

# Annual Report

2021

2022



# Overview of 2021-2022

**T**ransition was the watch word for the Community Shelter of Union County in its 28th fiscal year. Where the challenge of the start of 2020 was keeping Shelter participants, volunteers, and staff safe and the facility open, the 2021-22 fiscal year was navigating a pandemic safely.

With the surge of coronavirus, our partners stepped up on local, state, and federal levels to help us manage a surge of need. Our case management staff doubled. We took major steps to secure and distribute eviction relief

funds, start a contactless mobile food pantry, and we worked with a local motel to expand our capacity while spreading out our resident population to stop the spread of the virus.

All that worked, as the Shelter avoided any community spread of the virus while we maintained our expanded services throughout the year.

But in 2021-22, a deadline of June 30, 2022, loomed as the end for a bulk of government aid. We closed our motel program, helped our full-time

temporary case managers find new jobs, and kept updated policies and procedures to follow state Covid-related mandates. The coronavirus didn't disappear; we still operate under state emergency rules as of August 2022.

As 2021 closed, it was clear we would face another challenge. The need for our services didn't ramp down, and inflation leapt at the same time, and we saw the affordable housing supply tighten further as we entered 2022.

As we closed the fiscal year, U.S. inflation hit 9.1% in June. Our network of landlords, a key to housing our participants, shrank as landlords sold their properties, often to corporate interests who immediately raised rents.

We grew our economic mobility program, which helps our participants find better-paying jobs, but rising costs of transportation and childcare worked as engine brakes to the effort.

Though it was a year of constant change and readjustment, the Community Shelter kept its promise to be Union County's "front door" to services to fight homelessness and hunger. We see our job as more than a public health or public safety mission; it's just the right thing to do.

We are grateful, as always, for the wide range of community support to help us focus on Emergency Shelter, Food and Rehousing. Every week here, we see a heart-warming story about a participant making a life-changing effort, donors who are eager to give, and volunteers who freely share their time toward our mission. As we say, we can't do this without you.

**Melissa McKeown**  
Shelter CEO



Volunteers power our programs and add to the fun, whether it is serving at a special event such as the Souper Bowl of Caring Souper Bowl cookoff (above), or teaming up to provide one of the three daily meals we serve in our dining hall (right).

Last fiscal year, volunteers served enough hours to equal the work of almost nine full-time employees.





# Emergency Shelter



## Rising costs changing the equation



Moving day is a great accomplishment for our residents leaving the Community Shelter.

As the danger of the coronavirus subsided through August 2021 to July 2022, the Shelter faced another hurdle in rapidly rising inflation.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Price Index in the South was up 5% in June 2021. By June 2022, it was up 10%. Sharp increases in housing, transportation, and food costs further changed the face of homelessness in our county.

For the fiscal year, we provided 26,179 total overnight stays in emergency shelter. That was up 13% from the previous year. We helped 631 unique individuals, an increase of 8% from the previous period.

We began seeing more participants who had never required our services, particularly among the elderly.

Last fiscal year, 58% of our participants were experiencing homelessness for the first time, all while government programs were subsidizing income and blocking evictions.

First-time homelessness was even higher (60%) for seniors staying with us in shelter last fiscal year. Seniors made up 21% of our participants.

Finding affordable housing became much harder, which meant prolonged stays in our facility. Before the pandemic, our average length of stay in

the Shelter was just under 40 days. This past fiscal year, it jumped to 56 days from check-in to moving to independent living.

In usual years, many participants self-exit within two weeks, meaning they have found a place to live on their own, or with a friend or relative. That dropped sharply, from 148 individuals to 106 last fiscal year.

Throughout the pandemic, we contracted with a local motel to both spread out our participant population, and to provide more overall capacity. 148 people and 103 households were served through that program, which ended with the close of the fiscal year.







## Feeding the hungry, stretching budgets



The Community Shelter has worked to feed the hungry since 1995. We believe that access to food is a basic human right, and we use three programs to help.

We operate a soup kitchen for three meals daily, every day of the year. It is the only full-time soup kitchen in Union County. In the recent fiscal year, this program provided 47,000 prepared

meals over the fiscal year, serving 950 unique individuals.

Our contactless mobile pantry continued to grow. It began as a way to get food quickly into the community. For more than a year, it was a way that those hungry but not living at the Shelter could receive food safely.

Through this program, the Shelter and its volunteer and community partners distributed 486,340 meals in the fiscal year. This pantry takes place about twice monthly, on Tuesdays. See [unionshelter.org/food](http://unionshelter.org/food) for upcoming dates.

