

# Shelter guests to join CROP Walk

Hunger-relief effort draws walkers and sponsors from all corners of the community.

By Dave Hart, Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL -- Whenever Deb Baldwin, special events coordinator for the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service, stops by the IFC's Community House shelter, she's greeted with offers of help.

"If I have books or boxes to carry, I don't get out of the parking lot before people come over offering to carry them in for me," said Baldwin, who is coordinating this weekend's CROP Walk for hunger relief. "It's always like that. When we came over here and gave a presentation about CROP Walk and the needs that it addresses, there were heads nodding all around the room. So it's very clear to us that people here want to help."

Some of them are doing just that.

This year, for the first time, a team of guests from the Community House homeless shelter will be among the people walking the 10-kilometer CROP Walk course to raise money for hunger-relief programs locally and worldwide.

The 18th annual CROP Walk -- CROP is an acronym for Communities Reaching Out to People -- is scheduled for Sunday, starting at 2:30 p.m. at the Carrboro Town Commons.

Registration for walkers is to begin at 2 p.m., and then local bagpiper Yance Covington will set the walkers on their way. The course will proceed through neighborhoods in Carrboro and Chapel Hill, with rest stops planned along the way and refreshments waiting at the end, back at the Town Commons.

In the weeks, days and even minutes before they set out, walkers invite friends, colleagues, businesses, organizations and others to sponsor them with financial contributions in amounts from \$5 on up.

The walk is sponsored nationally by Church World Service and locally by the IFC. Twenty-five percent of the proceeds will go to the IFC's hunger-relief programs, such as the Emergency Pantry and the Community Kitchen. The remainder goes to hunger-relief programs worldwide, distributed by Church World Service.

Willie Hicklin and Anthony Mebane, residents of Community House, are organizing the shelter team, the IFC Striders. Thus far, Hicklin said, the team is 11 strong. Most of the members are shelter guests, plus Baldwin and at least one resident of IFC's Project Homestart residence for women and children.

"This seemed like a worthwhile thing to get involved in," Hicklin said. "I'm a homeless person myself, and I thought it would be a good idea to see if we could help out. Anthony and I have been talking to the other guys here, and a lot of them have said they're interested. The weather should be pretty nice, and hopefully we'll have a good turnout."

Monday evening, Hicklin and Mebane attended the Chapel Hill Town Council meeting and presented CROP Walk T-shirts to Mayor Kevin Foy and Mayor Pro Tem Edith Wiggins. On Thursday, they will participate in a WCHL-AM radiothon to invite sponsorships.

Anyone can sponsor the Striders -- or any other walkers, for that matter -- by visiting the IFC's Web site, <http://www.ifcweb.org>.

The CROP Walk draws walkers and sponsors from all corners of the community.

Among this year's participants, in addition to the Community House team, are at least one team that plans to run



Lindsey Norwood, right, and Stephanie Humphreys design personalized T-shirts they'll wear during CROP Walk on Saturday. The two are members of the Chapel Hill Bible Church's co-ed high school Bible study team.

*Staff photo by Shawn Rocco*

rather than walk, the course, and a group of about 10 high school students in the Bible study group at Chapel Hill Bible Church.

"They originally wanted to volunteer at the IFC soup kitchen, but it turned out that some of the kids were too young to do that, and we had too many of them, anyway," said Amy Caylor, a coordinator for the group. "IFC told us about the CROP Walk, and the kids have jumped all over it. They made their own T-shirts because they want to walk as a group and be recognizable as a team. They're really excited about it."

Last year's CROP Walk drew hundreds of walkers and raised over \$48,000.

Baldwin, sitting in the day room of the IFC shelter, said the walk is intended to bring diverse groups and individuals together in a common cause.

"The myth we want to dispel is that we're divided into these us-versus-them kinds of distinctions," she said. "It's a gift to the community to have us all walking together."

For information about CROP Walk, see the IFC Web site or call 929-6380, ext. 40.

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