

ROOM IN THE INN

Director's Corner

Daily work in the homeless community can leave you feeling overwhelmed yet amazed. The words that I associate with our daily routine are busy, hopeful, loud, inspiring, crowded, thankful, tiring, prayerful; always prayerful.

I have seen 14 women move into more permanent housing. RITI has made such a transition in the almost ten years since we began! We are a housing program in addition to emergency shelter! This means that for every bed your church provides; for every meal that is served; for every mile that is driven and for every donation that is made, someone typically moves one step closer to stable, sustainable housing. Do you see God's work in that? I certainly do!

As we continue this journey together I want to point out things that are important to RITI and our daily existence. In the beginning our founders saw the wisdom in partnering with Hospitality House (now Homeward Bound) to provide daily screening of our guests through the A HOPE Day Center. Without A HOPE there could be no RITI. Our women must have somewhere to gather, store their belongings, receive their mail, take their showers, wash their clothes....and the list goes on. These services as well as daily nurturing take place each day with the assistance of all the A HOPE Staff. I "direct" but there are scores of people who support our women. So the next time you have a few minutes, or are considering where you might send a donation, consider the A HOPE Day Center. Our staff with their HUGE hearts does awesome work each day with ALL God's children regardless of where they come from or where they are going.

Blessings -

Sharon



Room In The Inn
A Program of:
Homeward Bound
35 Grove Street
Asheville, NC 28801
828.252.8883
riti@hbfoa.org

Sharon P. Blythe, Director, RITI

**Rev. Heather Dillashaw Spencer,
Director of A HOPE Day Center**

SAVE THE DATE:

ROOM IN THE INN
WILL CELEBRATE ITS

TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY WITH
DINNER & AN AUCTION

DECEMBER 4, 2010

First Baptist Church
5 Oak Street
Asheville, NC
(More Details Later)

ATTENTION !!!
If you are interested in working with a committee to plan our ten year celebration please let us know. We would like to have several people join us!

Everyone asks what our needs are for the women and at A HOPE. We are grateful for your donations.

NEEDS:

For the Ladies

Bus tickets
Underwear (all sizes)
Feminine products
Tote bags
Small composition books

For A HOPE

Coffee
Shampoo
Toothbrushes
Toothpaste
Deodorant
*travel sizes please!

Transportation Needs

Our women are dependent upon Asheville City Transit to get them where they need to go. We have reached summer and some days it is just too hot to walk.

IMPORTANT NEWS:

Has your congregation paid their stipend yet? Stipend checks should be mailed to:

**ROOM IN THE INN
c/o Homeward Bound
35 Grove Street
Asheville, NC 28801**

DID YOU KNOW?

- That if you have a question or an emergency while the women are at your facility you should contact Sharon Blythe 828.776.9741
- That I need you to write in the book each day. It is imperative that I know what goes on at your churches (good and bad) so that I can effectively provide case management to our women.
- WE ARE SEEKING CHURCHES WHO WANT TO BE A PART OF RITI

TRAINING and COORDINATOR MEETINGS:

Our training and coordinator meeting schedules are listed below. We encourage you to post these at your church and invite **ALL of your volunteers to them!**

July 27, 2010; 6:30PM @ First Presbyterian
Coordinator Mtg.

October 7, 2010; 6:30PM @ First Presbyterian
Training Event

October 19, 2010; 6:30PM @ First Congregational
Coordinator Mtg.

RITI NEWS AND INFORMATION:

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you, our volunteers, informed with news and updates. We know that you are interested in each RITI participant and how they are progressing in their path to housing. There are some who are willing for us to share about them and some that are not. We are happy to celebrate our joys with you as we are allowed!



BEST PRACTICES

Does your church have "best practices" that they are willing to share with our other churches? Are there particular ways that you schedule, things that you do during your week that work well for you? We'd like to know about them! For instance:

First Baptist Asheville has a great spreadsheet that they are using to organize their volunteers. Imagine all of your names and numbers for the week on one page!



Are you interested in having training for your congregation? Do you need someone to speak to your group or on a Sunday morning to motivate your volunteers? Do you know another church that you think might like to be a part of our RITI program? Give Sharon a call!



