**

Students set up nearly 30 tents as a display of solidarity. Student organizations raised money by sponsoring tents and supplied more than 100 volunteers who slept in the Dwight Hall Chapel and on the Old Campus.



#### **MONDAY, 11/17/08 – INTERFAITH GATHERING**

Dwight Hall's Interfaith Alliance for Justice worked with Shelter Now to encourage reflection on homelessness and justice and to raise awareness and funds. "The threat to our community engages us on a deeply religious level. Running through all of our traditions is a strong injunction to care for those in need." ~ Jennie Nevin '10 and Madeline Johnson '10

#### **TUESDAY, 11/18/08 – FILM SCREENING**

Students produced a documentary about New Haven's homelessness crisis.

#### **WEDNESDAY, 11/19/08 – THE POLITICS OF HOMELESSNESS**

Dwight Hall hosted a panel on policies impacting homelessness in the state, with a focus on addressing root causes and developing long-term solutions. The panel featured directors from CT Coalition to End Homelessness, Partnership for Strong Communities, Capitol Region Council of Governments, and a representative for the City of New Haven.



#### **THURSDAY, 11/20/08 – THE YHHAP FAST**

The proceeds from the fall semester Fast were dedicated entirely to Shelter Now. The Fast was the most successful ever – 1,887 students participated, sacrificing their dining hall plans for a day and netting more than \$13,500.

Students raised nearly \$30,000 while also engaging the broader community in additional fundraising events. The result is that the men's emergency shelter has opened its doors and will remain open through April.

# DWIGHT HALL REMEMBERS HERB CAHOON

## A VOICE FOR SERVICE AND JUSTICE

### 1918 - 2008

Friends, family members and former colleagues paid tribute to Herbert A. Cahoon, longtime Dwight Hall leader, civil rights activist and community service advocate, during a September 26 memorial service in the Dwight Hall Chapel and in remembrances.

Cahoon, a colorful and inspiring figure who died in August at age 91, was director of Yale Volunteer Services from 1960 to 1982. When Volunteer Services became part of Dwight Hall, Cahoon remained active in his retirement by serving as Dwight Hall Emeritus Consultant for 25 years.

“Herb influenced generations of activists and civic leaders by organizing Freedom Rides with Yale Chaplain Rev. William Sloane Coffin during the Civil Rights Movement, counseling draft resisters during the Vietnam War, and encouraging Dwight Hall students to design programs that meet the needs of the communities they seek to serve,” said Alex Knopp, Dwight Hall general secretary and executive director.

Cahoon also was instrumental in securing Dwight Hall’s role as a mediator during the Black Panther trials in New Haven in the 1970s.

Henry Freeman, a former Dwight Hall general secretary, called Cahoon a fatherly figure. “Yale is a great place for nurturing a student’s head. Herb cared about students in terms of nurturing their hearts,” Freeman said.

John Abelson ’79 recalled Cahoon’s role in helping Yale students open a bike shop that employed troubled teenagers. He helped find a space on Wall Street for the shop and was responsible for bringing in many loyal customers.

Cahoon was also praised for: helping students establish non-profit organizations, such as Marrakech Inc. for disabled people and New Haven Halfway House; for working on creation of the Dwight Hall Summer Internship Program for students performing community service in New Haven; and for helping to increase the number of students involved in community service from 300 to more than 1,000.

Former Dwight Hall Program Director Pamela Bisbee-Simonds recalled that Cahoon “pushed, he prodded, he needled and inspired.”

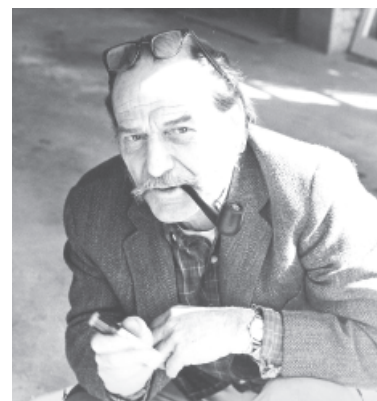
Johnny Scafidi, the current program director, called Cahoon “an organizer in the purest sense.” Scafidi said “when students came to him with service ideas, he challenged them to think through the details to make their projects manageable and sustainable. His catchphrase: ‘Who wants it? Who needs it? Who’s going to do it when you graduate?’”

Speakers at the memorial service also recalled Cahoon’s eternal youth, big laugh, and his flamboyant use of sounds and wild hand gestures in place of words.

Cahoon’s wife, Jean, praised her husband’s self-assuredness. “He was so comfortable in his own skin. He was so accepting of everyone else, but of himself, too,” she said.

Freeman, former general secretary, summed up Cahoon beautifully: “He just had an incredible gift. He was an incredible human being.”

Cahoon’s family has asked that donations in his memory be sent to the Herb Cahoon Campus and Community Fund at Dwight Hall.



*This piece is based on an article by Greta Stetson in the Sept. 29 “Yale Daily News”.*