

SAMARITAN HOUSE

HOW IT BEGAN

By Ruth Woodend and Freda Schlman

In 2002-2003, Ruth Woodend began studying spiritual formation with the Servant Leadership School in Charlotte, NC. The course was formulated by The Church of the Savior in Washington, DC. During this nine month course of study, students look within to find and identify their spirituality and then look outside of themselves to determine how this spirituality can be used to help others. In May, 2003 the question was asked of the group, "If money were no object what would you do?" Without thought Ruth replied, "I would find a four bedroom house and take in the homeless who need a place to recover from a hospital stay." Freda Schlaman, who had taken the course in 2001-2002, was present at this meeting. Freda and Ruth met the next week at Urban Ministry and Freda said she too had a great concern for the homeless who had been in the hospital. They began meeting in June, 2003.

They met every week, sometimes twice a week, to pray and to talk about how this mission could become real. In August, 2003 the two women went by train to Washington, DC to visit The Church of the Savior. This church is made up of a number of missions, all of which were started by people who saw a need and acted to address the need. Ruth and Freda were encouraged by the Church members, and given lots of good advice and prayer. They then determined that God was calling them to begin a mission in Charlotte.

The first step was to invite people who might be interested to a "Come and See" soup supper at Ruth's home. Emails went to all who had been part of Servant Leadership and to volunteers from The Urban Ministry Center where both Ruth and Freda were counselors. Twelve people came to that first meeting. From that group a mission team was formed of eight people. The mission team met regularly to pray, eat soup, and determine a course of action.

Ruth and Freda gave the mission its name, Samaritan House, and then proceeded to incorporate. This was done over the internet as there was no money to pay a lawyer. The two women shared the \$200 expense. Next Samaritan House had to become 501©3 eligible. Since the incorporation went well, they decided they could also do this on the internet. This was a very slow process as it was not an easy task and knowledge of the IRS would have been helpful. However, after a few months and many phone calls to the IRS Samaritan House became an official 501©3 charity.

Mac McGee, a member of the mission team, began the process of working with the city to determine how Samaritan House would be zoned. It was soon discovered that the mission did not fit into any of the current zoning areas. Mac, Ruth and Freda continued to meet with the planning and zoning people to write a text amendment. When that was completed

the text went to the Planning Commission and then on to the City Council. It was sent back to the Planning Commission who sent it back again to the City Council for final approval. Freda and Ruth had been told this project would take eighteen months. Luckily, it was completed in just eight.

While all of this activity was going on, the mission team formed a Board of Directors who met for the first time. January 14, 2004, and wrote the bi-laws. To raise money each board member turned in a list of possible donors. Letters were sent and contributions began to arrive. Ruth and Freda were busy speaking at church groups, Rotary meetings, and women's groups in Mecklenburg County.

Enough money was raised and it was time to find a facility. Jane Burts, Board President, was at a meeting where she heard of a house the YWCA owned that was empty. Jane and Ruth went to see the house that afternoon and realized even though the house was in disrepair that it would be a perfect 'Samaritan House.'

Tyler 2 Construction was working at the YWCA and two of the managers came to the house to see what we were doing. After hearing the mission they immediately said they would do the renovations. The Charlotte Dilworth South End Rotary Club decided they would furnish the house as well as paint bedrooms and clean. These two miracles allowed Samaritan House to open on March 1, 2005. Many groups and individuals brought all that was needed; bedding, dishes, towels, pots and pans, a microwave, a new dishwasher, a washing machine and dryer, a refrigerator – everything that was necessary to care for our guests.

It would be impossible to name all who have been so kind and generous to Samaritan House during the past five years. Due to the outpouring of compassion and money more than 500 men and women have received care and love as they recover from a hospital stay. A dedicated and indispensable staff work long hours to ensure the mission is carried forward:

- Brad Goforth- Executive Director
- Carrie Graves- Kitchen Supervisor and overnight person
- Al Platt- Weekend Supervisor
- Betty- Office staff
- Creole- House caretaker
- Many volunteers who help in ways too numerous name
- All who have served on the Board of Directors since January 14, 2004 have worked hard to keep this new ministry true to its mission and to guide Samaritan House through uncharted waters.

It is time for Samaritan House to take the next step and find a permanent home. We hope that the generosity of so many will continue as Samaritan House ventures forth to provide a healing haven for those who are homeless and in need of care.