



# Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness One Person at a Time: The Rome and Floyd County Plan



*Breaking the Cycle  
of Homelessness*

September 2009





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*Breaking the Cycle  
of Homelessness*

*Dear Friends,*

Every day many in our community must confront the question of where they will sleep that night. They miss the assurance that most of us have of a place to call home. That is why the commitment that our community has made to break the cycle of homelessness is so important.

Late in 2007, a small group of people representing service providers, local government and downtown businesses came together to discuss homelessness in Rome. The growing presence of people on the street, particularly in the downtown area, had created a new awareness and concern about the problem. That first informal meeting evolved into a community effort to make a positive impact on homelessness. The Task Force on Homelessness now involves over 40 organizations. In addition to this plan, the Task Force has conducted two homeless counts to better understand the size and scope of the problem. And just this summer we sponsored a homelessness resource fair to provide community outreach – the first of what we expect to be many joint activities.

It is tempting to say that the work of the Task Force has culminated in this plan. But the fact is, with the completion of the plan, the real work starts. Implementing the action steps outlined here will take the ongoing commitment of the entire community.

Before we roll up our sleeves and get to work, we would like to thank all of the members of the Task Force on Homelessness. Without the many volunteers who assisted with the homeless counts, homelessness resource fair, and planning process, we would not be here, ready to embark on this effort. The City of Rome provided leadership in initiating this process and dedicated staff time, meeting space, and funding to make this endeavor possible.

Working together, **now** is the time to break the cycle of homelessness in Rome and Floyd County – one person at a time.

*Breaking the Cycle Plan  
Steering Committee*





## Executive Summary

### Our Vision:

Working together, Rome and Floyd County will be a community without long-term homelessness where people have access to permanent housing and the supportive services they need.

### The Problem

Based on surveys conducted in September 2008 and January 2009, there are between 200 and 400 people who are literally homeless on a given night in Rome and Floyd County. The current severe recession has no doubt contributed to the upper number, but even under more normal economic conditions, our community has a significant number of people who are without permanent housing. This number does not include most of the families of the over 900 children in our schools who have also been identified as homeless.

### The Solution

The *Breaking the Cycle* plan is based on collaboration and coordination – maximizing the use of existing resources and developing new programs to meet service gaps. The plan describes twenty-three action steps to respond to the needs of homeless individuals and families and to prevent new homelessness in our community.

#### *An Action Agenda*

1. Establish the Rome/Floyd County Interagency Council on Homelessness as the vehicle for promoting and facilitating joint action.
2. Create a *Breaking the Cycle* web site.
3. Have an ongoing program of research, data collection, and evaluation, including regular point-in-time counts of the homeless population and evaluations of the service/housing needs of people facing homelessness in the community.
4. Create a day center for homeless individuals
5. Hold a homelessness resource fair at least twice a year to reach families and individuals in need.
6. Create a peer support and community mentoring program
7. Expand the use of individualized plans for homeless persons with mental illness/substance abuse
8. Create an ongoing community education and outreach program
9. Expand efforts for pre discharge and prerelease planning and increase coordination with neighboring jurisdictions regarding local service availability and capacity
10. Create a day center for homeless families
11. Facilitate transportation options for families and individuals facing homelessness, including after hours transportation

12. Facilitate after hours child care for families participating in homeless prevention and transitional programs
13. Review the need for weather emergency shelter beds, along with a system for calling weather emergencies and providing outreach to people who are homeless and unsheltered
14. Create an Interfaith Hospitality Network for emergency family shelter
15. Participate in federal programs for rapid rehousing and homeless prevention
16. Create 30 units of Permanent Supportive Housing for families
17. Review the need for medical shelter beds to provide for recuperative stays for homeless persons who have been hospitalized for accidents or illness and hospice services for end-of-life care for homeless persons
18. Create an additional 10 units of transitional housing for families
19. Create additional Permanent Supportive Housing units for individuals
20. Create new Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units as transitional housing for individuals
21. Investigate the need and feasibility for a family emergency shelter
22. Create additional affordable housing to meet the needs of extremely low income persons
23. Explore implementing a Housing First program for our community's chronically homeless population





## **Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness One Person at a Time: the Rome and Floyd County Plan**

Rome and Floyd County is fortunate to have many organizations working to provide services, advocacy, and outreach to individuals and families facing homelessness. The foundation is already in place to *break the cycle of homelessness one person at a time*. This plan is based on coordination and collaboration – maximizing the use of existing resources and developing new programs to meet service gaps.

