

Campus of Hope
by Pat Kimbrough
Sunday, October 18, 2009
High Point Enterprise

Since its inception eight years ago, West End Ministries has been credited with being the catalyst for positive change in an area that once was neglected and crime-ridden. Now, the ministry is coping with extraordinary growth as it continues its mission. A capital campaign has been launched to raise money to meet this growth. This two-part series looks at the work of West End Ministries and its efforts to raise money in tough times when residents need services the most.

HIGH POINT – When West End Ministries was started in 2001, its founders had a long-term vision for it.

The neighborhood ministry, which began as a grass-roots effort in response to rampant crime and other problems, has experienced tremendous growth and now provides a great variety of services and activities for those who live, work and worship in the West End neighborhood.

“From the very beginning, we were looking at it as a campus,” said Jim Summey, who helped found the ministry when he was pastor at English Road Baptist Church. “There were opportunities to go elsewhere, but I thought it was important to try to keep everything right here. We’ve got lots of land. Let’s make this a campus of ministry.”

The organization is rolling out a plan aimed at fulfilling this goal.

Ministry representatives are starting a capital campaign aimed at raising enough money to meet two major objectives. The first is to have all of the ministry’s activities taking place on the campus proper on English Road. The other is to enhance and expand the ministry’s existing programs to provide additional support to residents and better meet the needs of the neighborhood.

One of the campaign’s top priorities is to construct a one-story building on the ministry’s campus to house its thrift store, which currently occupies 75 percent of WEM’s community center building.

The additional space would allow the ministry to enhance its programs, which include a Boys and Girls Club, food ministry, life skills and computer classes and Leslie’s House, a shelter for women in crisis.

“We really see this capital campaign as a key component in securing the ministry’s future,” said WEM Executive Director Judy Mendenhall. “The ministry has come very far in its short life, yet we can see the potential for doing more. We serve an area that has families with a lot of needs.”

Refurbishing the community center building is another key goal of the campaign. A new, efficient central heating and cooling system is essential, while the addition of an elevator that would provide access to all three floors of the building is necessary, not only to allow handicap access, but to provide a way for elderly volunteers and mothers with small children who frequent the ministry to get to any of the floors with ease, according to Mendenhall and others.

Representatives also want to remodel the building’s kitchen so that it’s up to code, making it a true commercial kitchen and providing a way for the ministry to offer culinary training. The renovation would provide ample room to relocate the food ministry (offering a community meal on Thursday evenings) to WEM’s campus as well as space for the Kids Cafe, which serves meals to children three nights a week. Adding a playground on the campus site is another goal.

pkimbrough@hpe.com | 888-3531