

Welcome to TimesPeople
Get Started

 TimesPeople Lets You Share and Discover the Best of NYTimes.com

8:50 AM

[Recommend](#)

[HOME PAGE](#) [TODAY'S PAPER](#) [VIDEO](#) [MOST POPULAR](#) [TIMES TOPICS](#)

[Get Home Delivery](#) [My Account](#) [Welcome, tonsilva0](#) [Log Out](#) [Help](#)

The New York Times

Education

Search All NYTimes.com

Go



[WORLD](#) [U.S.](#) [N.Y. / REGION](#) [BUSINESS](#) [TECHNOLOGY](#) [SCIENCE](#) [HEALTH](#) [SPORTS](#) [OPINION](#) [ARTS](#) [STYLE](#) [TRAVEL](#) [JOBS](#) [REAL ESTATE](#) [AUTOS](#)

[POLITICS](#) **EDUCATION**



[View Current Incentives](#)

Jeep is a registered trademark of Chrysler LLC

[Advertise on NYTimes.com](#)

Surge in Homeless Children Strains School Districts

[Next Article in Education \(1 of 32\) »](#)



Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

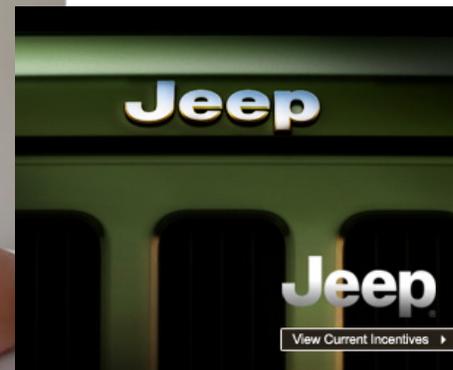
Charity Crowell said that in the turmoil of homelessness last spring, she had trouble sleeping, nodded off in class and saw her grades slip. [More Photos >](#)

By **ERIK ECKHOLM**

Published: September 5, 2009

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — In the small trailer her family rented over the summer, 9-year-old Charity Crowell picked out the green and purple outfit she would wear on the first day of school. She vowed to try harder and bring her grades back up from the C's she got last spring — a dismal semester when her parents lost their jobs and car and the family was evicted and migrated through friends' houses and a motel.

Charity is one child in a national surge of



[View Current Incentives](#)

[Advertise on NYTimes.com](#)

Buy Sports Tickets **TICKETSNow**[®] a ticketmaster[®] company

Fri, Oct. 2nd, 2009 11:59 PM	Chicago Bulls at Indiana Pacers	From \$30-\$50	BUY
Tue, Oct. 6th, 2009 7:30 PM	Utah Jazz at Chicago Bulls	From \$295-\$295	BUY
Sat, Oct. 10th, 2009 7:30 PM	Chicago Bulls at Milwaukee Bucks	From \$55-\$70	BUY
Tue, Oct. 13th, 2009 7:00 PM	Milwaukee Bucks at Chicago Bulls	From \$20-\$500	BUY
Wed, Oct. 14th, 2009 7:00 PM	Chicago Bulls at Minnesota Timberwolves	From \$9-\$20	BUY

SIGN IN TO RECOMMEND

E-MAIL

PRINT

SHARE

ARTICLE TOOLS
SPONSORED BY

In Her Words



Katrina Crowell talks about how hard times affect her young family.

CLICK TO PLAY AUDIO

Worried About Tomorrow



Audio: Fred R. Conrad

Not Having a Car

Moving Is Stressful

Multimedia



Photographs
Students and Homelessness

Enlarge This Image



Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

Her family is facing eviction, but Charity Crowell, 9, and her younger brother are enrolled in elementary school in Asheville, N.C. [More Photos »](#)

Enlarge This Image



Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

Katrina Crowell and her children, Charity Crowell and Elijah Carrington, who were homeless for part of the last school year. [More Photos >](#)

While the law's goals are widely praised, school superintendents lament that Congress has provided little money, adding to the fiscal woes of districts. "The protections are important, but Congress has passed the cost to state and local taxpayers," said Bruce Hunter, associate director of the [American Association of School Administrators](#).

homeless schoolchildren that is driven by relentless unemployment and foreclosures. The rise, to more than one million students without stable housing by last spring, has tested budget-battered school districts as they try to carry out their responsibilities — and the federal mandate — to salvage education for children whose lives are filled with insecurity and turmoil.



