

Hitting the streets Homeless advocates host 'camp out'  
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HIGH POINT – A High Point nonprofit that serves homeless youth is taking an unusual approach to draw attention to its cause.

I Am Now Inc. has invited the public to spend a night outside to simulate the experience of the 180 homeless people between the ages of 18 to 23 in Guilford County.

The event, billed as “Sleeping Out for Homeless Youth in the Triad,” is scheduled for Saturday at the site of the organization’s “Crossroads” house for young people who grew up in foster care but lack resources and support networks once they turn 18 and age out of foster care.

“Although we could never replicate the stress, fear, pain, loss of pride and hope that often coincide with being homeless, this event is a symbolic way of raising awareness and teaching others what it’s like being homeless,” said I Am Now founder Travis Burrell.

“What better way to let people get a feel for what it would be like than in November, close to Thanksgiving, being out there in the cold and not having a place to stay.”

Burrell said the organization has space at its Ferndale Avenue property to accommodate anyone who would like to “camp out” in cardboard boxes Saturday night. He said he also hopes to generate financial support for the organization, which, in addition to transitional housing, provides mentors and life-skills training geared towards self-sufficiency.

He said I Am Now is doing slightly better financially than it was this summer, when its leaders were contemplating closure because its budget dwindled to \$500. A grant was secured and a private donor stepped in, which has supplemented the funding it receives from Guilford County, he said.

Steve Key, executive director of Open Door Ministries, said his agency does a count each January that usually finds 80 to 100 unsheltered people in the city. He said a group of High Point University students is planning a similar initiative over the winter as a fundraiser for Open Door.

“It’s been done before and it’s a way of helping people realize that there are people that sleep outside,” Key said.

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