BE SURE TO CHECK OUT OUR NEW SECTION WITH ARTICLES SUBMITTED BY OUR CHURCHES ABOUT RITI! WE'D LOVE TO HAVE YOUR STORIES AND HEAR WHAT WORKS FOR YOU AT YOUR CHURCHES! EMAIL THEM TO riti@hbofa.org

**Check us out on Facebook:
Room In The Inn - Asheville**



Paula & Lisa at Hominy Baptist Women's Banquet

Tuesday afternoon programs for the RITI
Guests:



OUR NEXT COORDINATOR'S MEETING

WILL BE HELD:

THURSDAY, JULY 27, 2010

AT

6:30 P.M.

**First Presbyterian Church
40 Church Street
Asheville, NC**



Thoughts on RITI

Articles submitted by the YOU, the volunteers that serve our guests!

Thoughts on Ten Years with Room in the Inn

I can remember so clearly the mixed feelings of fear and excitement I felt at the first organizational meeting I attended when Room in the Inn was in its formative stages. This program could be great, but could I persuade my church (Asbury Memorial United Methodist) to be a part of it, and could we handle all that we would be asked to do?

I went to a church council meeting armed with information and proposals. I had nearly a full-length sermon worked up, using the story of the Good Samaritan to strike the right biblical note. I had hardly gotten a few words out when most everyone there said, "Let's do it!" so, we set to work to be ready for our first week in March 2001.

At the earlier organizational meeting I had talked with people from St. Eugene's Catholic Church and Christ United Methodist Church who wanted to be a part of the program but could not host the women. Asbury Memorial became the designated site, Christ United became the designated driver because they had a van, and St. Eugene's pledged volunteers for innkeepers and meals. One of Asbury's members, Ann Young, arranged for Mission Hospital to provide the linens for all the churches to use each week; Beacon donated blankets to all of those original host churches (we still use ours); I bought towels, washcloths, and pillows, and we were set.

The benefits of this great program have been evident on many levels. This was a mission that came to us instead of our going out or sending money out. Those who were fearful at first soon came to feel at ease and look forward to having the women with us. Even now there are members who are disappointed when they aren't asked to do something when the women are with us. Food, clothes and toiletries pour in when the women come. we are thrilled when someone gets her own place and we can help furnish it. We love it when one of the women comes back to church to tell us about the turn her life has taken and the part that the churches played in it. We have grown as people, as a church, and as members of our community. We have made friends with the women and with the volunteers from the other churches. We've even come to know each other in our own church better. Not all of the women have been easy to deal with or all of the weeks hassle-free, but the benefits definitely outweigh the minuses. Sanctuary has come to mean much more than the space in which we hold a weekly service. It is who we are and what we do.

Madeline Moseley
Asbury Memorial United Methodist Church

Computer Assisted RITI

We have found a very useful resource in our desktop computer as we recruit, prepare, and report on the sessions of RITI which we host at the Cathedral of All Souls. It is likely that many other churches use a similar approach. We write about this for the newsletter at Sharon's request, and hopefully others of you will share approaches and strategies that work well for you.

Hoping for volunteers to sign up at church – calling volunteers and getting answering machines – spending lots of time recruiting help; those are the things that often times pose the most difficulty in preparing for a RITI hosting. Putting together an email “group” and sending information and reports through quick, concise messages that go out in a cyber-second help us greatly. We begin 4 weeks ahead of our hosting dates to invite our email group to check their calendars and sign up to help. Often we have as many as a dozen volunteers before we even put out the big sign-up poster at church!

After a short period of getting folks' permission to use their email address, we now have 124 names in our group. Not all of them help regularly, of course. But everyone gets information and can feel a part of the hosting since we send a report out each morning during our week. The daily report lets everyone know what dinner meal was presented, how many women we have as guests, and any special information such as having a vegetarian or any certain dietary issues that could pop up. We also attach photographs occasionally showing our volunteers in action and our women guests, if they give their permission.

Using a daily message also allows us to name the volunteers who spent the night, prepared lunches, provided the evening meal, or brought flowers or other goodies and treats to share. By the end of the week, we find that usually 50-60 individuals/families have helped out in some way to show hospitality to our guests. Handwritten thank-you notes are just not practical to recognize that many people, so we use the email messages and printed summaries in church newsletters, etc. to thank our good volunteers.

To date, we have had no complaints from our email group about our messages. We do take care, however, NOT to use those addresses for anything but RITI information. Always send the message in a “blind copy” (bcc) to avoid showing addresses. If you are not using computer assisted RITI now, you might consider adding it to your “tool bag”!

Susan and Mike Stevenson
Coordinators, the Cathedral of All Soul