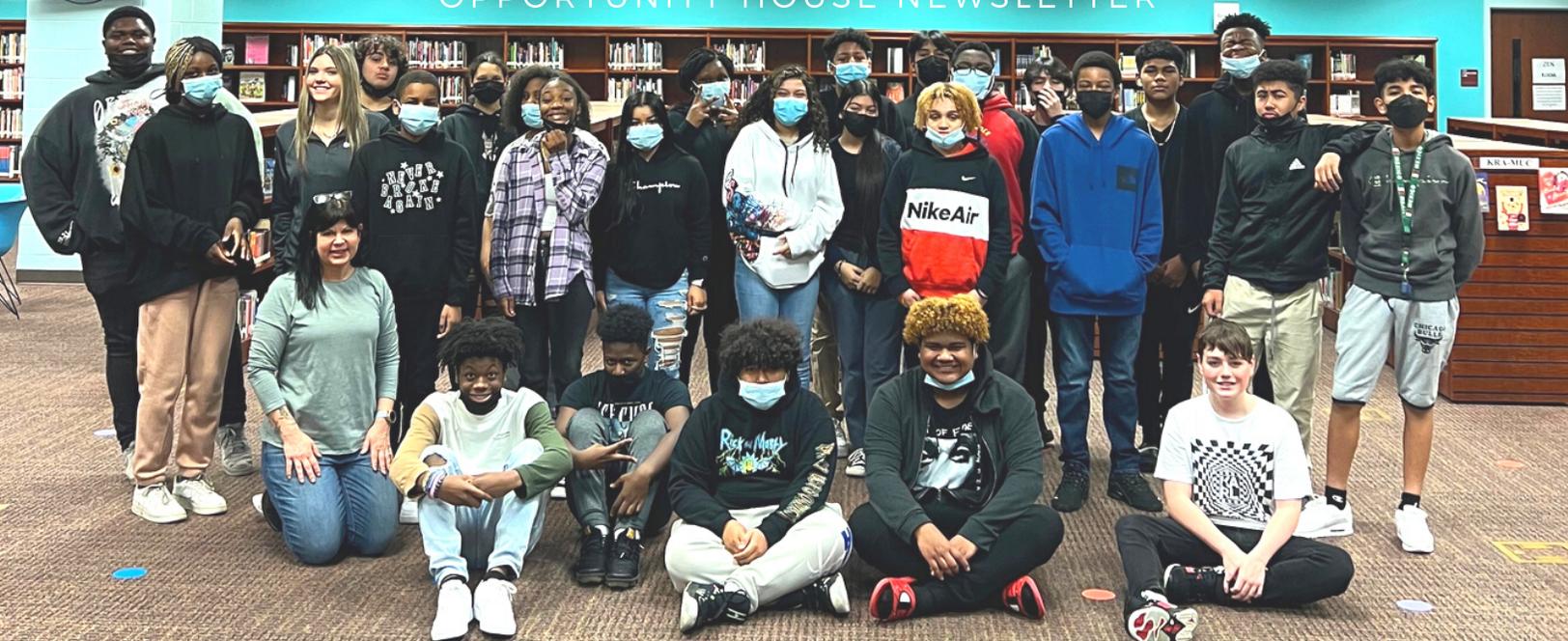




WORD ON THE STREET

OPPORTUNITY HOUSE NEWSLETTER



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings Friends of Opportunity House!

Thank you for your support in 2021. After taking hard hits from 2020, it was necessary for us to respond and recover with an amazing effort and we're pretty close. The need for services provided at Opportunity House increased last year and we're sure it's pandemic-related. We witnessed record numbers for first-time guests (413 to be exact). This means more meals provided, nursing visits, clothing and shoes distributed, showers taken, and laundry washed. But the increase that stands out

WHAT'S NEW?

