

A place for homeless to heal

By Lisa Thornton

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In 2005, Ruth Woodend and Freda Schlaman stood on the buckling, water-damaged floor of the YWCA-owned house on Park Road they had just rented. For \$1,200 a month, the women had inherited stacks of mold-laden pillows, ivy creeping through broken windows, and the pungent odor left behind by stagnant water.

They couldn't have been happier. It was the realization of a dream they had begun two years earlier, to open a home for the hundreds of homeless in Charlotte who have nowhere to go to recuperate after a stay in the hospital.

Samaritan House opened its doors two months later. Since then, more than 700 guests have stayed there.

"Neither of us had ever done anything like this before," said Schlaman, who is a retired schoolteacher, as is Woodend.

They say they were guided every part of the way. Each time they encountered an obstacle, someone stepped in to lift them over.

Samaritan House has meant all the difference to hundreds of homeless so far, giving them a place to get well without worry of where their next meal will be or who may harm them on the streets.

The home now is on Fortune Street because of generous gifts from the Carolinas Healthcare and Levine foundations.

It's not a medical facility, but simply a place where people without homes go to get treated with recuperative TLC.

"It's peaceful here. You feel safe here," said Greg Chapman, 42, who stayed at Samaritan House for 2 1/2 months after suffering a heart attack. "They don't make you feel like you're homeless."

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