Our third program is a senior food box program. These packages are filled with foods recommended as best for a senior diet. The Shelter switched from delivery of these boxes to a contactless pickup system, as we do our mobile pantry.

As well as feeding our Union County neighbors who can't afford a meal, our food services help households stretch budgets. We regularly provide hygiene kits among our food supports,

items that are not covered by food stamps (SNAP benefits). All this help can make it possible for households to stay current rent and avoid homelessness, a better outcome for that household and the community.



The Community Shelter runs a mobile food pantry twice per month, providing about \$100 worth of groceries to each household, which helps families remain in housing as well as feeding the hungry in our community.



# Rehousing



## Shelter focuses on Housing First

Of the three pillars of services we focus on at the Community Shelter, rehousing is the hardest but brings the most joy to fulfill.

Our emergency shelter and food programs satisfy basic needs for neighbors who would otherwise go without.

But we have found, locally and by researching national best practices, is that a Housing First philosophy works. Housing stability is what pulls our par-

ticipants from crisis mode. Otherwise, it's an enormous task to focus on economic empowerment. Our program helps participants save for an upcoming return to independent living.

The Shelter is committed to stretching our resources as far as possible, so we help with rent and deposits as needed. We also work hard to set participants on a path that is sustainable; after three years of entering our rapid rehousing program, 80.21% have

avoided another episode of homelessness.

That success is based on the strength of our food programs, which help support these re-established households, and the work of case managers who keep in touch with participants for up to a year after their moving day.

In the past fiscal year, the Shelter rehoused 143 individuals and furnished 53 new households via our Home Again program.

## New warehouse benefits Shelter programs

Thanks to support in a capital campaign that funded opening of a new campus in 2019, the Community Shelter finished construction of a warehouse that will change how we provide many of our services in 2022 and beyond.

The warehouse, built like the original Shelter campus by our amazing partner McGee Brothers, provides 3,400 square feet of space that will serve several purposes:

- Storage for donated furniture and housewares for our Home Again program, which we use during moving days to set up homes for our graduating participants who came to us with nothing.
- Storage and workspace for our Step It Up program that turns used bicycles into transportation



The Shelter opened a warehouse in July, part of the original campus plan, which helps us expand and speed delivery of our services.

- assistance for our participants.
- 400 more square feet of storage for our pantry programs
- 120 more square feet of frozen storage, doubling our capacity for accepting donations of perishable products. Consider-

ing the local market rate for 350 square feet of storage is \$500 per month, adding this warehouse brings considerable savings. Having such a building on campus also saves the agency considerable time in how it accepts and distributes donations.





# Economic Empowerment



## Stable households require more pay

With rising inflation and a minimum wage stuck at \$7.25, the math at this level of income puts independent living farther out of reach.

According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, it would take 108 hours' minimum-wage pay to be able to afford a one-bedroom apartment in Union County with its market rate of \$1,014 per month. Even for a one-room efficiency, it would take 106 hours' work per week at minimum wage to be able to afford that living space.

That's why we began an economic mobility program modeled after our successful rehousing effort. We work to build a network of local employers to match with our Shelter participants.

Like with rehousing, there are barriers. Access to affordable transportation and childcare is difficult for many middle-class

Household size	Rental cost/month	Hours/week to afford at \$7.25 minimum wage	Hourly wage to afford
0 Bedroom	\$996	106	\$19.15
1 Bedroom	\$1,014	108	\$19.50
2 Bedroom	\$1,155	123	\$22.21
3 Bedroom	\$1,497	159	\$28.79

Rising costs in Union County make it clear -- making at or even a few dollars above the \$7.25 minimum wage doesn't add up to sustainable housing.

families, not to mention those who at or below the poverty line.

Nonetheless, our economic empowerment program grew in the past fiscal year.

We helped 64 people get hired, and 53 of those participants retained employment after six months.

Household size	Annual pay to afford (rent = 30% of pay)
0 Bedroom	\$39,840
1 Bedroom	\$40,560
2 Bedroom	\$46,200
3 Bedroom	\$59,880



The Community Shelter partners with local businesses in February and March during its Souper Bowl of Caring campaign. In 2022, the Shelter worked with Union County brewers to put on a tasting event at Waxhaw Taphouse to fund our programs.



