125 Years

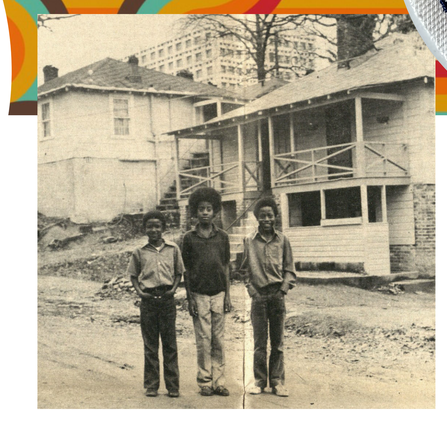
125 YEARS OF HOPE IN ACTION

"Old Homelessness" transforms to "New Homelessness".

Atlanta's "junior-sized" skid row was just a few blocks from the Capitol and the formerly bustling South Central Business District. Historically African American neighborhoods like Buttermilk Bottom (where the Atlanta Civic Center now stands), Mechanicsville, Peoplestown and Summerhill were targeted under the banner of "urban renewal" without solid plans for redevelopment and promises of rebuilding forgotten. These neighborhoods were bulldozed, and households were displaced—some to public housing, others to nowhere at all. Other African American neighborhoods were divided by the unnecessary placement of the Interstate highway, the Downtown Braves' stadium, and projects related to Atlanta hosting the 1996 Olympics.

Andrew Young & Maynard Jackson

Grandson of prominent civil rights activist and community leader John Wesley Dobbs, Maynard Jackson became Atlanta's first African American mayor and in 1971 expressed shock at the poor conditions at public housing projects like Bankhead Courts, describing issues like rats, uncollected trash, backed-up sewers and boarded-up apartments. Mayor Jackson took steps to address homelessness, including a promise to build thousands of new housing units. However, a tidal wave of Atlantans focusing on gentrifying large-scale development projects consumed resources and diverted attention from the needs of poorer Atlanta, resulting in the quiet displacement of longtime residents, especially African Americans without building affordable housing.


Settled in 1912 and often referred to as "Railroad Avenue," Johnsontown was an African American neighborhood located on the present site of the Lenox MARTA station. It was demolished in 1981.

TRAVELERS AID®
INTERNATIONAL

LETTERS
THE ATLANTA JOURNAL AUGUST 31, 1971
Refuge for Atlanta's Runaways
The Editors: We in Travelers Aid were greatly interested in Jack Spalding's column "Life in Piedmont Park," especially regarding the runaway children and youth who make their home in the park.
We would like to commend Parks Director Jack Delius for his concern regarding the runaways as lost people making their home there. Travelers Aid makes every effort to reach these young people, literally and figuratively. Through our long experience (since 1901 in Atlanta) and use of professionally trained social workers, we have developed expertise that enables us to be helpful in guiding some of these young persons toward realistic and productive goals.
One great advantage our Travelers Aid service has in helping these youngsters is that through our Travelers Aid Association of America chain of intercity service, we can learn whether there is any hope of obtaining the kind of home life for which the child or youth may yearn. While we are counseling with him here in Atlanta, our Travelers Aid caseworker in his home community hopefully will be counseling with his parents or those who might be close to him in an effort to bring this about.
It is not helpful to send him home before this. It should not be surprising to know that many parents, with the help of a professionally trained social worker, can begin to offer their children a stable loving home. The counseling with the child and the parents continues in the home community if there is a small beginning toward mutual goals prior to their reunion. There is little need to run away again.
We would like Mr. Delius and others to know that more than a year ago, when we learned that our Travelers Aid "establishment" office turned off runaways, we were able, with the help of Catholic Diocese Social Service, Jewish Welfare Federation, and Community Chest with its United Appeal funds, to plan for a roving or extension social worker speaking their language to move about Tight Squeeze and Piedmont Park day or night. Other social agencies, both public and voluntary, are also trying to help in every way possible, particularly with those whose homes are here in Atlanta.
The United Appeal has made it possible for several of these agencies—Child Service and Family Counseling Center, the Salvation Army, the Community Council—to work together cooperatively in offering service and study of effective methods. The Bridge and other groups have also provided significant help to troubled youngsters in the area.
Travelers Aid welcomes referrals. We hope that interested citizens, the park personnel, the police, and others will let us know about the out-of-town child or youth. Our extension worker can be reached, or a message left for him, at The Bridge, 65 11th St. NE, telephone 892-3559.
MARIAN J. FORD
ASCW Executive
Travelers Aid
Of Metropolitan Atlanta
Atlanta
Letters will be subject to standard editing and must bear the writer's signature and address. Short letters are best. Occasionally, when there is valid reason, the writer's name may be omitted.

