

Bike Patrol asking for blankets, gloves and caps for the homeless

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

The Downtown Bike Patrol is asking the community to donate new or gently used blankets, gloves and knit caps to help the homeless this winter.

The Downtown Bike Patrol is comprised of 12 officers who respond to calls in the downtown business district. Sgt. Terry Fulk said they've given blankets to homeless people who come by their office for years, but last year was the first time they sent out a request to the community for donations. The community responded in a big way, and about 1,500 blankets were donated. After that success, the patrol is adding knit caps and gloves to this year's donation requests.

Fulk said the reason why homeless people come by their office asking for blankets is familiarity.

"We're the people who have the most contact with them," he said "On a daily basis, we'll come in contact with a half dozen to a dozen of the homeless peo-

ple. They all know us by name; we know them by name."

He said the Bike Patrol has tried to treat homeless people as respectfully as possible even when responding to calls about them. He said the patrol has developed a relationship with them based on trust.

Since the patrol comes in contact with the homeless population so much, they have information on shelters and services they can refer them to. On cold nights they do their best to find them a shelter they can get into, but some people, no matter what the weather, will refuse to go to a shelter.

"We don't want people sleeping out in the public and we know that's a violation of city ordinance but the thing is, they do," said Fulk. "And so the reason we give them a blanket is we don't want them to freeze to death."

Fulk said a few hundred of last year's blankets were donated to shelters but the vast majority were distributed by the bike patrol directly. Many who

receive blankets will come back for another when their blanket gets wet or taken by someone. And it's not just the homeless, but also those in need who stop by the bike patrol office asking for blankets. Fulk said they've had families come by for blankets.

Andrea Kurtz with the 10 Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness said that the number of people who are homeless in Winston-Salem has remained steady in the last five years. The growth in poverty in Forsyth County hasn't resulted in a big increase in homelessness, but instead has resulted in more people living "doubled up," staying with friends and relatives. She said the number of chronic homeless, which is a disabled person who has been homeless for a year or more or who's been homeless four times in the past three years, is half of what it was in 2010.

Kurtz said the top priority for homeless agencies and activists is to get the homeless into permanent housing, but in an emergency situation a blanket



Photo by Todd Luck

Downtown Bike Patrol's Officer Paul Felske and Sgt. Terry Fulk pose with the collection box outside the Bike Patrol's office.

can help them make it through the night. She said some churches and those in Empowerment Project outreach teams — who try to find mentally ill homeless people and steer them to services— give out blan-

kets, but no one does it as systemically as the Bike Patrol.

Blankets, knit caps and gloves can be dropped off outside the Bike Patrol Office at 414 N. Cherry St.

across from the Marriott hotel; at City Hall outside the Human Relations Department, 101 N. Main St., Suite 109, and at the Public Safety Center, 725 N. Cherry St.

IRS warns of South Carolina flood relief scams

BY TODD LUCK
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The Internal Revenue Service is warning consumers to be weary of scam artists posing as charities that are helping with flood recovery in South Carolina.

"Any time disaster strikes, scammers come out of the woodwork and they try to take advantage of people's charitable feelings and need to help," said IRS Spokesperson Luis Garcia.

It's common after a disaster for scams to emerge with fake charities claiming to do relief work or scam artists attempting to impersonate recognized organizations. The scammers may be trying to get money or personal information they could use to steal a person's identity. Scams may involve solicitations by telephone, social media, website, email or in-person.

The IRS recommends donating to recognizable, well-known charities and being weary of charities that use names similar to nationally known organizations. Don't give out personal information to anyone who solicits a contribution that could be used to steal your money or

identity such as Social Security, credit card and bank account numbers or passwords. For security and tax purposes, donations should be made by check or credit card, not by cash.

Garcia said that it's common for taxpayers to make contributions and try to claim it on their taxes, only to then find out the charity wasn't legitimate. Identity theft is also common as scam artists use a victim's personal information to get credit cards, loans, new accounts or a tax refund in their name.

Garcia said that legitimate charities that qualify for tax-deductible donations can be found using the Exempt Organizations Select Check on the IRS website.

"The bottom line is you want to make sure they're legitimate and do your homework before you send any money," he said.

The IRS also warns to be careful of websites and emails that try to mimic legitimate charities.

Garcia said those who suspect they've been approached in a scam should report it to their local authorities. Those who suspect they've received fraudulent emails should visit IRS.gov and search for "report phishing" to report it.

The Exempt Organizations Select Check is at IRS.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Exempt-Organizations-Select-Check.



AAA Carolinas warn of flood-damaged vehicles for sale

SPECIAL TO
THE CHRONICLE

As cleanup from the devastating floods throughout the Carolinas continues, there's a new hazard to consider for used car buyers, according to AAA Carolinas. Buyers need to know how to avoid purchasing a vehicle that may look great, but could be secretly suffering from flood damage.