MIDDLE SCHOOL PHILANTHROPISTS

HOLDEN'S HOPE

MEET JAMES: UPDATE FROM THE CABARRUS COUNTY REENTRY PROGRAM

2021 YEAR END REVIEW

the most is the number of guests who were ready and willing to move out of homelessness and into housing.

In 2021, Opportunity House set out to reach further than we've ever reached before. We thought, how can we do more for people who are currently experiencing homelessness? There were many factors to consider and after several meetings and a few that resulted in strong new partnerships, we decided to set a goal at lifting 30 people out of homelessness for the year.

To accomplish this goal, we needed strong community support. We also needed strong partnerships that would enable us to provide wrap-around services to remove barriers. These partnerships included: access to affordable housing, access to intensive therapy, access to rehabilitation, access to job training and career skills, and a huge Peer Support component to name a few. Yes, it's a bit extensive, but everything necessary to help lift someone out of homelessness - moving them forward to self-sufficiency.

With your help and support in 2021, we were able to lift 28 people out of homelessness in Cabarrus County. Thank you for your commitment to our community and for helping us to accomplish this goal. This year, we look forward to continuing this effort and the fight to eliminate homelessness in our community.

Peace & Blessings,

Kimani Varner
Executive Director

WHAT'S NEW & HAPPENING

BY THAD BROWN, DIRECTOR OF DAY SHELTER OPERATIONS

2021 was an exciting year for us at Opportunity House. We welcomed Kimani Varner on board as our new Executive Director which has given us quite a boost. We also became intentional about getting people off the street by adding our new Housing and Reentry programs. I settled in as the Director of Operations for the shelter. While I'll let Kimani Varner and Laura Tolbert tell you about the new programs, I'll fill you in on the year for the day shelter at Opportunity House.

Over 16,000 meals
distributed in 2021

In 2021 we served **over 16,000 meals**, created by our chef and her assistant, Daron. These are wonderful meals, lovingly prepared, meant to nourish those who are hungry. Due to Covid, a new trend for us has developed, the to-go meals. We served **2847 to-go meals** for people in need this past year. We also provided over **898 loads**



Daron unloading food donations from Boy Scouts Troop #704

of laundry, 1376 clothing closet visits, and **2804 showers** for Opportunity House guests. We can use donations of canned food (no corn please) or prepared food that will serve forty to fifty people. We do receive many leftovers from church and corporate meals. Pop-tops for canned goods are greatly appreciated.

We also began our 2Gather2Gether ministry on Thursday evenings. 2G² is a worship experience with a meal. This service takes place at Opportunity House and replaces our old Narrow Gate service that we had at both Forest Hill UMC in Concord and at Midway UMC in Kannapolis. Our 2G² service is a more intimate service with a greater emphasis on connection and fellowship, not just the meal. Volunteer teams provide the meals. We are blessed with talented teams and great meals. We are also blessed by a variety of local preachers and individuals who provide the message. God's Spirit is present. The service starts at 6 pm with a meal to follow and is open to the community. We keep a running prayer list and we invite you to worship with us.

Should you wish to be a prayer warrior for Opportunity House, just send us your email info and we'll add you to our weekly email.

Many of our guests are challenged by a variety of addictions, not unlike other communities in our country. Sadly, 2021 was a year when we saw fentanyl really make an impact on our community and the people we serve daily. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid (80 times more potent than morphine). It is used in the processing of many of the drugs being used on our streets. This drug is causing a tremendous increase in overdoses and

deadly overdoses right now. This is why we want detox, rehab, and sober living to be an integral part of our housing and reentry program. I cannot emphasize how difficult this fight is. We need your continued support and prayers.

Finally, we need tents, sleeping bags, and tarps. The ice and snow play havoc with the tents and belongings of our guests. Replacements are needed after each snowstorm.

Thank you for your prayers and support.

MIDDLE SCHOOL PHILANTHROPISTS



Tarah Helms and her students at Harold E. Winkler Middle School

Harold E. Winkler Middle School has some pretty amazing teens! When this group of young men was given a choice to do a project for the community, they chose philanthropy. This included everything from asking fellow classmates for donations as well as teachers and administrators. But they didn't stop there. They also turned to the community, gaining a partnership with Chili's to host a "Give Back Night", with a percentage of all sales going to a nonprofit of their choice.

