

Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week

By: Sandy Dempsey

Posted: 3/28/06

Speaker Bonnie Cherry addressed a small group of interested students last Monday, March 20 as part of the Student Government co-sponsored Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week.

Cherry is the founder of a local women's shelter named Hannah's Haven that focuses on rebuilding women who have been broken down after living in the turbulent world with little to no support. Although the non profit organization is religiously based, Cherry's presentation focused more on her motivation in beginning the shelter and the experience she had in realizing her dream.

Cherry began by telling the story of a woman destined for a bitter life struggling on the streets with drug addiction and two kids. It seemed as though no matter what direction this woman turned, her life was headed in the same direction: the clinics she went to for help, the man she married, and eventually life back on the street all lead to an environment that surrounded her with drugs and abuse.

After attempting to separate herself from the drugs, this persistent woman left her children in the care of her sister and sought help relying on her own strengths to move beyond what she considered the world's plan for her. She finally obtained and held a job for nearly 11 years, and was able to reunite with her children, which gave an inspirational end to what began so heartbreakingly.

That's when Bonnie Cherry revealed that the woman was her.

Having been her own motivation for opening Hannah's Haven, Cherry described how the shelter will be more than just shelter. There are plans to offer classes and aid in whichever areas the six women it can accommodate need, such as GED classes, Bible studies, and even hygiene lessons.

"We can't keep letting people slip through the cracks," said Cherry, with a look in her eyes that was somewhere between sheer determination and remembrance. "One day I sat in that seat, too."

Hannah's Haven, named for a biblical character, is completely funded by private donors and will begin hosting fundraisers next year to supplement the cost of maintaining the facilities and paying a full time staff. Businesses such as Sealy and Lexington Furniture donated mattresses and other house accessories while local artist Bill Mangum, featured during the Hunger and Homeless Art Exhibit on Thursday, March 23, donated paintings that were all inspired by not only local scenery, but by the local homeless population to hang throughout the space.

Cherry's own children, now 20 and 22 are helping out some.

"When my son was 11, he wrote a paper that was published on what he wanted to do when he grew up. He said he wanted to open up a place to help women like his mother."

In 2003, Hannah's Haven was given the Incorporation status and it became tax exempt as a non-profit a year later. The actual center, located in Brown Summit, North Carolina, opened on Sunday, March 26,

2006 with an opening ceremony and reception for all those who worked for the past three years to pull the whole project together.

© Copyright 2008 Carolinian

<http://media.www.carolinianonline.com/media/storage/paper301/news/2006/03/28/CampusNews/Hunger.And.Homelessness.Awareness.Week-1749957.shtml>