

Countywide plan aims to help curb homelessness

BY EMMA BURGIN

ENTERPRISE STAFF REPORT

JAMESTOWN – On Jan. 24, more than 1,100 men, women and children were homeless in Guilford County.

But on Monday, a countywide plan was unveiled to help the most vulnerable and disabled of that group achieve stability in housing.

This particular stability, activists say, is the key to helping these individuals stay off the streets. “It will improve the quality of life of everyone in the community – housed and homeless alike,” said Philip Mangano, executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. Guilford County is the 13th community to formulate such plans, which have been implemented in Raleigh and Asheville.

The 10-year vision was developed by a task force convened by Greensboro Mayor Keith Holliday, High Point Mayor Becky Smothers and the former chairwoman of the Guilford County Board of Commissioners, Carolyn Coleman. The panel was made up of more than 50 leaders of government, faith-based, social service, law enforcement and business organizations, as well as people who had experienced homelessness. The plan focuses on housing, calling for the increase in supply of permanent housing for chronically homeless persons as well as resources for this housing. It also calls for preventative and supportive services, including a discharge plan for every person released from jail as well as a task force to enhance mental health and substance abuse services in Guilford County.

The Guilford Center announced Monday it and other organizations in the county will receive \$644,280 to implement a housing support team to work with homeless persons with mental and substance abuse disorders. “We are about to embark on a truly remarkable journey,” said Paul Gibson, current chairman of the board of commissioners. “We are challenged by the upcoming journey, but we will attain our goal.”

eburgin@hpe.com | 888-3533

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