

opinion & CAMPUS LIFE

VOLUNTEER TO FIGHT LOCAL POVERTY

By Morgan Ericson
Staff Writer

In the past two issues, I explored domestic violence, water scarcity, and poverty on a national and global level. This week, however, I gained a local perspective on poverty upon interviewing Urban Ministry's Operation Manager, Aaron Finley, and Case Manager for the Helen Wright Center for Women, Christa Fagnant.

As stated on its website, Urban Ministries is a non-profit, government funded organization that seeks to alleviate the effects of poverty on Wake County citizens by providing shelter, medical services, food, and prescription assistance. Similar to Church Worldwide Service's commitment to "mak[ing] poverty history," Urban Ministries devotes itself to "renewing lives [and] restoring hope." The agency depends heavily on volunteers and lies within a five mile radius of Meredith College.

We must first consider the severity of homelessness and poverty in Wake County. Wake County's 10 Year Action Plan of 2006 provides helpful statistics: About 29,000 people in Raleigh live in poverty. In the same report, 15,000 people living with friends or family were deemed at risk for homelessness. Wake County suggested that one of the greatest causes of homelessness is the fact that many people cannot afford to purchase secure living establishments in Raleigh's housing market. The closing of Dorothea Dix Hospital also has contributed to the problem.

Urban Ministries seeks to alleviate the effects of poverty and educate Wake County citizens regarding these issues. The HWCW provided assistance for 220 women last year and prepared more than \$107,000 worth of meals. Urban Ministries' Open Door Clinic operates four days per week and three times daily; they have one staff doctor and volunteer physicians, nurses, and lab techs that are kept on a consistent rotation.

Last year alone the ODC filled 35,000 prescriptions in its pharmacy and had 8,400 patient visits; to qualify, they had to meet several eligibility requirements—income level, proof of residence and household size are all considered. Urban Ministries also offers a food pantry which provides short-term relief to people in a crisis; last year they distributed 463,000 pounds of food for over 6,500 households in Wake County.



Photo courtesy www.urbanmin.org

The goal in distributing food is to help the individual offset his or her problem with non-financial assistance. As Finley explains, "No one should ever have to come home and tell a child that there is no food so they cannot have dinner, and for basically my entire lifetime, we have been working to make sure that doesn't happen, one person at a time. The 43% one time utilization rate is a good number, but it isn't the indicator of our success... Our success is best seen in the fact that for 27 years we have been a constant resource for people in need."

Since February, I have served as a volunteer interpreter and eligibility screener for Urban Ministries' Open Door Clinic. I have very much enjoyed getting to know Finley and the other volunteers; they have an openness and authenticity that encouraged me to keep serving there.

It is rewarding to interpret for physicians and patients with language barriers between them and to interview patients for the ODC, even though I sometimes wonder what I actually contribute. I ultimately leave the facility feeling like we really do address the problems of poverty by providing long and short-term help to people. Knowing Finley and the patients has given me a broader picture on the issues of poverty, domestic violence, and situations that lie beyond our control. We could all learn something from volunteering there. ■

LOOKING BACK: PART TWO

By Terri Jones
Contributing Writer

The musty Victorian sensibilities that cast a furtive shadow over the brassy exterior of the Jazz Age of the 1920's, when Meredith College expanded its boundaries by moving out to the outskirts of Raleigh, drove many disillusioned souls to counteract the oppression that resulted from the overly zealous moral authority of the time. As new forms of censorship sought to control and inhibit human behavior in the United States during the aftermath of World War I, self-exiled artists such as Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and Isadora Duncan, dubbed "the Lost Generation" by fellow refugee Gertrude Stein, migrated toward the effervescent cultural climate of Paris in search for personal freedom.

Others chose to remain behind and transform major cities in America by wielding their determined resistance to create such cultural explosions as the Harlem Renaissance in New York, and the jazz and blues scenes in Chicago and New Orleans. A more sinister backlash of the time was connected with the passage of the Volstead Act in 1920 that instigated Prohibition, giving birth to the era of organized crime in the modern world. However, as individuals possessed with such fervent passion and determination fueled a sense of rebellion in the arts, fashion, and society that added to the paradoxical nature of the decade, many young Americans on college campuses still existed in a puritanical vacuum lodged in a parallel world that strug-

gled to keep such impure, impetuous, and impious tendencies safely guarded within the carefully constructed ivory watchtower that had survived the nineteenth century.

In 1953, when members of the student body at Meredith College were sufficiently disgruntled about unwelcome restrictions imposed on their "new age" of social progressiveness to openly complain, the school paper, *The Twig*, ran a well-intentioned reality check, based on the college's 1924-25 school handbook that was written in the heart of the Jazz Age. Although by the mid-1920's, many of these rules had been somewhat modified since the first decade of the new century in a gesture to remain somewhat relevant to

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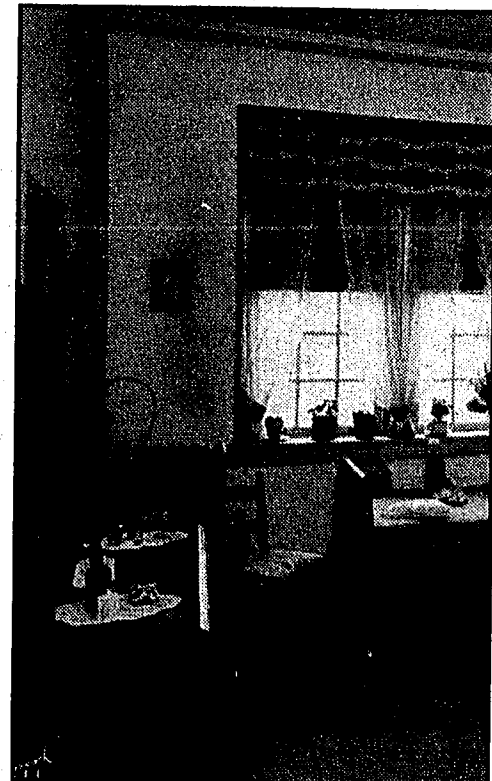


Photo courtesy Meredith Archives

Meredith College dorm in the early 1900s