The instability can be ruinous to schooling, educators say, adding multiple moves and lost class time to the inherent distress of homelessness. And so in accord with federal law, the [Buncombe County district](#), where Charity attends, provides special bus service to shelters, motels, doubled-up houses, trailer parks and RV campgrounds to help children stay in their familiar schools as the families move about.

Still, Charity said of her last semester, "I couldn't go to sleep, I was worried about all the stuff," and she often nodded off in class.

Charity and her brother, Elijah Carrington, 6, were among 239 children from homeless families in her district as of last June, an increase of 80 percent over the year before, with indications this semester that as many or more will be enrolled in the months ahead.

While current national data are not available, the number of schoolchildren in homeless families appears to have risen by 75 percent to 100 percent in many districts over the last two years, according to Barbara Duffield, policy director of the [National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth](#), an advocacy group.

There were 679,000 homeless students reported in 2006-7, a total that surpassed one million by last spring, Ms. Duffield said.

With schools just returning to session, initial reports point to further rises. In San Antonio, for example, the district has enrolled 1,000 homeless students in the first two weeks of school, twice as many as at the same point last year.

"It's hard enough going to school and growing up, but these kids also have to worry where they'll be staying that night and whether they'll eat," said Bill Murdock, chief executive of [Eblen-Kimmel Charities](#), a private group in Asheville that helps needy families with anything from food baskets and money for utility bills to toiletries and a prom dress.

"We see 8-year-olds telling Mom not to worry, don't cry," Mr. Murdock said.

Since 2001, [federal law](#) has required every district to appoint a liaison to the homeless, charged with identifying and aiding families who meet a broad definition of homelessness — doubling up in the homes of relatives or friends or sleeping in motels or RV campgrounds as well as living in cars, shelters or on the streets. A small minority of districts, including Buncombe County, have used federal grants or local money to make the position full time.

The law lays out rights for homeless children, including immediate school placement without proof of residence and a right to stay in the same school as the family is displaced. Providing transportation to the original school is an expensive logistical challenge in a huge district like Buncombe County, covering 700 square miles.

Fri, Oct. 16th, Minnesota Timberwolves

MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED | BLOGGED | SEARCHED

1. How Did Economists Get It So Wrong?
2. Back to Business: Wall Street Pursues Profit in Bundles of Life Insurance
3. Winslow Homer's Maine
4. Design: Typography Fans Say Ikea Should Stick to Furniture
5. Keeping That New PC Clean and Pure
6. Your Money: Why College Costs Rise, Even in a Recession
7. For Your Health, Froot Loops
8. Turning to Tie-Ins, Lego Thinks Beyond the Brick
9. Editorial: Respect Your Children
10. Gail Collins: An End of Summer Quiz

[Go to Complete List »](#)



When a colleague slacks off

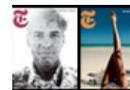
ALSO IN JOBS »

- Looking for a new job?
- Quenching a thirst for learning

nytimes.com

JOBS

ADVERTISEMENTS



The New York Times Style Magazine
 NYTIMES.COM/TMAGAZINE ENTER NOW

Ads by Google what's this?

- Private School K-12**
Learn About Our Accredited Online K-12 Private School!
Free Brochure
www.NationalConnectionsAcademy.com
- St. Peter's School, DC**
A Capitol Hill Community School Now Enrolling Grades PK-8
www.stpetersinterparish.org
- Free K-12 School at Home**
Get Started Today. Enroll Now! Give Your Child A Better Education.
www.ConnectionsAcademy.com

Fairfax County, Va., where the number of homeless students climbed from 1,100 in June 2007 to 1,800 last spring, has three social workers dedicated to the homeless and is using a temporary stimulus grant to assign a full-time transportation coordinator to commandeer buses, issue gas cards and sometimes call taxis to get the children to their original schools.

