

By LARRY LOCKE,
Vice President, Brooks House Board □

Restaurants throughout Wilson County are uniting to support Brooks House FEED HOPE fund-raiser. Usually these restaurants consider themselves to be in competition with each other. However, Brooks House, which “gives hope to the hopeful,” has inspired them to come together to give a “hand up” to homeless women and children to help them become productive members of our community.

The following restaurants in Wilson County have committed to participate. They include Zaxby’s, McDonald’s, CiCi’s Pizza, Whitt’s BBQ, HoneyBaked Ham, Painturo’s and Blue Moon BBQ. On Monday, April 23, these restaurants began collecting small basic household and cleaning supply items (not canned food) the women need when they move out of Brooks House into their own place. For making a donation the restaurant will give a FREE drink to each customer who participates. This campaign will culminate on Tuesday, May 22, when each restaurant will donate 10 percent of its sales that day to Brooks House.

Liz Reese is the executive director of Brooks House. She has been a fantastic leader for this ministry of giving help to homeless women and children almost from the beginning. We opened the doors to our current facility at 219 Virginia Ave., Lebanon, less than 1 mile from the Wilson County Courthouse, in April of 2008. The number of women and children who have been helped since that time is nearing 250. The goal has always been to not just provide overnight lodging but to give these women and their children the help needed for them to get on their feet and to become self sufficient. During 2008-2010, ninety percent of the residents left to permanent housing and employment. Brooks House has helped facilitate their move by providing assistance with deposits and the first month of rent. The average cost per resident to get into their own housing is \$1,400 to \$1,600.

One piece of exciting news last year at Brooks House was the retirement of our indebtedness. Our original loan was \$190,000. As one whose name was on that loan at the bank, that was a great step forward. Our current facility has four double rooms that will accommodate eight women, and there are four family rooms which can each hold a family of four. We have also regularly rented motel rooms for families when there is a man involved or when our facility is full.

FEED HOPE Campaign benefits Brooks House

Monday, April 30, 2012

The urgent need for Brooks House now is to be able to expand our facility. We hope to buy an adjacent piece of property for the expansion. Our goal is to construct an additional wing to double the capacity of our building by adding new restrooms, kitchen, laundry facility, playroom and new office space. We will then be able to convert more of the space in our current building into rooms for women and children. We do not plan to go into debt with this new construction but are working to raise the necessary funds through efforts like this FEED HOPE campaign.

As an original board member with Brooks House, it has been gratifying to have the tremendous support of our community. Our local businesses, churches, civic groups, scout troops, restaurants and individuals have just been terrific in your support. Scores of volunteers have come to help the residents or to work on a project on the grounds or in the building itself. Brooks House is a certified 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization and all of your gifts are tax deductible.

We are very thankful for these local restaurants noted above that are aiding Brooks House with this fund raising effort. We encourage you to patronize them and help us “give hope to the hopeful” and to give a “hand up” rather than a “hand out” to these women who are trying to make a fresh start with their lives.