

HOMEFRONT

A publication of the Cabell-Huntington Coalition for the Homeless

Spring 2015

Green Team Supports Huntington in Bloom

Provides Opportunity for Those in Need

We've all seen a change in downtown Huntington over the last five years. New businesses are moving in, people are coming downtown in greater numbers, and the streets are more beautiful and pedestrian and bicycle friendly. The transformation is due, in part, to the efforts of the Huntington in Bloom initiative. Volunteers plant flowers in baskets and planters downtown, pick up litter, and even remove graffiti. The program is supported by Harmony House's Green Team. The Green Team is comprised of homeless and formerly homeless seasonal employees of Harmony House, who are responsible for watering the plants seven days a week, April through September. Green Team members work an average of 10 hours a day.

While the Green Team makes a considerable contribution to the beautification of our city, it also offers a critical opportunity for those who are employed on the team. Under the supervision of Harmony House staff, Green Team members receive job training and the chance to build employment history. They take pride in the work they do and enjoy the compliments they receive from downtown business owners and citizens visiting the area. At the end of the 2014 season, four of the five employees were housed and had secured permanent employment.

The Green Team is funded by a Community Development Block Grant and private donations. In the past, one loyal donor provided most of the funding. However, this season, that donor is asking for the community's assistance to meet the need for funding of the Green Team. The donor has pledged up to \$10,000 in matching funds for donations coming from individuals and businesses in the community. If you would like to help support the Green Team, please send your donation to Harmony House, Attention: Amanda, 627 4th Avenue, Huntington, WV, 25701. Please write "Green Team" in the memo line of your check.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity because a guy like me doesn't have many opportunities, and the ones I've had I've always squandered. So to receive another one, to do anything that's worthwhile, is always a blessing. I look at things in terms of a gift or a test, and this is truly a gift, and so I plan to make the most of it."

-Andred Davis, Green Team Member



The Green Team pictured with Huntington in Bloom's Tom Bell and Lisa Riley.

In This Issue

- Adopt-A-Room
- Hometown Breakfast
- Nelson Apartments
- Volunteer Showcase
- Staff Profile
- Faces of Homelessness



Kitchen space in one of the new apartments, located on W 9th Street in Huntington.

Nelson Apartments Now Open

Nelson Apartments opened with an official ribbon-cutting in April. Bobby Nelson, after whom the building was named, and Mayor Steve Williams both spoke about the importance of providing homes for those most in need in our community. Representatives of the City of Huntington's HOME Program and the West Virginia Housing Development Fund were also in attendance, as were a number of supporters from Coalition Partner Agencies and Coalition Board Members. The building was donated by Huntington Federal and funding for the project was provided by the City of Huntington's HOME Program, the West Virginia Housing Development Fund, and the West Virginia Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The Housing Development Corporation was the contractor for the project and provided beautiful results.

The apartment building is fully occupied and provides an opportunity for some of the most vulnerable and chronically homeless to move off of the streets or out of the City Mission and into a place of that they can call home. The project operates under the Housing First model, which is premised on the idea that housing is a human right and that high-need people should not be expected to overcome their barriers before being housed. Instead, those individuals are housed and then provided with supportive services, with the ultimate goal being independence. The Housing First model also makes good economic sense. Housing a chronically homeless person and providing supportive services costs approximately 53% less than it does to leave that same person on the streets, where they will utilize emergency services, including shelters, hospitals, and police and EMS services. Supportive services for Nelson tenants are provided by Prestera's Housing First Team, which also provides services to those living in one of our other properties, Heistad House.

The Coalition was able to utilize some of the funding associated with Nelson Apartments to temporarily employ our own supportive housing team. During their nine months at Harmony House, the Nelson Team focused on the most high-need of those experiencing homelessness. They housed 28 individuals and families, assisted 29 in starting a relationship with a behavioral health provider, worked to get 7 into substance abuse treatment, and assisted 31 in obtaining identification so that they could apply for both housing and employment.



Hometown Breakfast Raises Over \$30,000 for Homeless



February 2015 found the Harmony House Hometown Breakfast at a new venue. This year's event was held in the ballroom of the Frederick Building. Reviews of the venue were outstanding.

