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Wheels of Blessings - January Newsletter

Heading

Since Sr. Carolyn Mary's desire to "take a sandwich to a homeless person," Wheels of Blessings has grown to three teams that go out at various times each month. Some notes from our teams' January trips:

Each month, we head out with 2 cars and a truck packed to capacity with 100 sandwiches, water, Gatorade, fruit, cookies, chips, care bags, clothes, shoes, blankets, tents, sleeping bags, etc. This month we had hot homemade chili, crackers, cups, lids, spoons. (Thanks to Judy, Jim, and Leo Dobies for the chili). Each month we think we'll never give all this out. Each month we do. Special thanks to Sr. Joann Ury and Michele Jarbeau who joined us for this trip.

We had been told of another motel in Gastonia that many unhoused go to when they have been paid from working and have enough money to get a room for a night or two. Several people we



spoke to there were in "FEMA rooms." These were people displaced by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina. They all were grateful for the food and clothing. One woman had 3 young children.

We told everyone we saw about the warming center at First United Methodist Church in Gastonia and its hours: 8 p.m. opening and closing 6 a.m. when the temperatures are at or below 32. Some could walk there and avail themselves of the shelter; others were too far out to walk and would have to rely on Go Gaston, the city's ride-share program, for transportation. One man (see photo) rides his wheelchair to the center. Others chose to stay in their tents.

We tried our best to help a woman, 4 months pregnant. We told her about the warming center, but she didn't have a phone to call GoGaston. Sr. Carolyn used her phone to try to get her a ride, but the connection kept cutting off. The woman then said a friend could take her, and asked if we could drop her off at a restaurant where she could find the friend. We did take her, and just prayed she would be OK.

We met A., who lives in the woods behind a church. She is a regular for Team 2, and we were happy to meet her. Many feral cats have coalesced around her tent site. As she talked to us about the cats, I was struck when she said: " I suppose I'm a feral person."

Wheels of Blessings' Queen of the Apostles teams set out on a frigid day, handing out meals and other items, going to the usual places and giving out meals to people walking along. Mary Kane, who volunteers at the FUMC Warming Center, recognized many from the shelter.

We found about 15 people in a camp and they were grateful for the meals, sleeping bags, and clothes. We also dropped off meals at one of the regular motels we visit.

Our other team covered the Belmont area, giving meals and items to our friends who live in their cars in various store parking lots.

A Special Note From Ellen

[Link to the Charlotte Observer - Sunday Jan. 19](#)

The Charlotte Observer published a January 19 article on the situation for the unhoused in Gaston County. The article cited the closing of the Salvation Army's overnight shelter in Gastonia and the closure of a county agency largely established to work with the homeless. The crux of the article pointed to the county governments' seeming relegation to community and church groups the main responsibility for meeting the immediate needs of the unhoused.

As pointed out in the article, meeting immediate needs is only a "band-aid." We at Wheels of Blessing agree, as do the many other community/church groups trying to find both short and long-term solutions. I wrote a letter to the editor commending the article and reiterating the desire of many community/church groups that both community and local government be in partnership to tackle the huge issue of homelessness.

We at Wheels of Blessings hope that these newsletters continue to keep you, our dedicated supporters, informed of the literal "on-the-streets" needs of the homeless. We also invite you to join us and other groups in publicly advocating for lasting solutions.



In gratitude and with love,
Ellen and Your Wheels of Blessings Team



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