

# THE RAM HOUSE

## ROANOKE AREA MINISTRIES

Fall/Winter  
2006

# Post

### From the Director's Desk

Dear Supporters and Friends,



We're reaching the end of yet another exciting year at **Roanoke Area Ministries**. We've seen some new challenges and have made the best of each situation, while always looking for opportunities to stretch the dollar a little further and make everything we have last a little longer.

Our summer months are typically the leanest times we see in terms of giving. As a result, by the time cooler temperatures set in, the amount of money we can distribute in our Emergency Financial Aid office is decreased and our cupboards are a barer than we'd like. The worst feeling has to be turning someone away who needs financial assistance for the common necessities of life or to stand in our food pantry and hear an echo because the shelves are getting emptier by the day.

Add this to the fact that fall is here and soon we'll be right in the middle of winter. I'm a cold-natured person no matter what time of year it is and even if I'm sitting in front of a fire, I need to wrap myself in a blanket before I can feel warm. (People often remind me to "take a blanket" when I head for the hammock on those balmy summer days!)

But, a deeper chill fills me that can't be cured with an extra blanket and that is the knowledge that so many in our area will suffer the hardest during the winter months. Our neighbors are most vulnerable during this time of year and will be in need of our help. The increased energy costs and cold weather impact the homeless, elderly people living on fixed incomes and people living just on the brink of homelessness. At RAM, we're feeling the added expense as well. We're already way over budget on gas and electricity for the year.

*I'm so proud of the good work we're doing here in the fight against poverty.*

We're still here and we still need your help so we can help others. Thank you so much for the care and compassion you've shown in the past for those who desperately need the services Roanoke Area Ministries provides. The monetary and food donations and the hours you spend volunteering speak volumes! Without your support, we would not be able to meet the needs of so many individuals and families in our community.

With warm wishes,

*Debbie Denison*

Debbie Denison

## EMPLOYMENT COUNSELING

The Employment Office at Roanoke Area Ministries works to help individuals looking for work find meaningful employment. In 2005, over 300 individuals found work through the Employment Counseling Office and the need continues to grow. While we work to place individuals in jobs, additional assistance is offered in order to help individuals stand on their own.

Many who visit the office do not have proper identification and cannot acquire jobs without a valid id. We work to help individuals obtain birth certificates, school records and other pertinent forms of identification.

In an effort to break the chain of poverty, individuals seek assistance through the Employment Counseling Office by going through the following channels:

- Meeting with the Employment Counselor to discuss current situation and discover solutions.
- Discussing interview skills as well as job dos and don'ts.
- Following job leads discovered through employment counseling sessions.
- Communicating job status and interview process with the employment counselor.
- Completing the process by keeping the employment office informed of job offers and work status.

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We have many success stories of people who have found employment, improved their financial situations and regained control of their lives.

# Volunteer Spotlight

## Charlie Warren

***The way Charlie chooses to live proves that we can all make a difference in the world in big and small ways and that no matter what your age or circumstance, there's always good work to be done.***

While living in Northern Virginia during the 1980s, Charlie Warren reached a pivotal point in his life. He was working in the construction industry and in 1983 saw a particularly rough winter. In order to escape the harsh winters and losing time from work as a result, Charlie packed up his car and told his parents and friends he was off to see the world.

Charlie headed south and stopped in Charlotte and Atlanta. Those cities didn't really call out to him so he kept on going until he landed in New Orleans. It was the right choice because he loved the warmer climate, jazz music and Spanish architecture.

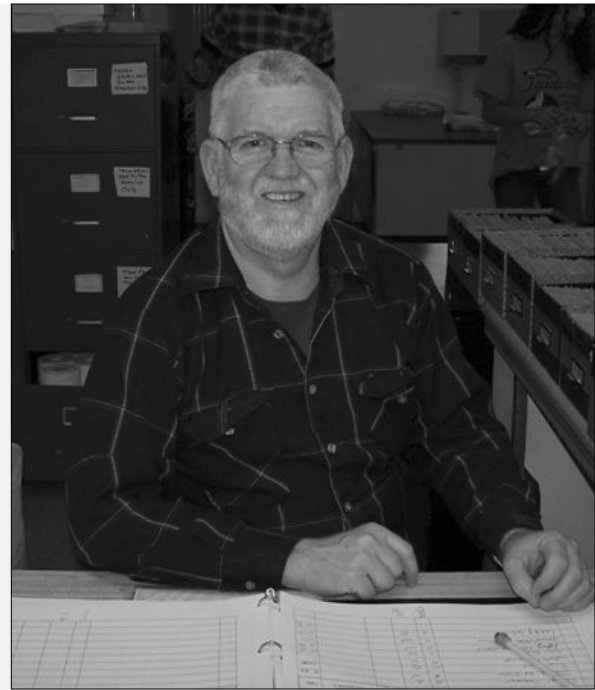
### **Life in the Big Easy wasn't so easy at first**

Arriving in a new town poses challenges for anyone and Charlie was no exception. He lived in his car and at the YMCA for the first few days until he found a place to live. The next challenge was finding a job. At the time, the unemployment rate in New Orleans was at an outstanding high of 14%, but Charlie didn't let it get him down. He had faith that doors would open.

