

Peanut butter, socks, flashlights, and HOPE.

By Pamela Josey Pope, Director of Resource Development- Catawba County United Way

How do you begin to address the needs and numbers of homeless people in our community? You come together and you find a way to connect with them. How do you connect? You give them incentive to be seen and heard.

Several groups working with the Continuum of Care met at the Catawba County United Way to organize the 2017 Homeless Count also known as the Point-In-Time survey. Teams of volunteers went out into the community last week to find the homeless, the unseen and “count” them. Participants willing to speak with volunteers were provided a backpack full of essential items such as apple sauce, peanut butter, tarps, socks, flashlights, batteries, toiletries and more. Supplies were donated and provided by several collaborative agencies. Wells Fargo employees from across the region packed the bags for the project at the United Way.

The homeless situation in our community is real. Don’t turn the page. The issues our homeless face are not in some other community, county, state or country. It’s right here. The reasons a person becomes homeless are as complex as the solutions. Job losses, mental health, domestic issues, physical health, education, learning disabilities, trauma, PTSD are only a few reasons...and that doesn’t even scratch the surface.

Homelessness is not only an adult issue. Homelessness touches every age group. Your child may be attending school right now with a child that spent the night in a car or shelter. This is the same young student we expect to perform well in school despite their great disadvantage.

Many people in our area would be homeless if they had to do without a pay check for more than a month. Not everyone is fortunate enough to have a strong family network to fall back on during tough times. Simply saying, “get a job!” doesn’t add up either. You need an address to get a job. You might even need transportation. Public transportation can be a challenge in a community of our size.

Teena Willis, Housing Manager at Partners Behavioral Health Management explained, “the homeless Point-In-Time survey helps us identify gaps in our services for the homeless population. The data is extremely important when planning for future housing and transportation solutions as well as applying for grants. It gives us the opportunity to connect, supply basic provisions and provide resources they may not be aware of locally.”

Seek first to understand. The Homeless Point-In-Time project is a national project that counts and reports homeless population numbers across our country. The information assists the

shelters, food banks, local government and the United Way to better understand the problem so we together can find solutions. We understand the tremendous impact Education, Health and Financial Stability have on a person's life. Tomorrow's outcome begins today. HOPE must start today. Everyone deserves to have HOPE. Don't you think?

Thank you to the volunteers and the following groups for your work with the homeless. The Continuum of Care is made up of community leaders from ABCCM, ACCESS Care, ALFA, Catawba County Schools, Catawba County United Way, City of Hickory, Community Link, CVCC, Dept. of Social Services, ECCCM, Exodus Homes, Family Care Center, Family Endeavors, Family Guidance, GHCCM, Greenway Transportation, Hickory Fire Dept., Hickory Police Dept. , Hickory Soup Kitchen, Highways & Hedges, Our Father's Pavilion, Partners Behavioral Health Management, Safe Harbor Rescue Mission, Salvation Army, Sipes Orchard Home, St. Albans Episcopal Church, Veteran's Transitional Advocacy Board, and WPCOG- RHA. The Catawba County United Way is honored to be a part of the process of bringing HOPE and future resources to our homeless population.

For more information on human and social services in our county call 2-1-1 hotline.



Photo attached:

Pamela Josey Pope
Director Resource Development
Catawba County United Way
828-327-6851, www.ccunitedway.com
ppope@ccunitedway.com

Logo attached:

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