### ***Vision Statement***

Working together, Rome and Floyd County will be a community without long-term homelessness where people have access to permanent housing and the supportive services they need.

### ***Guiding Principle***

Our guiding principle is that the homeless are not problem people, but rather, people with problems.

### ***Outcome***

Renewed Perception  
Renewed Reality  
Renewed Rome



# Background and Community Planning Process

## Background

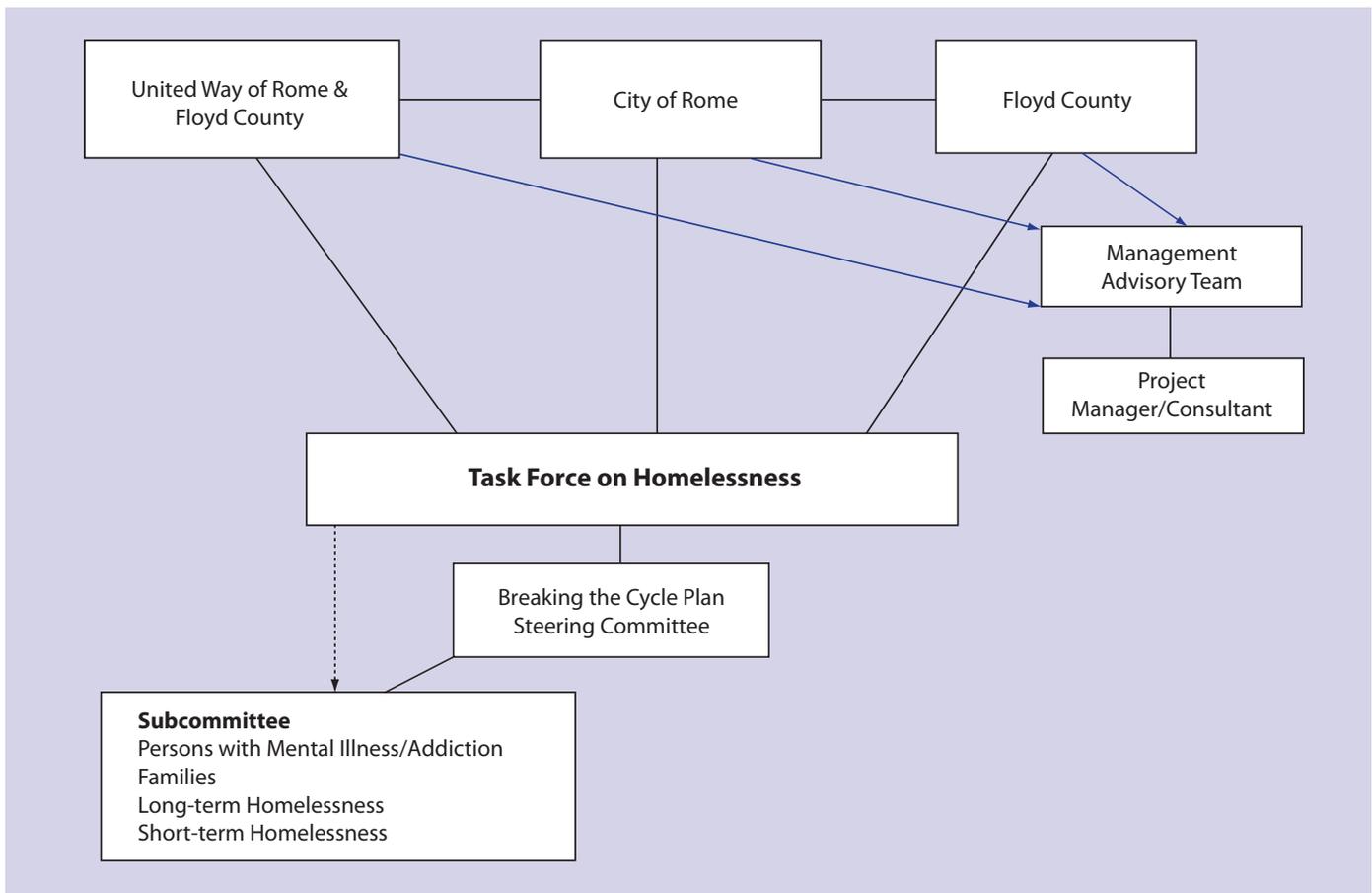
Late in 2007, Rome City Manager John Bennett invited a small group of people to come together to discuss homelessness in Rome. Representing service providers, local government, and downtown businesses, the participants of that initial meeting had a lively discussion, but there was little agreement about either the problem or the solution. What was clear was that more work needed to be done.

