

Forum focuses on homeless

BY NICK G. MAHERAS

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HIGH POINT - Raymond Payne wants to keep the problem of homelessness in the public eye.

One of the ways the founder of Rabbit Quarter Ministries, a ministry to the homeless, and Open Door Ministries case manager does that is through community forums on the issue.

The fifth annual Homelessness in High Point program will be held 2-3 p.m. Monday at Open Door Ministries. The program includes a panel discussion among representatives of five agencies and ministries to the homeless as well as Guilford College scholarship students.

"I want to try to maintain a focus on it (homelessness), so community awareness won't dwindle down," Payne said. "People will forget it if you don't keep it in front of them."

"We're going to focus on the 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness in Guilford County. A lot of agencies, organizations and the general population don't fully understand it."

The plan is emerging through a coalition of agencies, churches and homeless ministries in the county.

"I do believe that everyone is beginning to be on the same page," said Sara Holland, director of Leslie's House, a shelter for homeless, single women. "We're working on cohesiveness so that we can narrow the gap between agencies and the population we're serving."

"I've seen personally that we are narrowing that gap - that it is working, but it's just the beginning. There's still a lot to be done. Without communication, we're never going to know how to do it."

Payne hopes the program will help agency and ministry representatives understand how they can help implement the 10-year plan.

"We want to bring greater awareness to the plan and explain to them what it's about, and how they can play a part in helping," he said.

The plan's concept originated in Washington, D.C., and has been adopted by states and counties around the nation.

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