

Fun for a cause: Baseball game to generate relief for homeless

By Karen Underwood

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TRIAD - Guilford County has a 10-year plan to eliminate chronic homelessness, and by attending a local event, you can be a part of their mission.

The first annual Homerun for Homelessness event is June 1 at NewBridge Bank Park, where the Greensboro Grasshoppers will play the Lakewood BlueClaws. When group tickets are purchased, \$2 of the \$7 ticket price will be donated to the Partners Ending Homelessness Initiative.

"People around here literally live in the woods," said Bobby Smith, president of United Way of Greater High Point about the impact homelessness has on High Point.

In 2006, Guilford County began the Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and reduce other homelessness. Chronic homelessness is defined as an individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

In the 2007 Homeless Point in Time count, there were more than 200 people experiencing chronic homelessness in Guilford County, and in the first two years, they have housed about 70 people total, said David Miller, chairman of the Ten Year Plan.

"The trick is to maintain that," he said about the goal for the coming years.

During the January count in High Point, there were almost 300 homeless, said Steve Keys, executive director of Open Door Ministries. The Open Door Ministries Shelter houses about 750-800 homeless a year, Keys said. Because of the Ten Year Plan, 18 homeless individuals in High Point have been placed in housing, he said.

"There's a lot of work left to be done," Keys said.

At the June 1 event, a choral group from the Salvation Army in High Point will sing the National Anthem, and other individuals who are clients or volunteers with various agencies will be providing entertainment.

The event has several focuses, Miller said. "It is to raise the whole issue of homelessness," he said, adding that it affects everyone either directly or indirectly. "If any are homeless, we all suffer."

The event also will personalize the issue, Miller said, about the real homeless people who will be at the game. The event also will recognize organizations working to eliminate homelessness.

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