That first informal meeting evolved into a Task Force on Homelessness which grew to include over 40 organizations. From the start, the task force has been a fluid and continually expanding group. It began meeting regularly in 2008 to fashion a compassionate community approach to homelessness. After many discussions about the causes and origins of homelessness in Rome, the Task Force agreed that a better understanding of the problem was an essential first step to addressing it. The Homeless Task Force, led by City of Rome staff and working with Massey Consulting, conducted a count of Rome's homeless population during the last week in September 2008. The data, collected during the week of September 22, 2008, focused on people's housing status on the night of September 21<sup>st</sup>.

Even before the completion of the September 2008 homeless count, the Task Force and the City of Rome recognized that the logical next step would be to develop a coordinated response to homelessness. The City and the Task Force on Homelessness committed to produce a ten year plan, following the model spearheaded nationally by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (U.S. ICH). As part of that program, over 300 communities have adopted 10 year plans that are focused on ending homelessness, not just managing it. The 10-Year plan approach has been endorsed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Association of Counties, the National League of Cities, and the National Governors Association. Using the U.S. ICH model as a springboard, Rome resolved to look at solving the existing problem and preventing new homelessness.

## Community Planning Process

The process used to develop the *Breaking the Cycle Plan* centered on a Plan Steering Committee and four subcommittees that each focused on a specific aspect of homelessness. Membership on the Steering Committee and the subcommittees were largely drawn from the Task Force on Homelessness.



In a working session, the Steering Committee developed the vision statement, guiding principle and outcome statement for the plan. They also established the four subcommittees that were charged with identifying needs and proposing how to best respond to those needs. The four subcommittees were organized around:

- Persons with Mental Illness/Addiction
- Families
- Long-term Homelessness (persons homeless one year or more)
- Short-term Homelessness (persons homeless less than one year)

Each subcommittee looked at needs and solutions in terms of:

- Prevention
- Economic Stability
  - Jobs, training, education
  - Mainstream benefits
- Housing
  - Transitional housing
  - Permanent housing
- Outreach and Engagement
- Support and Services

The Task Force on Homelessness held a meeting on February 19, 2009 to kickoff the planning process. Mr. Michael German, Regional Coordinator for the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness was the special guest speaker. At the conclusion of the kickoff meeting, Task Force members volunteered to serve on subcommittees.

The Task Force also held a Community Forum the evening of March 3, 2009. The Community Forum opened with a community briefing on the issue of homelessness, the activities of the Task Force, and the planning process just underway. The Forum attendees then went to breakout sessions centered on the subcommittees. The breakout sessions gave participants an opportunity to talk about the needs of homeless individuals and families in Rome and Floyd County. Everyone was encouraged to join a subcommittee.

The subcommittees and Steering Committee worked through the spring and early summer of 2009 to formulate recommendations. Housing and social service professionals, volunteers from the faith community, advocates, and interested citizens were represented on the subcommittees. Subcommittee members researched funding and program options. Other subcommittee activities included a trip to a nearby city to learn about innovative programs. This plan is the product of those untold hours of work and a spirit of collaboration.





## Homelessness in Rome and Floyd County

To understand the issue of homelessness in Rome and Floyd County, it is important to first define who is homeless. Defining homelessness would seem to be a straightforward task, but in fact there are a range of definitions. State, local, and federal programs that serve people who are homeless are not always in agreement about who is and who is not homeless. This plan uses the following definitions:

***Sheltered Homeless*** – Persons who reside in an emergency shelter or in transitional/supportive housing for homeless persons.

