



Photos by Todd Luck

Homes 4 Our Heroes has transformed dilapidated houses on Cameron Avenue into homes for veterans.

## Homes 4 Our Heroes celebrates successful project

BY TODD LUCK  
THE CHRONICLE

Homes 4 Our Heroes used Veterans Day, Nov. 11, to celebrate transforming dilapidated houses on Cameron Avenue into homes for formerly homeless veterans.

Homes 4 Our Heroes, an initiative of Wholeman Ministries, has been working on five duplex buildings on the 1400 block of Cameron Avenue. Three are finished with four veterans living in them, including one who is living there with his family. The other two are scheduled to be finished by the end of the year. It took 2,000 individuals donating 7,500 hours of work to get this far in the \$631,000 project.

For Veterans Day, a stage was set up that played music, and food was served to celebrate the progress made on the project. People from some of the more than 60 organizations that contributed attended the event.

"You have made a difference on the street of Cameron Avenue," the Rev. Kenneth Holly, who oversees Homes 4 Our Heroes, told attendees.

Local dignitaries also spoke, praising the effort.

"It's a great revitalization of this neighborhood, first of all, but it's a revitalization of lives that we provide these homes for our veterans," said Mayor Allen Joines.

East Ward City Council Member

Derwin Montgomery praised Wholeman Ministries Pastor Barry Washington.

"It wasn't an easy road," he said. "But he had the foresight and vision to believe that we could create something in the community that honored our veterans."

No one had more reason to celebrate than the formerly homeless veterans who live in the houses. Army veteran Tracey Bradford moved into the first completed duplex in March. She lives in half of the building and veteran Solomon Gore, who moved in just days before her, lives in the other half. Her furniture, appliances and even household supplies and food were all donated. Bradford lost her home in a fire and moved to North Carolina with her daughter four years ago in hopes of getting a job that didn't pan out. The two ended up in a homeless shelter. She said that after an experience like that, she doesn't take anything for granted anymore and is extremely grateful for the help that finally got her housing.

"God made up for all the heartache, all the pain, all the days of worrying about where we were going to go, whether the

next shelter was going to accept us, how long we were going to be on the waiting list, whether she was going to have to leave the school or not," she said.

Bradford's son Timothy was in the Navy when she became homeless and her daughter, Naomi, was in ninth grade. Naomi had been accepted with a scholarship into the University of North Carolina School of the Arts high school program. She wasn't going to be able to continue attending because her and Bradford had to go to another shelter in another part of the state. Bradford said when one of Naomi's classmates heard about this, she told her family, who took Naomi in so she could continue to go to UNCSA as Bradford had to move from shelter to shelter around the state.

Bradford said her four years of homelessness was a trying experience, but it's worked out since she now has a home, and Naomi was able to graduate from high school and is now attending Rhode Island School of Design with a full scholarship.

"All the good that has happened - having a home and a roof over my head and my daughter being able to go and make her

dreams come true - it really has made up the difference and made all of what we went through worth it," she said.

Local homeless veterans shouldn't have to wait as long as Bradford did for housing. During the ceremony, Joines said that the city recently met the criteria for eliminating veterans homelessness, meaning homeless veterans can get housing in a matter of weeks.

During the Veterans Day event, the Wells Fargo Foundation presented a \$50,000 donation to Home 4 Our Heroes. The bank is among the many organizations that have been supporting the project with monetary donations and volunteer hours.

Washington said that volunteers and about \$30,000 in donations are still needed to complete the remaining houses. He said it was the community working together that made the effort successful.

For more information on Homes 4 Our Heroes, visit [wholemanministries.com/permanent\\_housing](http://wholemanministries.com/permanent_housing).



Bradford

## HARRY takes care of veterans on their special day

BY TEVIN STINSON  
THE CHRONICLE

A group that advocates for veterans opened its office on Veterans Day to make sure its message is known.

A.J. Shabazz, event coordinator for HARRY, said the open house was designed to show local veterans how much they are appreciated.

"We have events throughout the year to show veterans how much we appreciate what they do," he continued. "Every chance we get we try to give back but, for Veteran's Day, we wanted to do something big."

Each gift bag was filled with a number of items, including clothes, shoes, blankets, first-aid kits, notebooks, calendars and much more.

Currently HARRY (Helping Advocate Research Respond for You) serves 300 veterans, many of whom attended the open house at the nonprofits' headquarters at 897 Peters Creek Parkway. All military veterans received a gift bag and free lunch.

HARRY welcomed new members during the event as well. Non-members were encouraged to fill out applications to become regular members of the organization.

Many mentioned they heard about HARRY by word of mouth.

"I had never heard about the organization until one of my friends told me to check it out," said Vietnam veteran Derrick Smith.

"This program and this event was very much needed," he continued. "I will



Photo by Tevin Stinson

Veteran Curtis Polk enjoys the open house for the HARRY Veterans Community Outreach Services Center on Veterans Day, Wednesday, Nov. 11.

definitely be back."

Through advocacy, counseling, and handling medical claims, the organization provides a support system for veterans and their families they cannot get anywhere else.

"Here we have the ability to look at governmental claims and talk to our members about what they mean," said Shabazz. "The only other people who can do that is lawyers, so that's one thing that really sets us apart."

During the event, a number of veterans praised the organization for all they do.

Jimmie Cameron, who has been a member since 2012, mentioned, "There should be more organizations like this one."

"HARRY has been a big help to me and a number of other veterans in the area," he said. "A lot of veterans are seeking help but don't know where to look. I try to tell every veteran I meet about HARRY."

HARRY Veteran Community Outreach Services is named in honor of ex-Marine and Winston-Salem native Harry Smith.

After a battle with colon cancer, Smith passed away in 2005. According to Shabazz, Smith's nephew, if doctors at the Veterans Administration hospital would have detected the disease earlier, his uncle may still be alive today.

"We kept making trips to the VA hospital in Salisbury, and they continued to tell us that nothing was wrong. It wasn't until we took my uncle to Forsyth Medical Center did they diagnose him with colon cancer," Shabazz said.

"That's why we started this organization, to make sure veterans in this area receive the help they need and deserve."

For more information, visit the organization's official website [www.harry4you.com](http://www.harry4you.com).



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