In many cases, insurance companies total flood damaged vehicles, which are then sold to salvage companies. However, rather than being disassembled for parts, some of these vehicles end up being purchased by individuals who restore them to operating condition — with varying levels of expertise. AAA Carolinas warns car buyers that flood-damaged vehicles will often continue to appear in the marketplace for many months following a major flood.

"Fresh paint, new upholstery and that 'new-car smell' can mask flood damage," said Greg Pence, auto buying manager for AAA Carolinas. "While services like CarFax can be a good resource for buyers, the only true way of knowing whether a vehicle has suffered flood damage is to have a certified mechanic



inspect the vehicle."

The best protection against buying a flood-damaged vehicle is a thorough pre-purchase inspection by a qualified shop such as an AAA Approved Auto Repair facility. One is at 606 S. Stratford Road in Winston-Salem. Other locations can be found at AAA.com/Repair.

As part of the inspection, shop employees will look for common indicators of flood damage.

Tips on how to spot a flood-damaged vehicle

*Engage your sense of smell to detect any damp or musty odors inside the vehicle.

*Are the windows fogged up? Has the carpet or upholstery been replaced or recently shampooed? Pull back the carpet at different areas and look for mud, dirt or signs of water stains.

*Inspect the dashboard

underside for signs of mud and dirt. This is a particularly hard area to clean. Look under the vehicle for corrosion. It is uncommon to find corrosion in newer vehicles and those that are owned or sold in southern states.

*Open all doors, hood, and trunk to inspect for corrosion, mud and dirt or discoloration on the door-frames, hinges and under the weather stripping. Pay special attention to small spaces and crevices that are difficult to clean.

*Check all warning lights, window motors, and all electrical components to ensure they are working properly. While a non-working part alone does not mean the vehicle was flooded, it combined with other difficulties is a cause for concern.

Another good practice that can help prospective buyers avoid flood-damaged cars and trucks is the purchase of a vehicle history report. While such reports don't always catch everything, more often than not they will indicate when a vehicle has been in a flood or been issued a salvage title, indicating a major problem in its past.

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November community health seminars, screenings and events

Visit WakeHealth.edu/BestHealth for class descriptions and other events. Events are FREE of charge and require registration, unless otherwise noted.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2

Estate Planning Basics
3:30 to 4:30 pm
Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Country Club, 4610 Country Club Road, Winston-Salem

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Heart Failure: Diet & Complications
12:30 pm to 1:30 pm
Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Country Club, 4610 Country Club Road, Winston-Salem
Also offered Fri., Nov. 6; Thurs., Nov. 12; Fri. Nov. 13; Thurs. Nov. 19; Fri., Nov. 20. Visit our website for times and locations.

Heart Failure: Medications & Compliance \ 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm
Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Clemmons, 2311 Lewisville-Clemmons Road, Clemmons
Also offered Fri., Nov. 6; Thurs., Nov. 12; Fri. Nov. 13; Thurs. Nov. 19; Fri., Nov. 20. Visit our website for times and locations.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6

Common Hand Conditions
Noon to 1 pm
Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Country Club, 4610 Country Club Road, Winston-Salem

Love Your Holiday Leftovers
6 to 7:30 pm
Wake Forest Baptist Health Davie Medical Center, Plaza 1, Cardiac Classroom, Highway 801 N, I-40 (Exit 180), Bermuda Run

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Boot Camp: Walking \ 9 to 10 am
Wake Forest Baptist Health Davie Medical Center, Outdoor Walking Trail, Highway 801 N, I-40 (Exit 180), Bermuda Run

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Discovering Healthier Thanksgiving
5 to 6 pm
Lowes Foods, 2501 Lewisville-Clemmons Road, Clemmons.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10

Blood Pressure Screening
9 to 10 am
Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Clemmons, 2311 Lewisville-Clemmons Road, Clemmons

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12

Yoga for a Healthier Back \ 4 to 5 pm
Sunrise Yoga Studio, 6000 Meadowbrook Mall Court, Suite 1, Clemmons

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14

Chair Stretches \ 9 to 10 am
Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Country Club, 4610 Country Club Road, Winston-Salem

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16

BMI Screening \ 5:30 to 7:30 pm
Wake Forest Baptist Health Piedmont Plaza One, Kitty Hawk Room, 1920 W. First Street, Winston-Salem

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18

Discovering a Healthier Thanksgiving \ Noon to 1 pm
Lowes Foods, 3372 Robinhood Road, Winston-Salem

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome: Integrative Therapies \ 3:30 to 4:30 pm
Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Plaza—Country Club, 4610 Country Club Road, Winston-Salem

To register, call or visit:
336-713-BEST (2378) \ WakeHealth.edu/BestHealth