***Unsheltered Homeless Persons*** – People who reside in a place not meant for human habitation such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned or dilapidated buildings, and encampments.

***“Other” Homeless Persons*** – People who are in jail or in the hospital (medical, psychiatric, or detox) for 30 days or less, but who would otherwise be homeless.

***Facing Imminent Loss of Housing*** – People who are facing loss of their housing within the week. People in these situations are not literally on the street, but generally qualify for federally funded emergency shelter and homeless prevention programs. During the two homeless counts, people living in dilapidated housing (not fit for human habitation) were included in this group.

***Precariously Housed Persons*** – People who are temporarily staying with family or friends due to loss of housing or economic hardship; people who are living in hotels or motels due to loss of housing or economic hardship. People classified as “precariously housed” often move frequently, from one makeshift housing arrangement to another. School age children living in these situations qualify for U.S. Department of Education homelessness programs. Families in these situations may qualify for federal homeless prevention programs.

### **Number of Homeless**

During the course of formulating the *Breaking the Cycle* plan, the Task Force on Homelessness conducted two counts of the community’s homeless population. Both counts used survey methodology adopted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ (DCA) for its state counts. The counts used short surveys of people at service provider locations and at places where homeless persons stay or congregate. The surveys included questions to determine the person’s housing status on a specific night (point-in-time) along with additional questions about the person’s circumstances.

The first homeless count was a warm weather count and collected information about the respondents' housing status on Sunday night, September 21, 2008. The second count was conducted as part of a federally mandated count sponsored by DCA. The second count gathered data about housing status on Sunday night, January 25, 2009.

Between the September 21<sup>st</sup> count and the January 25<sup>th</sup> count, the unemployment rate statewide rose from 6.6% to 8.5%. The number of jobs in the Rome MSA dropped from 41,800 in September 2008 to 38,700 in January, 2009. Not surprisingly, housing need in the community rose at the same time.

Both the September and January counts focused on contacting people who were literally homeless – those categorized as sheltered, unsheltered, and “other” homeless. The number of people who are precariously housed, who face imminent loss of their housing, or who are living in dilapidated housing is likely to be higher than the number of surveys collected.

**September 2008 Count**

	<b>Sheltered Homeless</b>	<b>Unsheltered Homeless</b>	<b>Other Homeless</b>	<b>Imminent Loss of Housing</b>	<b>Precariously Housed</b>
<b>Surveys</b>	49	107	14	89	109
<b>Hospitality House</b>	23				
<b>Total</b>	72	107	14	89	109

**January 2009 Count**

	<b>Sheltered Homeless</b>	<b>Unsheltered Homeless</b>	<b>Other Homeless</b>	<b>Imminent Loss of Housing</b>	<b>Precariously Housed</b>
<b>Surveys</b>	85	200	57	136	29
<b>Hospitality House</b>	18				
<b>Total</b>	103	200	57	136	29

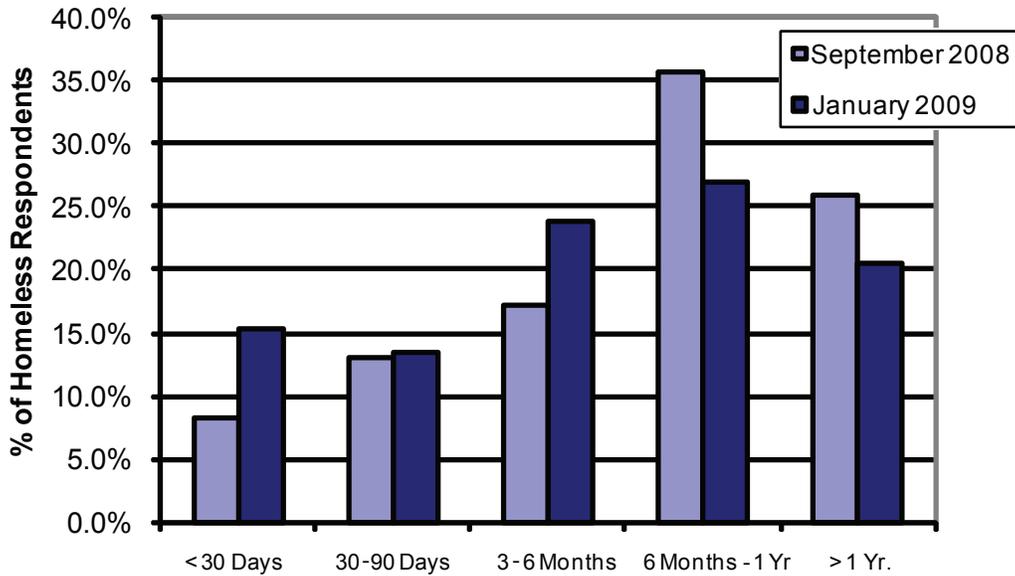
During the 2008-09 Academic Year, the Floyd County and City of Rome school systems identified a total of 994 homeless children. Many of these children are part of households that are defined above as “precariously housed”.

