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**[Community Housing Coalition](#)**





# Housing Coalition Headlines

## Community Housing Coalition of Madison County, NC

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## Management Musings

**By Christopher Brown, Executive Director**

As I hit the big milestone of turning 40 this month, I took some much-needed R&R for several days around my birthday. Unplugging from technology and connecting with friends and family was refreshing on so many levels, and I came back to work realizing something very important: human connections are what make lasting impacts on our lives, in ways that can't necessarily be measured but are so much more enriching than bottom lines and numbers on a page. And much of what CHC's work is about is making connections in the community.

Volunteers of all kinds should keep in mind the empowerment that arises when they make a human connection with individuals stuck in a rut of poverty, disability, or some other hardship. These individuals are much more likely to respond with "I can" moments of inspiration, when the hand that reaches out to help them is from a neighbor, or from someone who takes the time to swap stories and imagine being in the other person's shoes. Too often, help comes in the form of a compassionate stranger who swoops in, completes necessary assistance, and swoops out. It's as if there were a magic carpet providing all of the necessary tools and know-how to transform their lives. The truth is, each one of us has a well within ourselves that we can tap to get our needs met. Sometimes it just takes a neighbor stopping by to fix that "bucket" that won't dip down into the well properly to remind us we have the resources within, and all around us in our community, to thrive, live well, and feel at home in this world.

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Who We Are

CHC is a 501(c)(3) independent, non-profit organization, governed by a volunteer board. CHC's mission is to promote and facilitate healthy, safe, and [affordable housing](#) in Madison County, NC.

That is why CHC is so focused on building bridges in Madison County – bridges of connection, of neighbors helping neighbors, of service to each other. Yes, CHC puts hammers to nails and rebuilds homes, but our growing network of volunteers, board members, staff, and clients are engaged in building community as every person works together to ensure the safety and livability of homes in Madison County.

OK, deep breath as I move on from my birthday reflections. I have business matters and CHC updates to discuss! The bonny days of summer are winding down and it's time to reset our tool kits for winter weather preparations. Look for Chris Watson's article in this newsletter to hear about the work CHC has planned to get families ready for winter and able to keep living in their homes.

A big thank you to donors who participated in United Way fund drives, as CHC has recently received a \$3500 check for being a proud partner with UW of Madison County. This will give our Fall projects a nice boost, but we still need the financial kick-start of our generous donor base to rally in response to our End of Summer appeal letter. It's been a very busy year at CHC with many transitions, and our Fundraising Committee unfortunately won't be able to pull together a Fall Fundraising Event. If you received our appeal letter, please consider supporting CHC with whatever financial assistance you can manage. If you didn't receive our letter, please write to us at [chc@chcmadisoncountync.org](mailto:chc@chcmadisoncountync.org) and provide us with your address so we can add you to our mailing list!

Finally, we will have a big hole to fill with Stephanie McCullough leaving our office. Stephanie was our immensely talented and capable Summer Social Work Intern who just walked in and owned a special role on CHC's team. Her hard work and righteous social marketing skills will be sadly missed, though she will remain a part of the CHC family. Enjoy her piece about the learning experience she's had helping CHC with our busy summer! Thank you Stephanie from the bottom of our hearts for all your contributions!!

## Splinters from the Board

**By Jennifer Woodruff**

One year ago, I joined the Board of Directors for the Community Housing Coalition. It has been a pleasure and an honor to be part of this organization in such a fundamental way. One of the most impactful and significant ways I get to contribute to this organization is by going to the Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN) weekend work days that we hold on a monthly basis. This directly benefits someone needing home repairs or landscaping in Madison County. Neighbors Helping Neighbors takes place on Saturdays at one of our client's homes. Before we even arrive, all the materials have been purchased and are there waiting for us to put them to use. The house has been visited many times to make sure the priority projects and problems are being addressed for the homeowner(s). Our homes are our shelter and protection. No one should have inadequate housing, but so many do. This is a creative way to address those needs for people.

This past Saturday, I was helping replace boards and steps on a deck, removing nails, using pry-bars, hammers, screwdrivers - all of which I've had plenty of experience with before. There is always a head builder on site who helps teach us how to use a tool or set a board in the right place, if we have never done that before. Having a head builder on site is necessary for guiding and directing the project so that the homeowner doesn't have to. The homeowner may know nothing about building and construction, either. So we always have a lead builder to direct the show. And we always have CHC staff on site to make sure we have lunch, snacks and water.

Overall, Neighbors Helping Neighbors is a rewarding and gratifying experience of community and togetherness. And at the end of the day, your group have all accomplished something wonderful and hopefully made some new friends along the way.

## Volunteer Corner

**By Stephanie McCullough, CHC Intern**

Although the calendar doesn't technically reflect the end of summer, the summer is indeed over for Community Housing Coalition. All of our wonderful summer mission groups have returned home, the vast majority leaving us with many grateful and satisfied neighbors.