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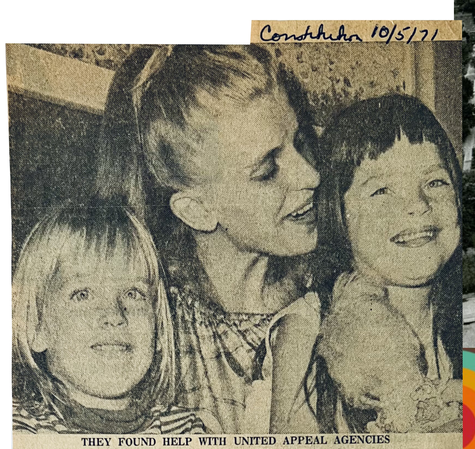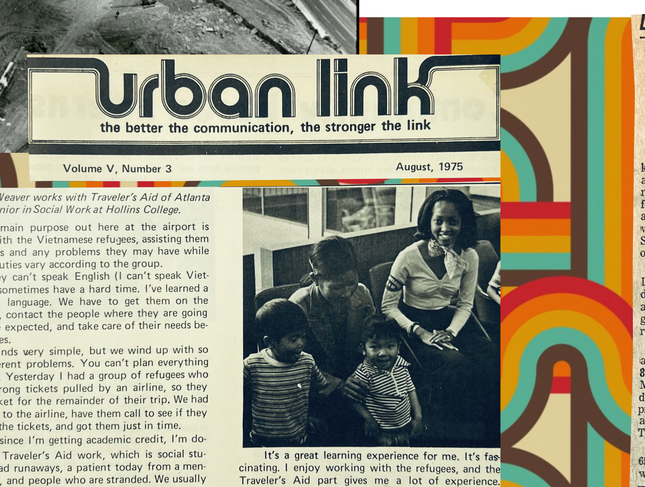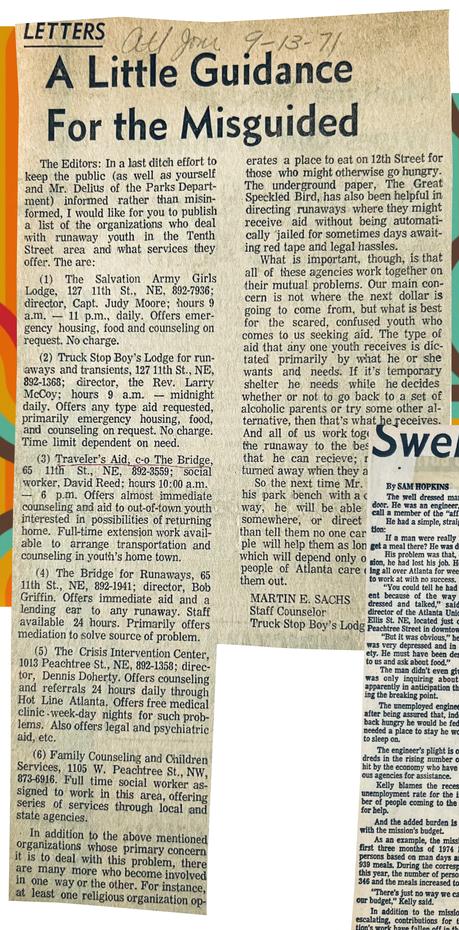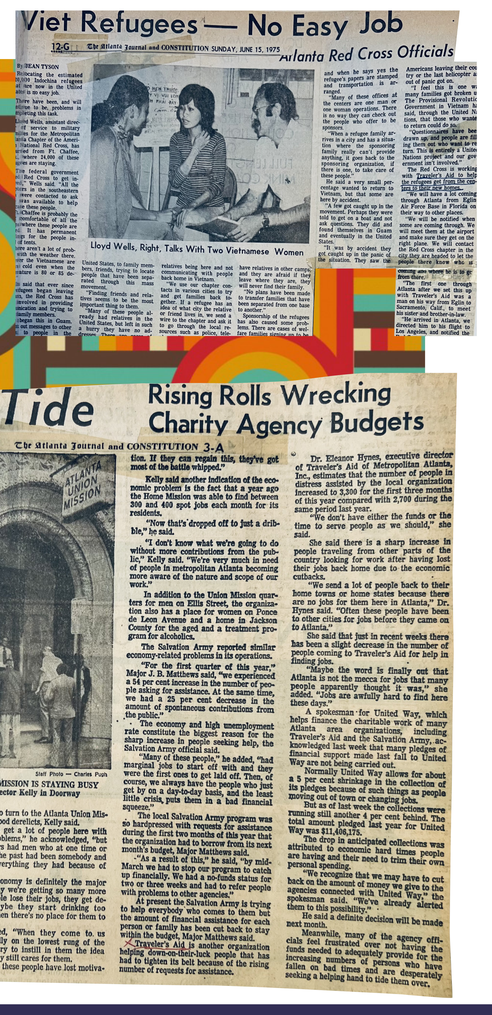
Seventeen people froze to death on the streets of Atlanta in winter 1981. Advocates from faith communities, homeless people, and community leaders mobilized an immediate response, prompting Mayor Andrew Young to create the Task Force for the Homeless, which also included leaders from the business community and in 1986 it became the Metropolitan Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless. In 1986 Central Atlanta Progress decided to address the "homeless problem." The growing numbers of people living on the streets and in church basements sparked the studies of downtown that described the Central Business District as a "vagrant-free zone" and "a sanitized corridor," categorizing homelessness as a public safety issue.