

# Mission expands in March



The Durham Rescue Mission has expanded since being housed in the original church building. (Photo by Thaddeus Berglund)

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The Durham Rescue Mission is building three new dorms in an effort to continue providing warm meals and safe places to sleep for the homeless of Durham. The first of the dorms is set to open in March.

Ernie Mills, 72, the CEO and co-founder of the mission, was inspired to help those in need after watching his father combat alcoholism. He believes in the power of treating those in need with dignity and showing them that they are loved.

"The better conditions they have, the better they feel about themselves," said Mills. "We try to treat the homeless with respect."

The Durham Rescue Mission was established in 1974 to help homeless people and those struggling with addiction.

The three new dorms follow the completion of the Center for Hope, built in 2013. The center provides a larger dining area, a better equipped kitchen, state of the art classrooms and additional housing to residents.

"I cannot tell you how that improved the attitude of our residents," Mills said. "It made them feel like somebody loved them, to create something this nice for them, and it just gave them a motivation

that seemingly you just don't get any place else. And the quality of our graduates has increased since then."

Each of the new dorms will be capable of housing up to 60 new residents. The dorms will provide housing as well as more classrooms.

Supplies and labor for the project have been donated by local businesses, such as Poole's Plumbing and Jacobs Glass.

With the new dorms, Mills hopes to facilitate more success stories like that of Lynn Holloway.

Holloway, 61, came to the mission in 1994 and was able to attain a scholarship through the mission to attend Piedmont International University in Winston-Salem. Holloway now works as the director of education in the men's division of the mission and as a biblical counselor.

"The guys can relate to him, and he can relate to them," Mills said. "What a valuable asset to have on staff. And that's why we want to build these dorms, so we can duplicate Lynn over and over again. That is a success."

The Durham Rescue Mission emphasizes education to help residents succeed. With the assistance of Durham Technical Community College, the mission hosts

classes to help residents get their GED certificate and gain new culinary skills in the Center for Hope's kitchen.

"Education is so vital to helping them get out of poverty," Mills said. "Our goal is for them to graduate from our Victory Program, to go on to college, if not Durham Tech, get a job."

The Victory Program is the mission's addiction recovery program.

Bryant Scales, 56, graduated from the program in 2009 and now works as the lead supervisor at the mission.

"Going through that program I established a relationship with my Lord and savior, Jesus Christ, and that is what I recommend to anybody that has been broken," Bryant said.

About half of the staff are former clients. It helps 64 percent of Durham's homeless population and last year donated around \$6 million in food alone, and \$16 million in total. For every dollar the mission receives, it donates \$4.25 worth of services back to the community.

The center plans to have an Easter celebration on April 14 at 11 a.m. The event will feature an Easter basket giveaway for any children in attendance, as well as a clothes giveaway of over 10,000 items.