### **Characteristics**

The characteristics of Rome’s homeless population, described here, will be based on the September 2008 count. Because of the unique economic circumstances existing in January 2009, the September count most likely represents the community’s “normal” homeless population in size and composition.

An indication in how the economic conditions in January impacted the homeless count is apparent in the percentage of persons who reported that they were newly homeless. In September, about 8% of survey respondents categorized as sheltered, unsheltered or “other” homeless had been homeless less than 30 days. In January, 15% of people in the same categories were newly homeless.

## Length of Current Homeless Episode

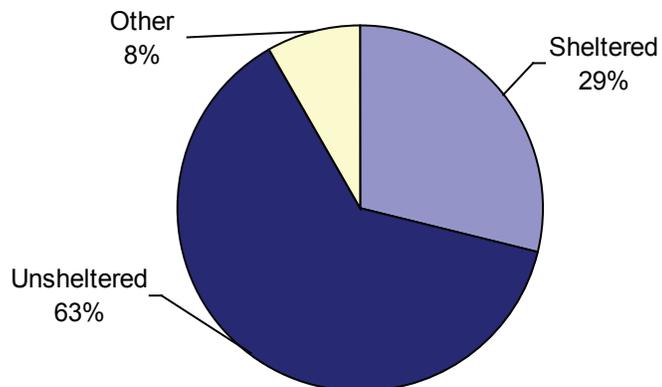


Based on the September 2008 count:

- Rome's homeless population is largely male (71%), white (65%) and middle aged.
- Over 25% of the September survey participant's who were homeless indicated that they had been homeless for more than a year.
- 66% of the homeless survey respondents said that their last permanent address was in Rome or Floyd County.
- 13% of the September survey respondents classified as homeless indicated that they were veterans
- 72% of the homeless survey respondents reported having at least one disabling condition – disabling conditions include chronic medical problem, physical disability, mental illness, HIV/AIDS, or substance abuse

The full report on the September 2008 count and the summary of the January 2009 count are available on the City of Rome's website at [www.rome.ga.us](http://www.rome.ga.us).

## Homeless Population by Shelter Status September 2008 Count





## Existing Resources in Rome and Floyd County: A Caring Community

Rome and Floyd County are known for having a generous response to people in need, including people who are homeless. The 40 plus organizations represented on the Task Force on Homelessness are a testament to that generosity. Not only are the community based efforts a tribute to the spirit of Rome, they are the foundation on which the *Breaking the Cycle* effort will be built. Current services include prevention, advocacy, supportive services, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. The following organizations provide services to homeless individuals and families in Floyd County. This list is intended to provide an overview of the resources currently available, but is not exhaustive.

For information on these and other community resources, contact the Floyd County 211 Information and Referral Line. Dial 211 from a land line or from a cell phone call 706-232-0210, Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00 p.m. The 211 database is available online at the Floyd County Government web site: [www.floydcountyga.org](http://www.floydcountyga.org). Click on the 211 logo.