This year's event was special because it gave the Board of Directors an opportunity to honor someone who has been so instrumental in helping our agency become a constant agent and source of help for people who are homeless and formerly homeless for the last 25 years. That person is Bill Dotson, recently retired Executive Director of the Huntington Housing Authority. It was Bill who had the vision and the knowledge that led to the creation of Harmony House and Vanity Fair. It is accurate to say that without his support and assistance our organization may never have been in existence.

The event was well-attended with over 100 people present. Our event speaker Coach Dan D'Antoni's comments were well received. Mayor Williams continued his support of our efforts and work.

Other honorees at our Breakfast included: Mark Chinn, recipient of the Volunteer of the Year; the Community Partner of the Year went to the Presbytery of West Virginia, Huntington Cluster; and the Business of the Year went to Starbucks, located at both Pullman Square and Merritt's Creek.

This year's breakfast was our seventh annual event. We appreciate the support of the community and our many contributors. It would not be a success without them.



Harmony House recently registered to become a community rewards participant with Kroger. To support Harmony House, register online at krogercommunityrewards.com. Be sure to have your Kroger Plus card handy. The site is user friendly and will walk you through all of the necessary steps. Our NPO number is 90296. You will be asked to enter this after confirming your personal information. For detailed instructions, call Amanda at 304-523-2764, ext. 102 or email ch.amanda.coleman@gmail.com. Each time you shop, Harmony House will receive a portion of your payment. You must swipe your registered Kroger Plus card or use the phone number that is related to your registered Kroger Plus card when shopping for each purchase to count.

Volunteer Showcase

We could not successfully continue to serve the homeless at Harmony House without the support of our faithful volunteers. If you are interested in organizing a meal for Harmony House or volunteering your time, please contact Amanda at 304-523-2764, ext. 102 or ch.amanda.coleman@gmail.com



Harmony House Welcomes Dismond

At the beginning of May, Harmony House had the pleasure of welcoming new staff member James Dismond to the Jobs First Team. As a member of Jobs First, Dismond will contribute to the program's overall goal of helping to end homelessness through supported employment.

A champion of youth empowerment and anti-bullying, Dismond is a youth pastor in his spare time. In 2013 he founded Gravity Outreach and Empowerment, which empowers youth between the ages of 15-24 to improve their lives and strengthen decision-making skills. Immediately prior to joining the Harmony House family, Dismond was the Assistant Programs Director at First Steps Wellness and Recovery Center, where he became acquainted with many of the clients who use Harmony House's services. Dismond views working at Harmony House as the ideal career move, as he considers Jobs First the "frontline of steps to help people better their lives." Dismond is happy that a major part of his new job will be helping clients gain empowerment, confidence, and motivation, and he looks forward to empowering people to want to be in the workforce.

Dismond is passionate about helping people realize their strengths, and he enjoys using mock interviews as a means to inspire confidence. Both of these assets will do nothing but strengthen and multiply the outcomes Jobs First has already seen. Over 140 clients have gained employment through Jobs First since its inception in late 2013, and many of those have gone on to receive promotions, gain housing, and support themselves and their families. Dismond is eager to contribute to these outcomes, and Harmony House is happy to have his talents and enthusiasm on our side.



Faces of Homelessness

Darrell (DJ) was born in Huntington, West Virginia 53 years ago. At a young age, he and his younger siblings were taken into child protective custody, where he lived in two foster homes. Although he was removed from the first foster home due to its abusive environment, DJ stayed in the second foster home until he was 18 years old. He quit high school in the 11th grade, but was able to graduate early with his GED. Since the age of 18, DJ has considered himself a drifter, traveling from area to area, but in a sense, always staying in the same place. These days, DJ is a proud father of a daughter who is 28 and a son who is 25. Even though his youth and young adulthood were turbulent, he still believes that he is blessed and is proud to say he was raised in a Christian household. Presently, DJ has one main goal that motivates him every day: he wants to find employment so that he can afford to maintain his own housing and support himself. DJ possesses many wonderful qualities, and he knows that he can achieve this goal. When he does, he looks forward to finally being able to call himself a resident, instead of a drifter.



Contact Us

For more information about our services, to volunteer, or to make a donation, please contact Amanda Coleman:

(304) 523-2764 ext. 102

ch.amanda.coleman@gmail.com

Visit us on the web at harmonyhousewv.com

AND

facebook.com/harmonyhousewv

Thank you for your investment...together we can end homelessness!



627 4th Avenue
Huntington, WV, 25701
304-523-2764

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