Meeting Notes – Jul. 19, 2022

The LaFayette Rotary Club met on Tuesday, July 19, 2022. We were honored to have with us our new Assistant Governor, Lindsy Gardner. She currently has four clubs in her region: Roanoke, Alexander City, Sylacauga, and LaFayette. She introduced herself and spoke a few words on behalf of the district governor.

Our guest speaker today was Kevin Pigg, from the Circle of Care (CoC). Kevin explained the purpose of, and services provided by, the Circle of Care. He then went more in-depth regarding his area of service, homelessness. Since November 2021 the CoC has opened 280 cases of homelessness in Chambers County, involving 510 people. It costs $34,000.00 per homeless person per year to provide for the needs of a homeless person. If the person is able to enter a shelter, the cost drops to $19,000.00 per person per year. Currently, Chambers County has no shelter for the homeless. Since November 2021, the CoC has placed 31 families, 90 people. They follow them for three years to make sure the family/person is able to maintain their new living arrangements.

The ultimate goal is homeless prevention. Kevin shared a handout with us showing a budget for a single person with one child earning minimum wage ($15.00/hr., 40 hrs./week). The budget does not include TV or internet services, nor any funds set aside for unexpected expenses. After paying all other bills, the person has only $61.00 left for groceries for the month, $359.00 short of the $420.00 budgeted. His example made it easy to see how a person in this position could become homeless. Part of homeless prevention services includes teaching the clients how to secure employment through Workforce Development. If the person receives or qualifies for Food Stamps, the person is paid $9.00 an hour to go through the Workforce Development course. Right now, the participants are guaranteed two interviews with major companies and, so far, 100% of the graduates have secured employment. The course teaches work habits, conflict resolution, resume writing and interviewing skills. The CoC also works with landlords to defer or spread out the required one-month advanced rent deposit. The Parenting Plus Program is also part of homeless prevention. This program serves families with children newborn through 21 years of age. Kevin hoes to secure grants to help these children ultimately attend SUSCC technical school so they can be prepared for a well-paying job. Kevin mentioned that various agencies and entities throughout Chambers County (police, DHR, school systems, etc.) work well together to try and prevent homelessness.

The Street Outreach Program of the CoC has identified 14 persons living in tents near LaFayette. There are also two groups living in tents in the Valley area. Last year, EAMC Lanier provided $2.4 million in free health care. The hospital and CoC are currently tracking those expenditures back to the homeless population. Kevin suggested that if each church and organization in Chambers County could commit to donating $100.00 a month to combat homelessness, it would go a very long way in helping to resolve this problem. There are individuals and grants available that would match these contributions, making the money go even further.

Diane Sherriff