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Homelessness an increasing issue in the High Country

BOONE, NC (July 16, 2009) – According to the 2009 point in time report conducted by the NC Coalition to End Homelessness (NCCEH), the number of individuals and families in crisis homeless situations in the High Country is on the rise. Since 2007, the total number of homeless individuals in the area has increased by just over 30 percent.

This is no surprise to Lynne Mason, Executive Director of Hospitality House. “We are seeing a dramatic increase of individuals and families seeking shelter and services,” she said. “Since 2005 we have seen more people in homeless situations, reaching record numbers in 2008.”

Mason also reports an increase in individuals who are not homeless seeking help from Watauga Crisis Assistance Network (WeCAN), a crisis assistance program of Hospitality House. “The realities of our current economy, coupled with a lack of affordable housing have resulted in a higher number of individuals requesting rent assistance to prevent homelessness. Without the WeCAN program, many more folks would find themselves without a roof over their head.”

According to Mason, the reports from the NCCEH reflect a homeless population that is growing at a rapid pace in our area and Hospitality House is positioning itself to increase their capacity to meet that demand. “We are working diligently to expand our services and construct a new facility that will allow us to nearly double the number of individuals we can help. During these tough economic times, we anticipate an increase in the demand for services and we hope to be prepared to meet the needs of those in crisis in our community.”

Hospitality House has been serving the homeless in seven mountain counties since 1984. Since its inception, the shelter has grown and now operates out of three downtown facilities. “Hospitality House provides more than a place to sleep and a hot meal, said Mason, it’s a place where people can begin rebuilding their lives.”

Hospitality House is a non-profit crisis intervention agency that provides shelter and services to the homeless, operates the community soup kitchen and administers WeCAN - the local crisis assistance program. Hospitality House is a High Country United Way agency. For more information, log on to www.hospitalityhouseofboone.org or call Jill Kuykendall Landers, director of development, at 262.3461.

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