

IFC leads effort to aid man who helped others

Clifton Eubanks, who fed and cared for the homeless, has suffered a stroke and is bed-ridden.

By Dave Hart, Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL — On Sundays, back before the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service shelter and community kitchen were in place, Clifton Eubanks used to drive an old school bus to a vacant lot in Carrboro where numbers of homeless men would congregate.

He would park the bus, run an extension cord from his amp to a nearby house and plug in his guitar. He would play and sing for the men, preach to them a little bit, tell them Jesus loved them, and then take them over to KFC and buy them a chicken lunch.

When the IFC shelter opened on Rosemary Street, Eubanks shifted his ministry there.

“For many years — I can’t remember how many, countless — Clifton conducted Sunday services for the homeless families at the facility,” said Chris Moran, IFC’s executive director. “That was just one of the many things he did for people. He befriended a lot of folks in the community who didn’t have many other friends.

“He did so much for so many people. Now he needs some care himself. We wanted to give the community an opportunity to give something back to him.”

Eubanks, who worked for the Town of Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Department for 26 years, suffered a stroke in April 2002. He is confined to his bed at home and is under the care of his family.

IFC, which last year named Eubanks to its list of 40 individuals and organizations that have made a positive difference in the community, has organized a fund to accept donations to help the Eubanks family pay for his care.

“We’re grateful that IFC has initiated this effort,” said Eubanks’ daughter, Harriet Eubanks-Graves. “Believe it or not, I’ve been amazed at how people seem to have forgotten him. Dad has loved people all his life, and it was his way to go beyond the call of duty to help others. If he had a sandwich and found out you were hungry, he wouldn’t think twice. He’d say, ‘Here, you take this.’ He’s that way with everything.”

Eubanks was born in Chatham County in 1937. He worked for many years in the housekeeping department at UNC, until 1968, when he was hired to the maintenance division of Chapel Hill’s Parks and Rec department.

“He oversaw Hargraves Center for many years,” Eubanks-Graves said. “All the kids in the community went there. Some of them had come from broken homes, and he was like a father to a lot of kids who didn’t have fathers. He loved that.”

Eubanks retired almost 10 years ago. Ordained in the mid-1980s, he continued conducting services at the IFC shelter until his stroke in 2002.

He always loved to sing, and in the 1950s and ’60s he traveled and performed with two gospel groups: the Divine Travelers, and Clifton Eubanks and the Family Gospel Singers.

Eubanks-Graves said Eubanks is doing quite well.

“I tell him, ‘Daddy, you’re in better shape than I am,’” she said with a laugh. “He loves his family. He has 10 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He told them, ‘I live for you kids.’”



Clifton Eubanks with his daughter Harriet Eubanks-Graves and her children Jaylen and Michelle enjoying a Gospel in the Park show at Baldwin Park in October 2003.

Contributed photo

Anyone wishing to donate to the Eubanks family fund can write a check with the words "Eubanks Fund" on the memo line, and send it to: IFC, 110 W. Main St., Carrboro N.C. 27510.

Dave Hart can be reached at 932-8744 or dhart@nando.com.