



WORD ON THE STREET

OPPORTUNITY HOUSE NEWSLETTER



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings Friends of Opportunity House!

What a hot and busy summer we've had this year. This summer has been recorded as the second hottest summer for North America since record keeping began in 1880. Now, for many of us, this is great news. It means trips to the park, jumping in swimming pools, hosting family cookouts, swimming in lakes, and camping season. However, this is not great news for our neighbors experiencing homelessness. The experience is quite different as it means trying to find adequate shelter,

WHAT'S NEW?

MOVING FORWARD AND GETTING AHEAD

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AN INCREASE IN HOMELESSNESS MEANS WHAT?

2ND QUARTER NUMBERS

a cool place to sleep, enough water to stay hydrated, a place to take a shower, and a place to find clothing for warm weather.

This community has helped us to become a place where many of these needs can be met. And we've taken it much further. Opportunity House is now a place where you can start again, rejuvenated, and every step within our program is a step forward into self-sufficiency.

Our programs are centered around forward mobility. In partnership with Aya House, we have launched a Reentry program, which is now the first point of contact for anyone recently released from a treatment facility or previously justice-involved. This program guides participants toward sobriety, life skills, job training, employment, and transitional housing.

The Day Shelter not only provides essential needs such as food, clothing, and showers, but it now extends further into another essential, healthcare. Through the Day Shelter program, we provide access to primary care, dental treatment, and mental health treatment through partnerships established with **Cabarrus Health Alliance** and **Cabarrus Rowan Community Health Centers Inc.**



The Day Shelter provides a computer skills class to teach basic computer literacy. And now, thanks to a partnership with

Rowan Cabarrus Community College, a GED class is coming soon.

This summer was also one to celebrate as we congratulated our first Getting Ahead Graduates! Getting Ahead is a weekly workshop designed to help stabilize each participant's situation and challenges them to build resources to improve their lives.

This is just the beginning of an enhanced Opportunity House. We are grateful for your support and excited to share what we've accomplished together, in Cabarrus County.

Peace & Blessings,

Kimani Varner

GIVING BACK TUESDAYS AT CHILLI'S

We are excited to announce that Chilli's, located at 1365 Concord Pkwy N. Concord, NC, across the street from Atrium Health Cabarrus, has designated the 2nd Tuesday of each month as a giving back night to support Holden's Hope.

Holden's Hope is a memorial started by Tarah Helms, a mother who knows firsthand the hardships that come with a fight with substance abuse. Named after her son, Holden's Hope helps to provide therapy, treatment, and support for many individuals who are facing the same challenges that her son Holden battled in an effort to reach sobriety.

AN INCREASE IN HOMELESSNESS MEANS WHAT?

BY THAD BROWN, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Greetings friends of Opportunity House,

I pray this newsletter finds you well. We appreciate your interest in and support of Opportunity House. With the current inflationary economic conditions, we foresee an increase in new clients here at Opportunity House. This is because affordable housing continues to be a problem in Cabarrus County, as it is all across our country.

Interestingly, that being said, our daily numbers have been down somewhat. Not much, 10 % or so. Even though we are still averaging 68 meals per day. This includes breakfast, lunch in, and lunch to go. We are also averaging 1 to 2 new people per day. So, people are continuing to become homeless at an increasing rate, just as the previously cited economic conditions would indicate. But there are several factors that would impact this small decline in our overall attendance.

First and foremost, is our becoming intentional in getting our clients off the street. We began 2021 with a goal of helping 30 homeless people attain stable housing. We accomplished this goal. We have a similar goal for this year. Meaning that, as of today, we have approximately 50 fewer homeless because we have

helped them off the street and into some form of stable housing. This help could be any combination of treatment facilities, job success and entering the housing market, or other similar avenues provided by our Reentry and our Housing programs. This proves that these programs are making a noticeable difference in confronting the homelessness issue here in Cabarrus County.

A second reason for this decline is that, sadly, we have had several deaths in our homeless community. This is a reminder that being homeless is not the only challenge that this population faces. Drugs and alcohol abuse are rampant in our community as a whole. Fentanyl is deadly and its availability is increasing. Many times success in getting off the street solely rests upon whether or not an individual can make the tough choice of seeking detox and/or rehab. A large number of our success stories include the testimony of sobriety and staying clean.

Finally, we have begun to raise our expectations for all of our guests. This includes setting standards around our zero-tolerance policy for stealing, drug dealing, and abusive behavior. We also expect all of our guests to help out around the shelter. We have a points system in place that ensures each guest is being proactively productive. Points are earned for each act of initiative and they can be applied toward securing needs such as washing clothing and clothing closet visits.

In speaking of raised expectations, I have to give an update on our Thursday night worship service with a meal,

2Gather2Gether. After a slow start, we are now averaging 20 - 25 visitors on Thursday nights. Most important is the connection and personal bonding that is taking place. We are building close relationships with one another, helping to facilitate the trust necessary to accomplish our main goals: witness and service to Christ, keeping people healthy and alive, and getting people into stable housing.

