

## IFC, churches establish ground rules

**System for providing temporary shelter will go into effect while IFC facility undergoes renovations.**

By Dave Hart, Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL -- In a little more than three weeks, the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service's shelter for homeless men will lose its home, displaced while extensive renovations are done to the Rosemary Street building that houses it.

Fortunately for the guests of the shelter, a number of local church congregations and the Town of Carrboro have stepped forward to offer sleeping space, meals and volunteers. Eleven local church congregations and the Carrboro Century Center will serve on a rotating basis as temporary accommodations for the shelter's guests. A number of other congregations that are unable to house the guests overnight have offered to help provide volunteers and other services. St. Joseph CME will serve as the temporary dining facility, providing lunches and evening meals, and the Chapel Hill YMCA and Chapel Hill Community Center will provide shower facilities.

On Thursday, IFC staff and Chapel Hill police and fire personnel presented representatives from the host congregations with a highly organized, tightly scheduled plan for the housing of the shelter's guests during the renovation.

"It takes an entire community to do this work," Chris Moran, IFC's executive director, told the participants. "We can't do it by ourselves. Homelessness is not a problem that is owned by IFC. It's all of our problem.

"We're all doing this because we want to. You, I presume, are doing this because you want to. We are inspired by you. It gives us hope, and because of you we know we're going to succeed."

The host congregations will take turns hosting the shelter's guests for up to two weeks at a time, starting with the Chapel Hill Bible Church, which will serve as host April 13-22.

During each congregation's turn, it will host up to 24 homeless men. The guests will sign up in advance and will follow a precise schedule and set of procedures.

Under the IFC's plan, each evening starting at 6:15, the guests will eat a meal at St. Joseph CME, which has offered to serve as host site for the Community Kitchen during the renovations. Afterward, they will travel en masse on a bus to the host church, arriving at 8 p.m.

"The only people coming to the host church will be the ones we bring there," said Rosetta Wash, IFC's residential services director. "Everyone will come together. You're not going to have people wandering in throughout the evening."

The guests will check in, be briefed on the facility and procedures, receive a personal care kit and be assigned a sleeping space and sleeping gear. After that, they're free to read or socialize until lights out at 11 p.m.

Wake-up time will be 5:45 a.m. The guests will rise, dress, have a simple breakfast and coffee, clean the site and, by 7 a.m., leave for the day.

Guests will not be permitted to loiter at the host church during the day. Chapel Hill Police Chief Gregg Jarvies said anyone who does should be asked to leave by a representative of the church. If the person refuses, he said, police will charge them with trespassing.

"If you ask an individual to leave in front of an officer, that is law," he said. "If they leave, the problem's over. If they don't, or if they come back, we will place them under arrest. If an individual causes a problem, our goal is to remove them from your property."

Jarvies said his department and IFC have worked closely on the coming move. The police and fire departments have the rotation schedule and will be in close contact with IFC and the host churches, he said.

But Jarvis emphasized that he expects few, if any, problems.

"We don't have a lot of problems at the community shelter," Jarvis said. "We never really have. It's been hard to convince the community, or some members of the community, of that, but we just don't encounter many problems there. I don't anticipate anything different at any of the host congregations.

"The guests need shelter and assistance. And for the most part they are very diligent in looking out for each other, and very appreciative of what people do for them."

IFC is asking each host congregation to provide three volunteers each evening: two to help with check-in and other duties, and one to remain at the site overnight. All volunteers will attend a comprehensive training session.

A professional IFC shelter manager will be awake and on duty throughout every shift.

"It's important to understand that there will be a paid, trained, professional manager there at all times," Allred said. "We have incredible managers. They're well-trained, very experienced, and they know the guests. They have dealt with every scenario you could ever devise to throw at them. So nobody needs to feel like they'll be in there alone with the weight of the world on their shoulders. You'll be in good hands."

Volunteers are still needed for a variety of services: to help put together personal care packets and informational materials, do laundry, help monitor meals, and do evening shifts at the Century Center and one or two of the smaller churches.

Anyone interested in helping should contact Moran at 929-6380 or by email at [Executive@ifcmailbox.org](mailto:Executive@ifcmailbox.org).

Allred said IFC hopes the experience will deepen and strengthen the relationships between the community, the IFC and the homeless population.

"This is a unique opportunity for us to reach out to people who might otherwise be intimidated or reluctant to get involved," she said. "We can invite people in within the safety of their own congregations. We hope that will encourage them to continue working with us in the future."

She said the volunteers and congregations, by opening their doors and offering their time and attention, would do more good than they knew.

"We're asking you to serve, not to solve," she said. "In one night or two weeks, you're not going to solve the problems that led these people to homelessness. What we need is for you to be there, to be authentic, to be present and respectful. Simply by doing that, by serving in the moment, you will go a long way toward easing the social problem of homelessness."

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