



A Poverty Simulation HOPE Initiative brings citizens together in search of a deeper understanding of the impact of poverty on the lives of individuals and the communities in which they live. In a morning of intentionality, not offering up excuses, , people's understanding of the impact of poverty is enhanced and their compassion is enlarged through a national simulation. South Memorial Church of God hosts this event for HOPE. Date to be determined.

Spring Clean-up....and Plant-down, April 22-April 23: This year, our clean up will encompass a diligent effort, taking on a variety of fix up, paint up, and tear down projects, culminating on April 23, noon, when, again, we will offer a neighborhood a "hand up" in accomplishing spring cleaning. Along with cleaning, we are adding a planting component: trees and smaller plants. We will kick off our effort by assisting with a Healthy Communities project; we will help plant trees at Baker Park and in other areas on Earth Day, April 22. Always, we look to partners in our efforts. Residents are so appreciative. (Our first year in this particular project, in three and a half hours, we picked up 12,000 pounds of throw away, things that do not get picked up in routine weekly trash collection.) This year's specific area for clean-up will be decided at the April 14 meeting. Traditionally, we begin the morning with breakfast at a nearby church, work for a good three hours, and end our morning with a lunch provided by Stonebrooke.

Active Living Workshop, Thursday, April 28, 9 am- 4 pm, Public Library. Registration required.

HUFFER offers Child Development Accreditation certification coursework, beginning in April.

A plant swap, Saturday, May 14, 8:30-9:45 am (and again in the fall) allows gardeners to share their plants and plant magazines and plant containers with others. No cost....just bring an appropriate swap item. Join other green-thumbers at 8:30 am at Millstone Farms and Gardens, 1500 Alabama Street, New Castle, west of the Henry County Memorial Hospital. The actual swap begins at 9 am sharp. Rain or shine.

Summer "Outdoor Living and Garden Tour" occurs annually, this year on June 18. Area citizens open their yards to neighbors from New Castle and surrounding towns, sharing both the beauty of their gardens, but also tips that can be used by those who also garden. Cost is \$5 per ticket. Tickets will be available for sale at area businesses, starting May 12

Back-to-School Festival, July 25, celebrates the power of education in the lives of our children. Food and games are offered to all children who attend the event, sponsored by HOPE and the LOVE CENTER, working with many other organizations, businesses, and area churches. Along with food and games, some children receive book bags and school supplies, haircuts by Colourz stylists, dental exams by Dr. Seth Conley, and other prizes provided by local businesses and law enforcement officials. All elementary principals attend, welcoming students back to school. Over 450 filled book-bags were distributed last year alone.

A fall plant swap, Saturday, Sept. 17, allows gardeners to share their plants and plant magazines and plant containers with others. No cost....just bring an appropriate swap item. Join other green-thumbers at 8:30 am at Millstone Farms and Gardens at 1500 Alabama Street, New Castle.

HOPE Initiative participates in the Chamber-sponsored Christmas Walk, first week of December..

THE Donut Run, December 24, 10:30 pm: We take a token of love to those who work on our behalf on Christmas Eve, EMS, police, hospital, nursing homes, etc.. What fun!!



Several meetings after being formed initially as a task force charged to study poverty issues confronting the city, HOPE Initiative was born. While yet deeply committed to addressing the city's economic plight, HOPE Initiative, with input, over time, of more than a hundred citizens, enlarged its territory to include all citizens of New Castle and surrounding areas: The mission is to ensure that every citizen in this area be afforded dignity, no matter his/her station in life.

How will dignity for everyone look? We have gone initially to the basics: Is equitable thought given to every part of the city and surrounding areas when it comes to cleanliness, to safety, to enforcement of ordinances, to police protection, to education for our children, to family security and well-being, to community spirit, health and entertainment? While celebrating the area's assets (and there are many), our hope is to partner with existing entities whenever possible in facilitating warranted change. For example, we partner with ICAP and HUD in hosting the Poverty Simulation. We partner with ICAP, HUD, Habitat for Humanity, and the City of New Castle in addressing the housing situation in the city. We partner with several churches and the LOVE Center on the "back to school" festival, scheduled for this fall. We lobby the City government for help in addressing scholarships for economically strapped citizens using the local pool. We partner with the Henry County Community Foundation in serving our youngest citizens through the Early Childhood/Preschool Initiative.

To respond to the above questions and to address the voids, we have five committees:

1) family/youth/health, 2) community involvement and public relations, and 3) business, 4) government issues, and 5) education issues. Each committee is charged with staying focused, looking for ways to collaborate with other people/organizations, seeking stakeholders who can help solve problems facing the city/county and its people.

Along with engaging elected and acclaimed leaders in conversation around hard issues, sometimes in public and sometimes in private, we also conduct city clean-ups, sponsor the outdoor living and garden show, educate and advocate for the 21st Century Scholarship, co-sponsor the "Back to School" festival, write grants to assist in educating the larger public around the needs of the city and surrounding area, and serve the real purpose of asking hard questions: *Why are we doing this? Why haven't we done that?* All while sincerely seeing beauty in our city/county, simply wanting it to be even more beautiful. A number of our HOPE Initiative participants have taken on advocacy roles around "hot button" topics: the swim pool, abandoned houses, graduation rate, the poor seeking a hand up versus a hand out, and educating the public to the plight of our economically challenged with the idea of being a friend to them. HOPE participants often are affiliated with other civic entities, creating a wonderful pool of knowledge around joys and issues. We meet monthly on the 2nd Thursday of the month at the The HOPE Building, 1426 Broad Street, 6:30-8:45 pm. Our special programs for the coming months include the following:

April 14:	TAKING THE PULSE: Join area elected and acclaimed leaders as they share the good and the bad news confronting our community. HOPE Building, 1426 Broad Street
April 22-23:	Clean up and Plant Down, various areas in city; route determined at the April 14 meeting
April 28:	Active Living Workshop, 9 am -4 pm, limited space, registration required. Public Library
May 12:	Guest Steve Wiseike of Richmond will talk about Narc-Anon, working with families who are dealing with addiction, HOPE Building, 1426 Broad Street

We invite citizens to come whenever they can, every time they can. Together we can support our city/county in righteous endeavors. Need more information? Call Directors Jimmy Kidd @ 521-2949, Bev Hankenhoff @ 529-1132, or Cathy Hamilton @465-4200. Check us out on Facebook, thanks to Randy Smith.