### Children

Exchange Club Family Resource Center  
Floyd County Schools, Student Services  
Georgia Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS)  
Open Door Home  
Rome City Schools, Student Services  
Rome-Floyd County Commission on Children and Youth

### Clothing, Furniture, and Related Services

Impact Church of Rome  
Habitat for Humanity Home Mart  
Lovejoy Baptist Church  
Metropolitan UMC  
Salvation Army  
Thankful Baptist Church  
Third Street Ministries

### Disability Services

disABILITY LINK  
Floyd County Library  
Georgia Department of Labor, Vocational Rehabilitation  
U.S. Social Security Administration  
U.S. Veterans Administration

### Domestic Violence

Hospitality House



## **Education (Adult) and Employment**

Floyd County Library  
Georgia Department of Labor  
GNTC Adult Education Center

## **Family Support**

DFCS  
Exchange Club Family Resource Center  
Rome-Floyd County Commission on  
Children and Youth

## **Financial Assistance, Homelessness Prevention**

Appalachian Housing & Redev Corp  
DFCS  
Good Neighbor Ministries  
Salvation Army  
Tallatoona Community Action  
William S. Davies Shelters

## **Food, Meals and Groceries**

Community Kitchen  
Day of Sharing, Cave Spring  
Floyd County Baptist Association  
Garden Lakes Food Pantry  
Helping Hands, First Assembly of God  
Let Me Help You With That/SOW  
Lovejoy Baptist Church  
Meals and More  
Metropolitan UMC  
Rome Action Ministries  
Salvation Army  
South Broad Feed the Hungry Ministries  
St. Mary's Catholic Church  
Tallatoona Community Action  
Thankful Baptist Church  
Thanksgiving Love Feast  
Westside Family Worship

## **HIV/AIDS Referral**

AIDS Resource Council

## **Housing/Shelter**

Action Ministries  
Charles Williams REIC/ Pine Ridge  
Habitat for Humanity  
Highland Rivers CSB  
Hospitality House  
Let Me Help You With That/SOW  
NWGA Housing Authority  
Salvation Army  
William S. Davies Shelters

## **Information and Referral**

Rome/Floyd County 211

## **Medical Care**

Floyd County Health Clinic  
Floyd Medical Center  
Free Clinic of Rome  
Redmond Regional Medical Center

## **Mental Health Treatment, Counseling, and Advocacy**

Floyd Behavioral Health Center  
Highland Rivers CSB  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
NWGA Regional Hospital

## **Substance Abuse, Counseling, Referral, and Treatment**

Alcoholics Anonymous  
Highland Rivers  
Meth Free Project  
Road to Recovery  
Star House  
Steps Toward Recovery  
Women's Outreach

## **Veterans**

Veterans Clinic of Rome  
U.S. Dept of Veterans Affairs



## Housing Inventory

	<b>Beds/Units</b>
<b>Emergency Shelter/Transitional Housing</b>	
William S. Davies Shelters	28
Action Ministries	8
Salvation Army	18
<b>Open Door Home (Children)</b>	
<b>Boys Home</b>	24
<b>Girls Home</b>	30
<b>Domestic Violence</b>	
Hospitality House	27
<b>Permanent Supportive Housing</b>	
Charles Williams REIC Pine Ridge Permanent Supportive Housing (Section 8 Vouchers)	30
<b>Shelter+Care</b>	
Highland Rivers CSB	28
<b>Public Housing</b>	
NWGA Housing Authority	918
<b>Housing Choice (Section 8) Vouchers</b>	
NWGA Housing Authority	495 (Floyd and Polk Counties)



# The Plan to Break the Cycle of Homelessness

## One Person at a Time: An Action Agenda

### The Goal

Families and individuals facing housing crisis need housing and services that are grounded in the reality of their situation. For the citizens of Rome and Floyd County that means a system that is:

- *Ready on short notice* – often when individuals or families connect with a service provider they have already lost their housing or are facing imminent loss of housing
- *Ready with appropriate supports* – families and individuals in crisis have a range of needs. Some people may simply need one-time or short-term assistance to reestablish stable housing while others may need permanent supports for serious disabilities
- *Ready when the individual is ready* – not all people who are homeless are ready on first contact to begin the process of reestablishing stable housing. The service system envisioned by this plan will be ready with a range of options when the individual is ready.
- *Ready to reach out* – many persons in housing crisis are unable to advocate for their needs. The Breaking the Cycle Plan envisions a service system that will proactively enable families and individuals to navigate the various service providing organizations.
- *Ready to connect to the larger community* – the service providers and partners in the Breaking the Cycle Plan will work to advocate for those who are homeless to the greater Rome/Floyd County community. It is important to educate and inform the community about homelessness and to foster connections between the larger community and people in need.

