



The Doe Fund

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CANDLELIGHT VIGIL FOR HOMELESS LIVES DRAWS HUNDREDS
TO GRAND CENTRAL STATION ON CHRISTMAS DAY**

FOUNDER OF THE DOE FUND CALLS FOR "HUMANITY AND OPPORTUNITY" AT STIRRING TRIBUTE

December 25, 2014 (NEW YORK) -- At 11 o'clock Christmas morning, hundreds of people, many of them formerly homeless, gathered at Grand Central Station to pay tribute to individuals who have perished on New York City streets and to remember one woman, in particular: Mama Doe.

The event is an annual holiday tradition started by George McDonald, founder and president of The Doe Fund, one of the nation's most respected homeless services organizations.

"We're here to honor the life of Mama Doe," began McDonald, who addressed the crowd at the vigil's start, "a dear friend who died here nearly thirty years ago after she was forced out into the cold on Christmas Eve." Mama Doe, a woman who lived in Grand Central while McDonald was feeding the homeless there, was the inspiration for The Doe Fund.

"All lives have value. Homeless lives have value!" McDonald continued. "What we all need is opportunity, so that that value can shine through."

The Reverend Alfonso Wyatt also spoke, directing his remarks to the "men in blue"-- formerly homeless men in The Doe Fund's transitional work program who attended in bright blue uniforms. "The train is leaving!," he urged. "The train to a better life is in the station. You have to make sure you have your ticket; you need to get your ticket and get on that train!" The crowd cheered in response.

Recalling the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights attorney Norman Siegel told the vigil's crowd, "It truly is what's in your mind and what's in your heart that matters. That is what makes us who we are, not our pasts, not our skin color, not whether you have a home or not."



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Charles Bryant, who himself had experienced homelessness and incarceration after the death of his mother when he was a teenager, was the morning's final speaker. Bryant graduated from The Doe Fund's Ready, Willing & Able program and now works for the organization.

"I don't think my mother or Mama Doe would want us to be sad today. Because we've saved ourselves, and we've saved each other," he said. "And today, on Christmas, we're all brothers and sisters here, from the same family."

The program concluded with a candle lighting ceremony. When the hall was fully illuminated, singer-songwriter Lindsay Ellyn led the crowd in rounds of "Amazing Grace" and "This Little Light of Mine."

The vigil comes in advance of The Doe Fund's 30th anniversary and ahead of a major expansion for the organization, which was announced earlier this year.

ABOUT THE DOE FUND

Founded in 1985 by homeless advocate George T. McDonald, The Doe Fund provides life-transforming services, supportive and transitional housing, and economic opportunity for formerly homeless and incarcerated men, veterans, and people living with AIDS.

Through its pioneering work in social enterprise, including the acclaimed Ready, Willing & Able program, The Doe Fund reduces recidivism, improves the quality of life in city neighborhoods, and fosters permanent economic independence among its clients.

Known throughout the city by their distinctive blue uniforms, The "men in blue" of The Doe Fund's Ready, Willing & Able program clean more than 170 miles of New York City streets and sidewalks as part of a year-long program of recovery, personal and professional development, and economic advancement.

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