I'll finish with a shout-out to our team. Dennis Brown who is heading up our reentry program and our indefatigable parish nurse, Laura Tolbert, who is in charge of our housing program are working hard to implement a vision. Also, Alisha Dixon, who is our peer support specialist. Without Alisha, none of this would happen. They are all doing wonderful work.

A special thank you needs to be given to our chef and food coordinator Kathy Rowlands, and our sous chef Daron Williams. These two created many tasty miracles during the pandemic. They continue to bless our clients with nutritious and fun meals. May God continue to bless them in their work.

We need your help for all of this to be successful. Volunteers, donations of money, food, supplies, and items such as tents, sleeping bags, and backpacks are essential. If you are in a position to help, please do.

Finally, understand that our fight against homelessness is a spiritual battle. We need your prayers. Pray for us regularly.

We thank you for any and all support.

Thad Brown
Opportunity House
Day Shelter Operations

THANK YOU CORNING INCORPORATED FOUNDATION

This year, we received a gift from Corning Incorporated Foundation that helped us to prepare meals during the spring and summer transition. Whenever there is a drastic change in weather, our operations are always affected. For warmer weather, typically this means finding a cool place to escape the heat, a washer and dryer to clean sweaty clothes, and a shower to rinse off the day. However, this year's summer, mixed with COVID-19 pandemic-related situational homelessness, has increased meals distributed to new record highs.

Thanks to the generosity of Corning Incorporated, we have been able to distribute **4,913 meals**. Thank you Corning Incorporated for helping us to continue our mission to serve the people of Cabarrus County.



CORNING
FOUNDATION

GREETINGS FROM THE GATHERING

BY JIM HOOD, PASTOR

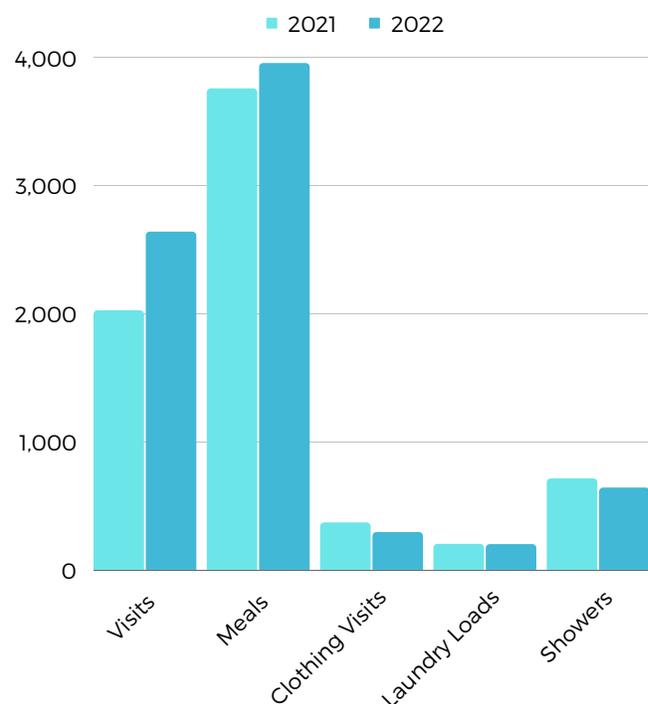
The Gathering is a congregation that meets at Opportunity House and is an integral part of the Opportunity House family. Every Saturday evening we have a meal at 6:00 pm and worship service at 7:00 pm. We are a small congregation, averaging 25-30 in attendance. The atmosphere is casual, but we are serious about our faith. Here you will experience not just a meal, but fellowship, great music, and interactive, Spirit-filled worship service. We are mission-minded and provide a welcoming environment for everyone from the unsheltered to professionals, and everyone in between. Here you will worship with a truly diverse congregation as we seek to grow in our faith together and expand the Kingdom of God.



We have room for more and would like to invite everyone to visit the Gathering. Our worship service starts at 7:00 pm every Saturday, and we offer a meal before the service at 6:00 pm. We meet at Opportunity House, 72 Corban Ave SW in Concord. We are a brick warehouse-type building with a blue awning. Drive through the gate and park and enter in the back. If you have any questions, you can contact Pastor Jim Hood at 704 425 3443 or at pastor@opphouse.net.

OPPORTUNITY HOUSE BY THE NUMBERS

As we are getting close to the end of summer, we typically reflect on the guests we've served this year versus last year. This helps us to gauge impact and ensure our forecast for upcoming needs is on track.



We've seen record increases in services for visits and meals and new guests are no exception. Our second quarter numbers show a 24% increase in new guests requesting services in comparison to last year's.

As you can see, the need is now greater than ever. We appreciate your support in helping us to provide *hope for a better tomorrow* and to continue to move our neighbors in Cabarrus County forward.

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 into a new season 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 sneakers 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 and have fallen into situational homelessness 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.*

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