They chose to directly impact Opportunity House and the Holden's Hope Memorial.

HOLDEN'S HOPE MEMORIAL

Last year, we met Tarah Helms after she discovered information about Opportunity House. She wanted to share her testimony with us. It was an extremely moving story about her love for her son, his struggles with substance abuse, and her wish to speak out about the harmful effects of a substance abuse disorder from a mother's point of view. She wanted to help other families that could be experiencing the same hardships she faced with her son Holden.

We believe in Tarah's mission and have shared her testimony on our website. She has started [Holden's Hope Memorial](#) in the name of her son which provides resources and support needed to help people determined to overcome a substance abuse disorder.

MEET JAMES

BY LAURA TOLBERT, CASE
MANAGER



We received a call from a probation officer. He has a kid in his early 20s that needs some support. His parents are fed up, he continues to use drugs, and he's going to end up back in jail. The probation

officer, in a desperate attempt to help, wanted to know if we could speak with him to see if there was any support we could provide?

James came in, anxious, disrespectful to his mom, skeptical of what we could offer him, and at one point, he left the meeting. After a private talk with Dennis Brown, Director of Reentry, he came back in, agreed to go to treatment for his substance use, and come into our [Reentry](#) program after treatment.

Since that conversation, James has completed therapy, life skills & home management classes, and has gotten his logistics certification through RCCC. He is currently employed and looking to go back to RCCC for his associate's degree. He has opened a checking and savings account, established credit, bought a car, and has begun to save money for his future. He has repaired his relationship with his family and will be moving into Stage 2 of our program as soon as a bed becomes available.

We are proud of the accomplishments that James has made and his dedication to achieving his personal goals.

Our goals are to prevent recidivism and relapse by providing services to address the root causes of people's individual situations, whether it's substance use, justice involvement, lack of education, or mental/physical illness. When these goals are attained, we are able to empower individuals to become stable and independent members of our community.

ADDRESSING THE HOMELESS CRISIS IN CABARRUS COUNTY

BY JIM HOOD, PASTOR

People are more important than numbers. At Opportunity House, we want to help people - and not just our Guests, but also the entire community. But numbers do have value. They can help us measure - and communicate - success. With that in mind, here are some numbers to help you understand what we have accomplished at Opportunity House in 2021.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHECK-INS: **8,730**

TOTAL NUMBER OF UNDUPLICATED GUESTS: **713**

This is the total number of check-ins in 2021, including individuals who came to Opportunity House more than one time.

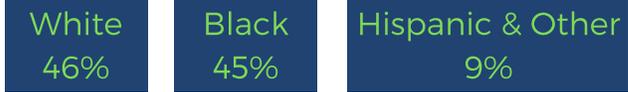
Here are the numbers for the basic needs we provided:

Meals	16,166
Showers	2804
Clothing Closet	1376
Loads of Laundry	898

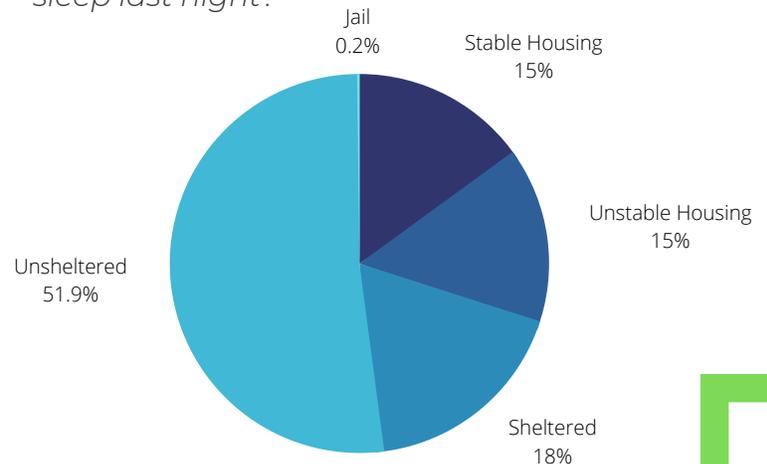
**Note: This figure does not include in-house laundry use for towels, etc. In-house use amounts to about 500 loads/yr*