What a learning experience I have had with this fantastic agency. I can tell you that, without a doubt, paid or unpaid, job or internship, this is by far the most worthwhile experience I have had in an "employment" setting. The past ten weeks have flown by. I believe that says a lot about my internship experience, time flies when you're having fun right?!? This being my last week, and having nearly completed all requirements of my Bachelors of Social Work degree, I thought I would share a particular learning experience for me, one that has continually surfaced for me over the past 10 weeks, and that is a lesson in judgment.

One of Webster's many definitions for judgment is "the process of forming an opinion or evaluation by discerning and comparing." I would add that regardless of how nonjudgmental we believe ourselves to be, within us all lays the ability to form judgment. For those of us at CHC who have the opportunity to interact with our neighbors (clients), particularly inside their homes, it is imperative that we leave our judgment at the door! We have seen homes in such immense disrepair that we are actually attempting to move in a new mobile home for the client. I have noticed in myself that *curiosities and assumptions* will lead down the road to discernment, comparison, opinion... JUDGMENT. We must remind ourselves that we are all doing the best we can, in the present time, with what we have. Studies have proven that having a safe home is a contributing factor in alleviating mental health concerns, such as anxiety and stress, and even helping with substance abuse issues. We are here to help these neighbors of ours, not to judge them. And who knows what the long-term, lasting affects might be. Improving their home may just give them the self-determination to do better for themselves. Bottom line: our neighbors need our help, not our judgment.

Thanks for reading this, and tremendous thanks to all at CHC who made this a most memorable, once-in-a-lifetime internship experience. Thank you!

## Client & Grants Update

**By Chris Watson, Client and Grants Coordinator**

The summer volunteer season has come to an end and it's in this time leading up to fall and winter that the staff at CHC changes focus to get families ready for winter. We are fortunate to have Federal and State grants that allow us to focus on major repairs that our volunteers are unable to undertake. Between now and the end of the year, we project that we will spend nearly \$100,000 to replace 6-7 roofs, repair or replace 2-3 septic systems, install 1-2 new wells, and repair or install 2-3 new heating units.

Wells have become an especially critical need for low-income families in Madison County. Many of our elderly and disabled families live in homes that get water from a spring. Springs inherently require maintenance and as people age and become limited by disabilities their springs do not receive the needed attention and can become clogged, unhealthy, and unusable. In addition, changing environmental conditions and the natural migration of spring heads all contribute to these water sources being unreliable. We have had clients with spring boxes full of dead animals and ones so full of leaves and debris that no water can flow through the pipes. In many

cases, the only safe and reliable option is to install a well at a cost of at least \$6,000-7,000. Annually, CHC spends \$15,000-20,000 to repair existing and install new wells in an effort to make sure all families have safe, reliable water.

Thank you all for your support in helping our Madison County neighbors maintain safe, healthy, and affordable housing!

## Thank you, Good Stuff!



Word is out that Eats & Drinks for Equal Housing has been an amazing success this summer in drumming up extra business for local eateries Good Stuff and Zuma Coffee!! Owners Amy Gillespie and Joel Freedman, respectively, have reported increased sales on the days they've designated to donate 10% of their sales to CHC. Let's keep the excitement rolling for the rest of 2016! CHC's restaurant initiative is taking a break for the month of September, but make a note on your calendars that **Sweet Monkey Bakery and**

**Cafe is lined up for October to donate 10% of its Thursday sales!** Hollie West, chef and owner of this "slow-food" local restaurant, has committed to support CHC's housing work while serving up craft food with a delicious flair. Get ready to loosen your belts in October at Sweet Monkey and support CHC on Thursdays all month long!!

## Donation Box



CHC is proud to be a United Way partner! As you make contributions to the United Way of Madison County, you can designate CHC as a recipient.

If you would like to make a donation to CHC directly, those donations are always welcome. You can mail a tax deductible gift to The Community Housing Coalition of Madison County, P.O. Box 1166, Marshall, NC 28753. Or visit our website at <http://www.chcmadisoncountync.org> to make a donation online.

Thank you!

## Legs & Regs

Will return in September.

## Closing Thoughts

While it's a bit hard to think about heating systems as the remnants of summer's humidity still linger in the air, better to consider it now than when the air turns frigid. So the approaching months of Fall are a good time to check your heating systems: change filters, gauge fuel levels, have your chimney cleaned, and get firewood prepared. Inspect your roof as best you can for damage from summer storms. Reversing ceiling fans can be surprisingly helpful in moving and circulating warmer air. For optimum maintenance, know how to put your small engine power equipment – like lawn mowers and string trimmers – to bed for the season.

Look for more to come on winter preparedness as we get closer to those colder, shorter days!



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