Like Fairfax County, the Asheville area looks prosperous, drawing tourists and retirees, but manicured lawns, million-dollar homes and golf courses mask the struggles of many adults working at low-paying jobs in sales and food service.

Emily Walters, the liaison to the homeless for the Buncombe County schools, is busy as school begins, providing backpacks and other supplies and signing children up for free breakfasts and lunches. But her job continues through the school year as other families lose their footing and those who had concealed their status, because of the stigma or because they were not aware of the benefits, join the list.

Sometimes it includes driving families in crisis to look at prospective shelters — a temporary solution at best, Ms. Walters said. When the county receives a two-year stimulus grant next month, she said, she hopes there will be more money to help people avoid eviction or pay security deposits for new rentals.

The evening before school began, Ms. Walters drove 45 minutes to an RV campground to deliver a scientific calculator and other essential school supplies to Cody Curry, 14, who lives with his mother, Dawn, and his brother, Zack, 11, in a camper. Mrs. Curry had to downsize from a trailer, she said, when her work as a sales clerk was cut to two days a week.

The first day of school, Ms. Walters drove to a men's rescue shelter in the city to take Nate Fountain, 18, to high school. Nate said his parents kicked him out of the house last spring, during his senior year, because he was not doing his school work and was drinking and using drugs. With Ms. Walters's help, he said, he expects to finish high school this semester and study culinary arts at a community college.

"I spend a lot of time just making sure the kids stay in school," Ms. Walters said.

The busing service was especially valued by Leslie Laws, who was laid off from her job in customer service last year and lost her rental apartment.

Ms. Laws and her 12-year-old son are staying in a women's shelter in Asheville, far from his former school. He is deeply involved with activities like chorus. Now he must catch the bus at 6:05 a.m. and ride one and a half hours each way.

Educators and advocates for the homeless across the country said that in the current [recession](#), the law had made a difference, minimizing destructive gaps in schooling and linking schools with social welfare agencies.

Charity Crowell, despite her vow to bring up her grades, may be in store for another rough semester. Her stepfather works long hours delivering food on commission, but business is poor. Her mother, Katrina, wants to look for a job, but that is difficult without a car.

Food stamps help, but by the second half of each month the family is mostly eating "Beanee Weenees and noodles," Ms. Crowell said. As school resumed in late August, the family was facing eviction from the \$475-a-month trailer and uncertain about what to do next.

[Sign in to Recommend](#)

A version of this article appeared in print on September 6, 2009, on page A1 of the New York edition.

[Next Article in Education \(1 of 32\) »](#)

 E-MAIL

 PRINT

Times Reader 2.0: Daily delivery of The Times - straight to your computer. Subscribe for just \$3.45 a week.

Ads by Google

what's this?

[Get a 10% Discount](#)

On K12's Award-Winning Curriculum Buy now & give your kids an edge
www.K12.com

[Study The Bible Online](#)

Earn an Online AA, BA, Masters, or PhD. Request Free Information!
www.eLearners.com/Bible

[troubled youth schools](#)

Positively changing youth lives by education at our private school
www.Starr.org

Related Searches

- * Homeless Persons
- * Education and Schools
- * Children and Youth

- + Get E-Mail Alerts
- + Get E-Mail Alerts
- + Get E-Mail Alerts

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



THEATER »



Hello, Sweet Prince: Jude Law as Hamlet

OPINION »



Op-Ed Puzzle: Circular Reasoning

FASHION & STYLE »



A Chance to Dream Where Madoff Did

N.Y. / REGION »



For New Yorkers, the Joy of Reading Underground

OPINION »

Op-Ed: College Advice From the Pros

Professors give some helpful advice to young adults entering school this fall.

MAGAZINE »



Bringing 'Where the Wild Things Are' to the Screen

[Home](#) | [World](#) | [U.S.](#) | [N.Y. / Region](#) | [Business](#) | [Technology](#) | [Science](#) | [Health](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts](#) | [Style](#) | [Travel](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Automobiles](#)
[Back to Top](#)

[Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#)
[Site Map](#)