

CATHERINE'S HOUSE

Nonprofit helps homeless women, children

Ted Hall

Special to The Gazette

A shortage of affordable housing, sharp increases in home prices and rental rates and the rising cost of living are resulting in more homelessness and hitting women with children especially hard. This was the message delivered to Belmont Rotarians recently by Kathy Gauger, president and CEO of Catherine's House in Belmont.

Catherine's House is a nonprofit organization established in 1992 by the

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Kathy Gauger, Catherine's House president and CEO

Sisters of Mercy in Belmont. It's named for Catherine McAuley of Dublin, Ireland, who founded the Sisters of Mercy, and is located on the former Sacred Heart campus.

The mission at Catherine's House is to provide women and their children, who otherwise would be living on the

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Kathy Gauger, president and CEO at Catherine's House, is pictured with Belmont Rotary Club Past-President Whitney Norton. PROVIDED BY TED HALL

Nonprofit

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streets or in cars, a transitional home plus individualized counseling and educational programs on finances and improving credit scores to help them break the cycle of homelessness. The usual stay at Catherine's House is four to six months, Kathy Gauger said.

Each woman entering Catherine's House has an emotional wellness check with a licensed clinical health counselor who makes recommendations on individual counseling, group sessions and referrals to local providers when appropriate. She also is assigned a case manager who helps develop an individualized plan focused on securing employment, obtaining permanent housing, and improving her emotional health and decision-making skills.

In 2022, Catherine's House served 54 women and 36 children from Gaston and Mecklenburg counties. Since 1992, more than 2,350 women and children have been served.

"In January this year, a count identified 388 homeless people in Gaston, Lincoln and Cleveland counties," Gauger said, "and 37% were unsheltered, living in encampments or on the streets."

After more than 20 years of experience working with the homeless, Gauger came to Catherine's house two years ago. Her previous positions include director of Family Promise in Charlotte and director of shelter operations at Charlotte Family Housing.

She described as her "greatest joy" seeing women who arrive at Catherine's House broken, dejected and hopeless begin to thrive, as they take advantage of the programs provided, and leave with new skills and renewed confidence and hope.

She also described her joy at seeing frightened children who cowered behind their mothers upon arrival at Catherine's House soon come bounding down the hallway to greet and hug a staff member.

"We bestow mercy upon our residents every single day," she concluded.

Read stories of residents and volunteers, check out and respond to the wish list of items needed, learn more about Catherine's House and how you can contribute at www.catherineshouseinc.org, or call 704-825-9599.