### Moving Forward Out of Homelessness – the Concept

All of the action items described in the *Breaking the Cycle* plan are based on the concept of moving individuals and families from homelessness to independent, stable housing. For some people, the path will be directly from homelessness to permanent housing. For others, the path may require transitional steps and a range of services and supports. Recognizing that people have different types and levels of need, the plan is based on formulating a unique strategy for each individual. That individual focus is reflected in the plan title, *Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness One Person at a Time* (emphasis added). The action items described here should be considered within this context. But regardless of the path – the number of steps and the amount of time required – the ultimate goal is the same: stable, permanent housing for everyone in our community.

### Time Frame and Lead Organization

The action steps outlined here will include a time frame within which the action will be completed. Time frames are as follows:

- Short-term means completion within 12 to 24 months
- Mid-term means completion within 2 to 4 years
- Long-terms means completion within 5 to 10 years

In some cases an action step will list one or more lead organizations. Where the lead organization is listed, there is already an organization(s) that is committed to promoting and implementing the action. For many other action steps a lead organization is not identified. For those actions, the lead organization will be the Rome/Floyd County Interagency Council on Homelessness (discussed in more detail under the implementation section). The Council will work to identify the lead organization or to help create collaborations of two or more organizations to achieve the action step.

## **Plan Implementation**

Because this is an agenda for action, we begin with implementation. Our implementation strategy is based on the recognition that collaboration and cooperation are imperative for the success of such a major undertaking. The Rome/Floyd County Interagency Council on Homelessness will be the vehicle for promoting and facilitating joint action.

### **Action Item #1 – Establish the Rome/Floyd County Interagency Council on Homelessness (RICH)**

- a. The composition of the Council will include a wide range of organizations with an interest in addressing homelessness in Rome and Floyd County. Examples of organizations to be represented on the Council include service providers, local government, the United Way, the faith community, and advocacy organizations.
- b. The RICH will meet quarterly. The chairperson will serve for two years and will be chosen by the Council from among its members. An organization wishing to participate on RICH will notify support staff of its intent to participate and will provide the name of its designated representative. The Council will establish organizational rules and a committee structure as needed.
- c. Members of RICH will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that describes roles of collaboration, coordination, and involvement (including meeting attendance and advance notice of withdrawal) of participating organizations.
- d. The City of Rome will provide staff support to schedule meetings, reserve meeting space, and work with the RICH chairperson on agenda.
- e. One of the first priorities for RICH will be to obtain nonprofit status to enable it to accept donations and expend money for Council activities.
- f. The RICH will seek funding to hire a staff person. The staff person will be responsible for coordinating Homeless Resource Fairs, education and advocacy programs, and community mentoring. He/she will work in a coordination and liaison role with member organizations. The RICH staff person will engage in grant writing and related development work to obtain funding for RICH activities.

*Lead Organization(s):* Breaking the Cycle Steering Committee/City of Rome

*Time Frame:* Short-term

## **Action Item #2 – Create a *Breaking the Cycle* Website**

Create a website that includes:

- a. Information regarding RICH
- b. The *Breaking the Cycle* Plan document
- c. Homeless count information and data
- d. Links to national and state organizations and resources
- e. Resource list, contact information and links to local resources
- f. Web-based opportunities for people to donate and volunteer locally
- g. Other web based communities and communication vehicles (i.e., Facebook, My Space, Twitter)

*Lead Organization(s):* RICH; Floyd County 211 to assist with resource list

*Time Frame:* Short-term

## **Action Item #3 – Research, data, and evaluation**

- a. Conduct regular point-in-time counts of sheltered and unsheltered homeless population in Rome and Floyd County to monitor progress in meeting community needs and to help identify unmet needs.
- b. Develop an information base on homelessness in Rome and Floyd County. In particular, applied research should include work on:
  - a. Costs associated with homelessness in Rome and Floyd County
  - b. Service/housing needs of people facing homelessness in the community.

