

## **Advocates for homeless boost visibility**

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HIGH POINT – A nonprofit organization that oversees efforts on behalf of homelessness across the county is stepping up its presence in High Point.

Partners Ending Homelessness will relocate from its Jamestown office to the United Way of Greater High Point on Thursday. It also will establish an office at the United Way of Greater Greensboro.

Representatives of the group said the move is aimed at raising greater public awareness of its mission and highlighting the need for more coordination of homelessness services.

“We wanted to increase our visibility,” said Jehan Benton-Clark, director of Partners Ending Homelessness. “We really thought it would behoove us to be in both locations and really capitalize on that partnership with United Way and all that they’ve done for us to this point.”

The United of Greater High Point is donating office space and will handle the organization’s administrative operations, said President Bobby Smith. “That’s one way we can help the organization and the cause,” Smith said. “We’re excited about it. It’s an issue that impacts a lot of our agencies.”

One of the Partners Ending Homelessness’ tasks involves working to implement Guilford County’s Ten Year Plan to end chronic homelessness. A key component of the plan is enhancing partnerships with the business community, faith community, service providers and community members at large – something the relocation should address.

“We really want to leverage those partnerships to get people who have not traditionally taken hold of this issue to really become involved,” Benton-Clark said. “We’re seeing new people who are willing to help because now they have a friend or family member who’s experienced this issue. It’s more close to home for a lot of people.”

Smith said one way the United Way’s work will align with Partners Ending Homelessness is with the Housing First program, a component of the Ten Year Plan that moves chronically homeless into permanent housing that he called a major success.

“What we’ve seen here is that it’s a whole lot less expensive to house somebody in an apartment and bring the wrap-around services to them, as opposed to trying to put them in a shelter, where, because of their severe physical disabilities or substance abuse or mental health issues, they just don’t do well,” he said. “You think of taking somebody who’s lived under the bridge for most of their life and putting them in an apartment and having 90 percent of them get stabilized, that’s a pretty good success rate.”

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