

# Community Outreach



In 1990, the members of Faith and Victory Church in Carteret County turned their desire to feed their community into a mission they called Hope. Now, nearly thirty years later, the Church is no longer around, but Hope Mission continues to model and honor the example set by those church members.

The mission is grounded in the Christian faith, but the services it provides are open to all and over the decades have expanded beyond hot meals. In 2017, the mission did the following:

- provided almost 40,000 meals to folks living in the shelter and in the community
- helped dozens of people with substance abuse issues through a recovery program
- provided 268 families with some type of financial assistance, which many times meant the difference between them staying in their homes or being out on the street

- provided 164 men with shelter, support, hope, and, hopefully, a new start in life

- provided transportation for homeless women to neighboring counties with shelters and, in some cases, paid for motel rooms for them

In the summing up for 2018, that last statistic will be much lower. "I am very proud to tell you that, in February of this year, we opened a homeless women's shelter in Carteret County," says Gene McLendon, Executive Director of Hope Mission Ministries, adding that both the men's and women's shelters stay full nearly every day, with waiting lists on most days.

Some days people will also find members of Transportation Impact at Hope Mission, donning aprons to serve food or otherwise helping out. Each month, the company sends two teams of four people to serve lunch at the mission. Staff and leadership also keep an eye on the mission's Facebook page to

watch for other ways in which TI can help.

"Whether it's clothes, bikes, or food, we try to gather more money to give to them," says TI Marketing Coordinator Jillian Farrington, "because what they are doing is much more than feeding the homeless. It's providing hope for people to change their lives and choose a different path."

This relationship between the family-run local corporation and the nonprofit began with a casual encounter three years ago between McLendon's wife and two TI employees at a Leadership Carteret meeting.

"June was talking to these ladies about Hope Mission, and they were very interested and decided to volunteer," explains McLendon. "Well, they enjoyed it so much they asked others from the company to come with them. Then Travis Burt and his wife came to volunteer, and then they brought their children. Pretty soon it seemed like everyone in the company was volunteering."

# Hope Mission

The connection has become one with a profound reciprocal effect.

For McLendon, the “example that a company the size of TI sets for the community” is important. “They not only donate financially, but owners and employees alike volunteer their time. We just think it’s a wonderful example to set and we love them for it.”

And on a personal level, he says, “Travis Burt has been an example, a friend, a mentor, and a teacher for me. TI has resources and knowledge that Hope Mission could never access or afford. Travis has counseled me and shared his knowledge and experience. He has helped a small, struggling nonprofit learn to develop leaders, add to our dream and vision, and learn about the business world. The value of his counsel will serve both me and Hope Mission for a lifetime.”

For many TI employees, volunteering at the mission holds a special place in their lives and hearts.

“I have lived in Carteret County my entire life minus my college years and had never heard about Hope Mission,” says Farrington. “When I got there it was such a humbling experience. Serving the men and women that are less fortunate really touched my heart. When I left that first day after serving lunch, I sat in my car and cried. It truly humbled me as a person and I started looking at my life a different way. I am very blessed to live the life that I do, and these people are just happy to get a warm meal. It really puts a lot into perspective.”

Along with food and shelter, Hope Mission also offers a priceless intangible benefit. “I believe that the most important thing we provide is a sense of belonging,” says McLendon. “Homeless folks and those that are on the edge or have substance abuse issues have lost their sense of identity. Much of the time that loss of a sense of identity is because of the disconnection from family



and community. These folks feel as though they are standing alone against the whole world. And they become discouraged from thinking that life can ever be any better. They lose hope. At Hope Mission, we do everything we can to give them back that sense of belonging. We believe this is vital to their ability to transition back to the full and rewarding lives God intended them to live.”

Over the years, McLendon and the staff and volunteers at Hope Mission have witnessed many people transform themselves and their lives. For instance, there was a young local man who had spent more years in prison than out who finally joined the mission’s recovery program. “He is now married, very involved in his church, and runs the most effective jail ministry in the entire county,” says McLendon proudly.

Or there’s the story of “Molly,” who came to Hope Mission out of detox. “She had been living as a hobo for seventeen years, hopping trains all over the country and doing all sorts of things to survive,” says McLendon. “Then she came to Hope Mission and transformed her life. She went through our recovery program, and we supported her emotionally and mentally and helped her get back on her feet. She has since graduated from Carteret Community College and now works at the Department of Social Services helping others that are in similar situations to the one she came from.”

Through the decades, Hope Mission has grown a little at a time, as the community could afford to help it grow, which means that the plans and dreams for other ways to help those who need it most sometimes require a bit of creative juggling and can take years to turn into reality.

“We have little bits and pieces of our mission scattered all over town in half a dozen places. Most people don’t realize that we take down the tables in our soup kitchen at night and put up army cots for the homeless men to sleep on. That’s the only way that we are able to have a men’s homeless shelter,” explains McLendon. “So we’re hoping that in the near future, Hope Mission will be able to bring many of the services we offer under a single, but slightly larger roof.” **Q**



*Hope Mission of Carteret County, Inc. is located in Morehead City, NC, and regularly holds fundraisers such as carwashes and an annual golf tournament to support its ministries. To find out more or to sign up for the newsletter to stay informed of all the things going on with the mission, visit [www.hmcm.org](http://www.hmcm.org) or follow Hope Mission on Facebook at [facebook.com/HopeMissionofCarteretCounty](https://www.facebook.com/HopeMissionofCarteretCounty).*