**Barbara’s House: A Madison County Haven**

Although census information doesn’t rank Madison County with a high poverty rate, it still has a significant population of people in need. In fact, Madison Emergency Services Association (MESA) has been serving local families and individuals in crisis for well over three decades.

One of MESA’s outstanding programs is Barbara’s House, which opened in the fall of 2002 as a residential transitional housing program. This three-story, five-unit, fully furnished apartment structure has more than 3,000 square feet, providing families or individuals with a safe and secure place to live while they reorganize their lives.

Named after longtime MESA treasurer Barbara Sherman, it was planned and built primarily thanks to grants, donations, and mostly volunteer labor. Residents are allowed to stay rent-free for up to a year, while various community mentors guide them on a more stable and productive journey. Since it first opened its doors, Barbara’s House has consistently been in use, and to date has helped over 100 families.

Like any home, Barbara’s House has faced maintenance issues, but because it doesn’t collect rent, funds for repairs are difficult to procure. This winter, it was faced with a serious septic system problem. After examining all possibilities, the only recourse was to replace a sewer pump, which came with a $9,200 price tag. Luckily, the Northern Piedmont Community Foundation (NPCF) was able to offset the cost with a $9,000 grant from its Now and Forever Fund.

“This was a godsend!” said MESA Executive Director Eleanor Mower. “As a small nonprofit, the only way to pay for this would have been to take it from our operating budget, which would have put us in a tight situation. Thanks to the grant, we immediately fixed the problem for Barbara’s House residents.”

MESA is one of several Madison County charity organizations that needs ongoing support. Less than two years ago, NPCF, led by current board members Jeff Early, Valerie Goossens, and Russell James, as well as former board member Carty Yowell—all Madison County residents, launched the creation of the Madison County Community Fund, with the goal of expanding long-range available funding to the county’s nonprofits.

“The Madison County Community Fund is a legacy fund that we established as a future giving vehicle for Madison County,” said Jane Bowling-Wilson, NPCF Executive Director. “It is a long-term solution to an immediate problem in Madison County—a lack of sustainable funding for local charities—that will support the nonprofit community in years to come.” She noted that as it grows, the Madison County Community Fund could become a Community Grant solely accessible to and utilized by Madison nonprofits.

Please consider supporting this worthy fund. To donate to the Madison County Community Fund, contact Jane Bowling-Wilson at NPCF at jbwilson@npcf.org.