

Homelessness still apparent in county

BY KATIE MANN
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Many organizations around Rockingham County are coming together to end the homeless epidemic by coming up with permanent solutions to house homeless individuals.

The Rockingham County Regional Committee to End Homelessness meets the third Thursday of every month and its objective is to end homelessness entirely in the county.

"We have just about everybody in the community involved — hospitals, transportation, Salvation Army, you name it," Ellery Blackstock, chair of the committee, said. "We try to network and reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness; it's our mission and we're using a team approach."

The committee is working toward developing a year-long shelter.

"It would be funded by donations," Blackstock said.

Blackstock said the committee also could look for affordable housing for the homeless by speaking with landowners or landlords to see if something can be worked out for cheaper payments for those living in the landlord's house.

A faith-based organization in Rockingham County has a mission to provide support and affordable housing to the homeless — Rockingham County Help for Homeless, Inc.

Board Chair for Rockingham County Help for Homeless, Inc. Portia Parris said the organization is housing 51 people.

"These are our neighbors," Parris said. "You



KATIE MANN/STAFF
Portia Parris of Rockingham County Help for Homeless, Inc. receives a check from Pastor Tommy Puryear for the organization.

don't know the need unless you look around." Rockingham County Help for Homeless, Inc. provides permanent and transitional housing to people who are homeless or on the verge of being homeless, as well as food

assistance, support services to help families become sufficient in finances. "We've got to pull together," Parris said. The organization receives donations from businesses, churches or other organizations. Just

recently Penn Memorial Baptist Church gave Help for Homeless, Inc. \$2,365.87 for the homeless initiative and \$260 from the Penn Memorial Baptist Church Vacation Bible School.

Pastor Tommy Puryear said that the church tries to meet or exceed its goal of raising money every year and this year, it met its goal.

Each year, during the last Wednesday in January, a point in time count occurs around the state.

"In 2013, there was 349 homeless individuals in Rockingham County," Blackstock said. "There were 96 children homeless last year and three homeless veterans."

Parris and Help for Homeless, Inc. writes a lot of grant proposals and Blackstock said he works a

Regional Committee to End Homelessness

» More information: Call 336-342-1394, ask for Ellery Blackstock.

lot with Parris because of what Help for Homeless, Inc. brings to the table.

"We're focused on grant writing and getting some funds to open a year-round shelter," Blackstock said. "That's where Portia came in, along with Reidsville Housing Authority and Help, Inc."

Blackstock said most homeless people are sleeping in woods, abandoned cars and tents.

"We're hoping and praying that we can connect and communicate and pull this together," Blackstock said.



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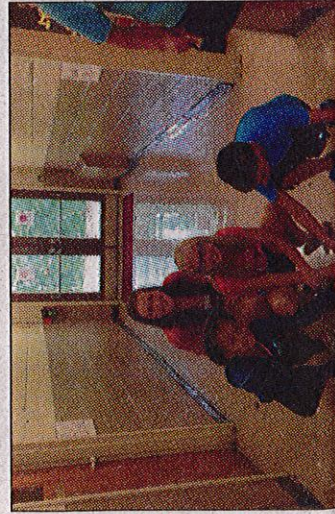
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