

Making ends meet: Coalition sponsors poverty simulation

by David Nivens

2/10/10

High Point Enrerprise

HIGH POINT – After a sparse supper Thursday, members of four High Point churches will take a look at what it is like for the 61,000 Guilford County residents who live in poverty.

The Main Street Coalition of Churches will bring together 100 people to participate in a Poverty Simulation sponsored also by the United Way of Greater High Point.

Simulation participants role-play the lives of low-income families, from single parents trying to care for their children to senior citizens trying to maintain their self-sufficiency on Social Security. The task of each family is to provide food, shelter and other basic necessities during the simulation, while interacting with representatives of various community resources, also role-played by participants.

Following the meager meal of bread, water, and soup, the simulation will begin at 6 p.m. Thursday at First Presbyterian Church at 918 North Main St.

“Now more than ever in our lifetime, each day we are likely to encounter an individual who is facing a crisis, either due to a job loss, reduced hours/benefits, loss of health care, raising grandkids or facing a foreclosure or bankruptcy,” said Bobby Smith, president of the United Way of Greater High Point.

The number of households receiving food stamps was up 24 percent in Guilford County to 66,300 households in September 2009 from 2008, according to the same 2008 N.C. Justice Center report that estimated local poverty. The federal poverty level for a family of three is \$17,500.

First Baptist Church, First United Methodist Church, First Presbyterian Church, and St. Mary’s Episcopal Church will participate.

“Several members of the coalition and other representatives of the participating churches have already participated in a simulation,” said Paul Siceloff, chair of coalition of churches. “Their experiences led us to believe this would be a valuable learning experience for us as we seek to provide community service and outreach.

“Our hope is to deepen awareness in our own hearts and minds regarding the challenges faced by individuals and families in our community who live in poverty.”

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Poverty

Guilford County: In 2008, 13 percent of residents lived in poverty, according to a N.C. Justice Center report.

Schools: Just about half of the 70,000 students in Guilford County Schools receive free or reduced-price lunches.