Soon Charlie found himself on the deck of a riverboat vying for the same job as fifteen other men. While waiting to find out if he'd gotten the job he looked at the Ozanam Inn, a ministry of the St. Vincent De Paul Society. The Inn is the RAM House of New Orleans, and Charlie knew if he didn't get the job, he'd be going there for help. Fortunately, he was hired and began work right away as a deckhand on the boat.

Charlie says, "It was hard work but I've always had a strong work ethic that I inherited from my parents and grandparents."

The captain of the ship was impressed with Charlie's drive and good nature and offered him the chance to work as the night guard on the boat, as well. So for three months, he swabbed decks by day and made the rounds on the boat by night. Working alone at night gave him a lot of time to think and he began spending his time in prayer and pondering about how he could make a difference in the world.



Eventually, he landed a job in the construction industry and could put his construction skills to

good use on many historic buildings, mansions and churches within the French Quarter, the garden district and the uptown area of New Orleans.

In 1987, Pope John Paul II visited New Orleans and Charlie heard him speak. The speech roused something within him and made him realize he felt an intense call he had to answer but working a full-time construction job made it difficult for Charlie to engage in full-time mission work.

### **Fast forward nearly twenty years**

Before he'd ever lived in Roanoke, Charlie vacationed in the Star City several times. He visited his brother and family and would spend time walking around and exploring all the nooks and crannies of what Roanoke has to offer. Charlie moved to Roanoke not long after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and admits he felt the collective uncertainty of our nation. With all the tragedy he saw played out on the nightly news, Charlie's responded by searching out a place where he could do some good. He hadn't been in town long when he says he'd see people waiting outside RAM House in the early mornings.

On a cold December day of 2001 Charlie showed up at RAM House with a sack of canned goods, looking to see what he could do. He's been volunteering at the reception desk every Thursday afternoon since. Volunteering at the desk is unlike any other volunteer work Charlie has ever done because he's never had a desk job. Yet, he believes he's called to be part of RAM House and really puts his heart into making all the guests, volunteers and staff feel welcome.

"Work is in the big and little details," explains Charlie. "Working at

*"I would drive by the RAM House and I figured there must be something good going on there."*

the desk is a way to take care of small details and as a result I know that helps other people take care of the big details." And Charlie never forgot what it felt like to be without a place to stay those couple of days in New Orleans.

"I feel like I can relate to what people are going through," he says.

Charlie is a deeply spiritual man. He lives a simple life of prayer and work. He says he lives a sort of monastic life though he never felt called to join a particular order of organized monastics. Instead, he believes wholeheartedly in living out the gospel in everyday life much like St. Francis.

*"I like people. It's a true joy to serve your neighbor. I've never NOT wanted to serve my neighbor. St. Francis knew it was a true joy when you serve one another. For him it was all about serving. It was never about himself. That's how I try to live."*

## CAN VOLUNTEERING HELP YOU LIVE LONGER?

"People who do volunteer work are much less likely to suffer illness. The close interpersonal relationships and community involvement that occur with volunteer service are tailor-made to enhance the healing process."

- *The Healing Power of Service* by Edward V. Brown



At RAM House, we have many volunteer opportunities available! We have a need for reception desk volunteers to greet guests as they come in and complete some simple filing. (This is a great sit-down job!) We have kitchen prep volunteers who come early to prepare food at 9:30am everyday and another group of dining room volunteers who serve drinks, desserts and help make our dining room a welcoming place. We have administrative volunteers who help in our administrative and financial aid office.

Call Allison Martin at 345-9786 or stop by for a tour and more information!

## Linda's LEFTOVERS



When people come by and take a tour of RAM, one of the first things they notice is that we don't put our resources into the cosmetic upkeep of our shelter and office facilities. We believe that money could be better spent by helping people in our Emergency Financial Aid office or in serving a hot meal. In our offices, we use caution and try to make items last longer by using them multiple times and for different uses. In our kitchen, Linda Avery and Sheila Campbell are amazing when it comes to turning small pans of leftovers and donated items into large amounts of food to be served for lunch. Recently, we received several cases of lettuce and Linda whipped up a delicious batch of cream of lettuce soup! (She also used leftover beans, mushrooms and carrots in the soup too!)

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## RAM HOUSE. A PLACE YOU CAN TURN WHEN IN NEED FOR EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Your child caught the latest bug at school and you had to take a few days off work to stay home with her. No work, no pay. The prescription for the antibiotics costs so much because you haven't been working long enough to receive health insurance benefits. Now, you're behind on the electric bill and the rent is due next week.

Roanoke Area Ministries knows that shelter and a hot meal are much needed for some people but other people have different needs. This is where the Emergency Financial Aid office steps in.

RAM provides emergency assistance for people who have suffered some temporary financial set-back caused by job loss, death, illness or even car repairs. Your contribution helps us keep the lights on and

a person from being a permanent guest in our day shelter. There are thousands of emergencies in our valley every year that require individuals and families to come to us for help. With so many living on the edge, your contribution truly does make a difference. We thank you for your generosity, both past and future.