

CCAP/Loaves & Fishes partners with Faith Community Coalition for the Homeless to better address community needs

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From left: Beverly Van Metre, with CCAP, Cynthia Jamison, with Faith Community Coalition for the Homeless, Vel Chapman, with CCAP, and Pat McMillan, with Faith Community Coalition for the Homeless, joined forces to better provide food and shelter to those in need in the community.

MARTINSBURG — A collaboration launched earlier this year, leadership with both CCAP/Loaves & Fishes and the Faith Community Coalition for the Homeless said it was pleased to announce the trial run of a partnership has ended and the decision has been made to make it a permanent part of each organization's work.

Aimed at providing additional emergency food assistance to low-income and underserved residents of Berkeley County, leadership with both groups said the need in the area has only

continued to grow due to COVID-19, and both wanted to help ensure those families who were now facing homelessness would at least have food in their bellies.

However, both organizations were unsure of how to do so on their own as they addressed two very different sides of the same issue.

“Every organization has their own limitations, but we really care for our clients, so sometimes they’ll come in with challenges and problems that our particular organization cannot address, so we try to educate ourselves and partner up, just like we did in this situation,” Cathy Ruley, board member of CCAP and its web and social media coordinator, said. “We supply food, but Faith supplies emergency housing. It just seemed logical. Now, we have partners we work with to try and help them.”

Ultimately, the two teamed up to provide a two-day supply of food for those families in emergency housing and have found success in their short time working together.

According to Pat McMillan, board member and treasurer with Faith Community Coalition for the Homeless, since April and through November, the group has served 34 households, consisting of 69 people that included 23 children and 46 adults.

In serving those families, McMillan said the group gave out 35 bags of ready-to-eat food to ensure those families in need would not have to worry about where their next meal came from.

“CCAP was formed in 1982, and we’ve been in operation ever since and have grown tremendously over those years,” Beverly Van Metre, president of the CCAP board of directors, said. “One of my goals when I came into my term as president in January was to expand our operations or to create partnerships where we could with our sister nonprofits, and I really feel this collaboration takes our efforts to the next level and will allow us to continue to expand.”

According to Van Metre, so far this year, CCAP have provided food directly out of its food pantry to 23 households who didn't qualify for its regular services.

According to Van Metre, CCAP has received 122,741 pounds of donated and Mountaineer Food Bank-supplied food and has dispensed 110,762 pounds to those in the area.

Both organizations' leadership agreed they've already begun to see the fruits of their labor since beginning their collaborative work in the form of deep appreciation and gratitude from those people they are directly helping.

"Due to COVID, the way we operate things is over the phone," Cynthia Jamison, board chair for the Faith Community Coalition for the Homeless, said. "My volunteers do the intake process and place them in the hotel, and if they need food, they contact me, and I bring a bag of food to their hotel room. They are always so grateful. We've had people break down and cry, because they didn't know where their next meal would come from.

"We have served quite a great deal of people, and this partnership with CCAP has been very beneficial, because not only are we filling the gap in housing, we are addressing area hunger issues, as well. None of this would be possible without the community and volunteers. We are a community trying to help the community."

According to all four women, the two organizations plan to continue the partnership over the next year and have six-month check-ins to adjust their program guidelines and plans as needed to best address the ever-changing needs of the community.

The Faith Community Coalition for the Homeless' efforts focus on helping people who are homeless or on the verge of being homeless when there is no other available option. For more information visit, faithcommunitycoalitionforhomeless.com/

CCAP/Loaves & Fishes focuses on providing emergency food and financial assistance to low income and underserved residents of Berkeley County. For more information visit, ccaploavesandfishes.com.