# 2021-2022 at a glance



## Emergency Shelter

- » Total overnight stays in emergency shelter -- **26,179**
- » On campus-stays -- **18,549** for **483 individuals**
- » Motel stays -- **7,630 stays** for **148 individuals**



## Food

- » Prepared meals served in dining hall -- **47,000 to 950 people**
- » Meals served with pantry food -- **486,340**
- » Pounds of food distributed in drive-through pantries -- **583,608**



## Rehousing

- » Individuals moved to independent housing -- **143**
- » Households moved to independent housing -- **76**
- » Households receiving Home Again furniture, supplies -- **53**



## Volunteers

- » Hours contributed by volunteers -- **18,174**
- » Full-time equivalency (FTE) of volunteer support -- **8.74 FTE**
- » Savings from volunteer work -- **\$544,311**  
(Independent Sector valuation)



## Economic Mobility

- » Total individuals employed -- **64**
- » Total employed and Sustained after 6 months -- **53**
- » Total employer partners -- **15**



# 2021-2022 financials

## Shelter funding sources

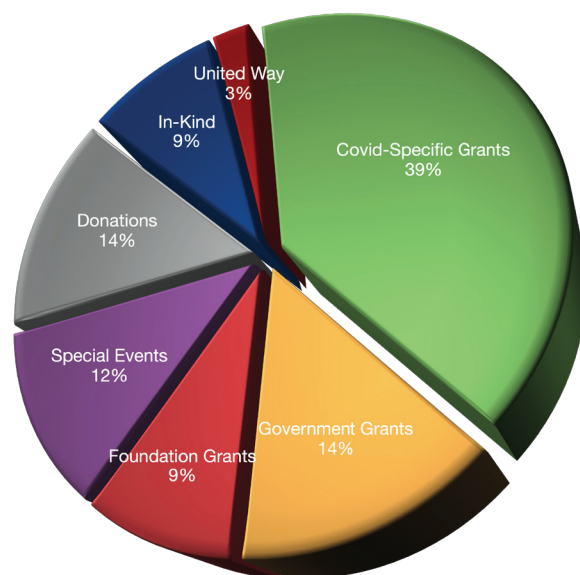
The difference in Covid-relief government funding from the previous year was dramatic, dropping more than \$800,000 in our total operating revenues of \$2,837,042.

Our donation partners, made up of individuals, families, churches, schools, and businesses, provided the second-highest revenue stream,

totaling more than \$400,000.

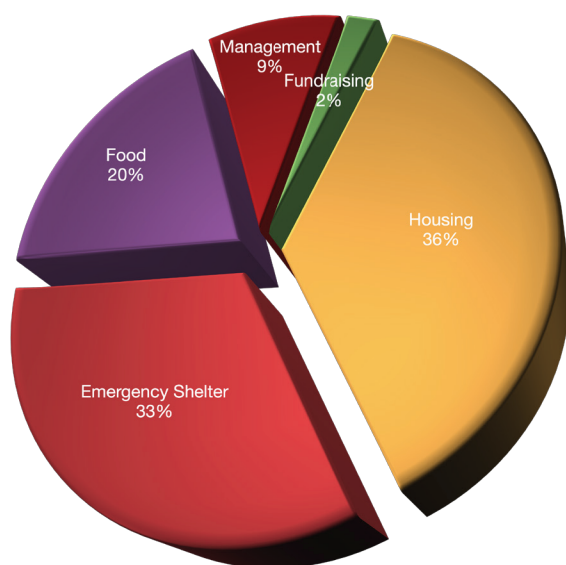
In-kind donations, which include utilities, food, and supplies, totaled more than \$270,000 of total revenues.

In addition, government and private grants, excluding Covid-related funds, contributed more than \$640,000.



Figures unaudited and rounded

## Shelter expense breakdown



Figures unaudited and rounded

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Our charge is to be good stewards of the resources directed to our agency. We take the responsibility seriously and are overseen by a board of directors made up of 23 local community leaders.

With the draw-down of Covid-related government funding, our total expenses dropped accordingly, from \$3.4 million to \$2.5 million.

Our largest expense was for housing, a \$910,049 expense that made up 36% of the total.

The next-largest cost of running the Shelter came in providing Emergency Shelter. Its share of the total expenses increased 11%, to 33%, from the previous year.

The portion of Food against our expenses rose, making up 20% of our total expenses.

Total program expenses accounted for 89% of the overall expenses, with management and fundraising expense accounting for 11% of the total.



*The Community Shelter of Union County provides Emergency Shelter, Food, and Rehousing. Our low-barrier services support equitable opportunities because safe, affordable housing and access to food are basic human rights.*

For volunteer or donor opportunities, visit [UnionShelter.org/GetInvolved](http://UnionShelter.org/GetInvolved).

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