We also gather demographic data that can help us understand the nature of the homeless crisis:

Ethnicity:



Finally, we ask each individual who checks in each morning the following question that helps us understand homelessness in our community better: *Where did you sleep last night?*



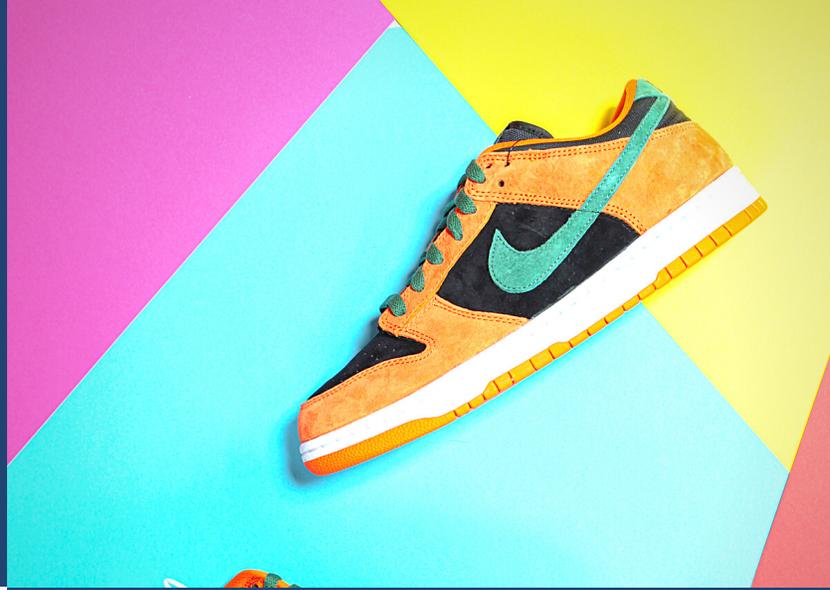
Over half of our guests spent the previous night unsheltered. Only 15% spent the night in stable housing.

You can see from these numbers that there is a lot going on at Opportunity House. If you have any questions concerning these results, feel free to contact us at 704 786 4020 or by email at pastor@opphouse.net. We hope that these results will help you better understand how the ministries at Opportunity House are addressing the homeless crisis here in Cabarrus County. We also hope that they reassure you that we are good stewards of your donations. We could not have accomplished all of this without your generous support. We thank you and ask for your continued support in 2022.

WE NEED SNEAKERS?

Are you getting ready to purchase new sneakers and would like to donate your gently used ones? If so, we'd be delighted to receive your donation!

As we move away from winter, we find ourselves in great need for everyday tennis shoes or sneakers in all sizes for men & women. Please consider donating new or gently used items to Opportunity House!



GET INVOLVED

There are many ways that you can help our neighbors in need. Whether through volunteerism or donating, we are always happy to receive assistance! For more ways to get involved, please visit our website.

Continue to help us serve individuals and families in our community.

Thank You!

Because of your support, our neighbors in need are provided the opportunity to access daily chef-prepared meals, a safe space to shower and wash clothing, vital access to healthcare & treatment, and resources needed to find jobs and housing.

Your generosity also helps to provide free clothing and canned goods for individuals who've been put out of work due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thanks to you, **Opportunity House** is able to meet the needs of several members in Cabarrus County, providing 'hope for a better tomorrow' and the assurance that there are people in this community who care.

72 Corban Ave., SW Concord, NC 28025

PH: 704-786-4020

www.opphouse.net