

Group donates \$27,000 to help homeless, poor

BY KRISTY DAVIES • COURIER-POST STAFF • FEBRUARY 12, 2009

A grass-roots group, founded more than four years ago to help the poor, carried out that mission Wednesday night.

People for the Poor has given 100 percent of the \$27,000 it collected through various fundraisers to local homeless shelters and soup kitchens.

"In our first year I said we would give away \$1,000 to each of the eight facilities," said co-founder Caroline Scherrer, 60, of Gloucester Township. "The next year, we wanted to double it."

The organization was the idea of Scherrer and childhood friend Mike Scott, 56, of Audubon.

"I used to drive 1,000 miles a week because I was in sales," Scott said. "I was always thinking and knew I wanted to help the poor, but didn't know how because I worked."

He joined forces with Scherrer to ensure all the money raised would go directly to the organizations that could help.

All the money is raised with private donations and fundraisers throughout the year such as a beef and beer, happy hour at the Coastline restaurant and bar in Cherry Hill, a 5K run and an annual golf tournament.

"Every penny counts," said James Wynn, development director for Volunteers of America Delaware Valley, which runs homeless shelters in the tri-county area. "Some may look down on the fact that it's not a lot of money, but what it does is help us buy linens, (personal) hygiene goods, and take part in activities to help with recovery. It gives our clients a chance to participate in the community as volunteers."

Before an organization can receive a check from People for the Poor, it must share a success story.

Wynn told the story of a heroin addict who was at one of the homeless shelters. At People for the Poor's 5K run, the man was inspired to change his life. With the help of the shelter, workshops and determination, the man was able to get a job, get on his feet and even fulfill his goal of coaching a youth football team.

"It's a wonderful donation for us and we really appreciate it," said Karen Talarico, director of the Cathedral Kitchen in Camden. "We don't know what's going to happen this year (with the economy). We've really come to depend (on the money) and we love them for that."

Cathedral Kitchen provided nearly 100,000 meals last year. Another recipient of People for the Poor's money is the Neighborhood Center's soup kitchen, also in Camden.

"They are a very honorable nonprofit," said Tim Humeniuk, the director of Neighborhood Center Inc. "In this world today, to have such dedication of volunteerism is rare. They are really people for the poor."

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These are some of the living quarters provided for the clients of the Volunteers of America shelter in Camden.

- Volunteers of America Shelter

- Thumbnails from: Volunteers of America Shelter



DOUGLAS M. BOVITT/Courier-Post

Rosemarie Scardina takes the blood pressure of Shaun Hall at the Volunteers of America shelter on Atlantic Avenue in Camden on Wednesday.