



Full Story

[CLOSE WINDOW]

Ceremony held for five homeless who died in territory in 2006

By IAN MORRISON

Friday, December 22nd 2006



ST. THOMAS - Only a handful of people attended, but that was enough to shine brightly on the lives of five men and women who died homeless in the territory this year during a special memorial ceremony held Thursday in front of the Salvation Army building.

"They lived lives, just like you and me. They were just homeless," said Lauris Harley, events coordinator with God's House International, which sponsored the candlelight vigil.

The ceremony coincided with National Homeless Persons Memorial Day, which is set aside by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Health Care for the Homeless Council to commemorate those who have died homeless across the nation.

Organizers set the memorials on or near the first day of winter - also the longest night of the year.

As part of the vigil, Harley and God's Life International Founder Yvonne Turay led a commemoration ceremony marked by music, the lighting of candles to represent the five homeless residents who died and a moment of silence.

Lockhart Elementary School sixth-grader Aleja Sekou-Tapia presented God's House International with a cash donation and food for the homeless as part of the ceremony. Sekou-Tapia and 23 other Lockhart students raised the money as part of an entrepreneurial class project.

"Everybody needs a good Christmas," Sekou-Tapia said.

The organization secured from the Human Services Department the names of five homeless people in the territory who died this year: Jamie Abbott, Alan Roy Lee, Gayle Meyers, Marcia MacIntosh and Carol McShore.

Though little is known about their lives, they still had souls that need to be remembered, Turay said.

Turay never personally met Lee, but she said she heard from others that he was a tall, "happy-go-lucky" man who liked to hang out in Market Square and teach people how to dance.

The ceremony also was a good opportunity to remind the public and lawmakers that the territory's homeless still

need help, even if National Hunger and Homeless Awareness week occurred last month, Turay said.

"Someone has to keep pressing the powers that be to address this issue," Turay said. "This is a human rights issue and it's a big shame for the Virgin Islands."

[\[CLOSE WINDOW\]](#)