*Time Frame:* Short-term (and ongoing)

## **Outreach and Services**

Families and individuals who are homeless, precariously housed, or facing imminent loss of housing generally share a common characteristic – extreme poverty. When coupled with poverty, a change in circumstances or a personal vulnerability can result in homelessness. Risk factors for homelessness include loss of employment, loss of transportation, medical or health crisis, family violence, disability, mental illness, substance abuse, or brain injury. Homeless families find their situations further complicated by the need for child care. Virtually all of these families and individuals need services to reestablish permanent housing. Some people will require ongoing services to maintain housing stability.

## Action Item #4 – Day Center for Individuals

Create a day center for homeless individuals that would provide centralized access to services and a space “off the streets” during the day. Services offered at the day center could include:

- a. Opportunities to apply for identification and for mainstream benefits (e.g., Social Security, SSI/SSDI, food stamps, Veteran’s benefits)
- b. Computers, laundry facilities, showers, mail boxes, lockers, voice mail, etc.
- c. Space for classes and training
- d. Job skills training
- e. Case management and mentoring
- f. Job board and volunteer opportunity postings
- g. Counseling, support groups
- h. Food pantry and meal preparation



*Lead Organization:* William S. Davies Shelter

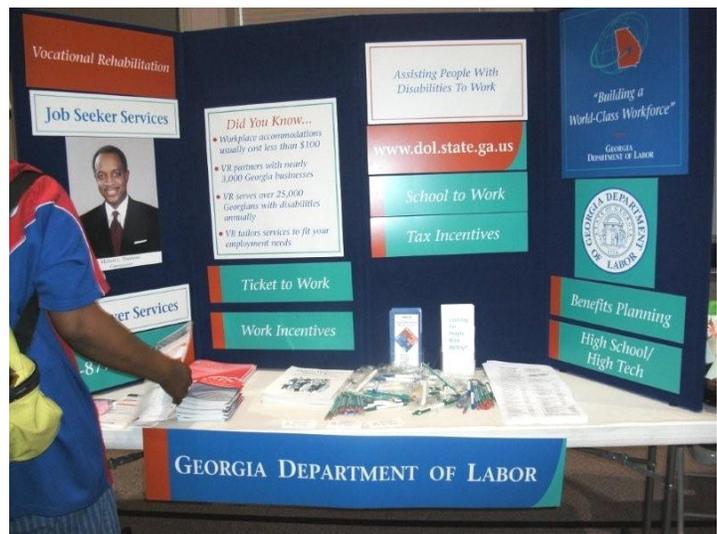
*Time Frame:* Short-term

## Action Item #5 – Homelessness Resource Fair

Hold a Homelessness Resource Fair at least twice a year as a way to reach out to families and individuals in need and to provide members of the larger community with an opportunity to connect with local organizations. Consider requesting funding from the State Housing Trust Fund for the Homeless to help support the fair(s).

*Lead Organization(s):* RICH, Floyd County 211

*Time Frame:* Short-term



## **Action Item #6 – Peer Support and Community Mentoring Program**

Create a peer support and mentoring program for individuals and families. This program would allow people to support and empower one another.

- a. The peer support program would be centered on persons who have been successful in reestablishing housing. The program will seek to match clients with peers who have successfully overcome similar obstacles. The peer support program would include opportunities for support groups and networking.
- b. The community mentoring program would give volunteers from the community an opportunity to work with individuals and families to provide encouragement and coaching.

*Time Frame:* Short-term

## **Action Item #7 – Individualized Plans for Homeless Persons with Mental Illness/Substance Abuse**

For homeless persons with a mental illness or history of substance abuse, moving into permanent housing and maintaining that housing often requires special services and support. To achieve the goal of housing stability, individuals with disabilities or other significant obstacles would work with a caseworker on an individualized plan to move through the continuum of care. This action item builds on existing services already provided by Highland Rivers Community Service Board (CSB). The importance of this item is that it envisions reaching more persons who are homeless and who also have a mental illness or addictive disease. Features of the individualized plan program would include:

- a. Paid or volunteer caseworker working one-on-one with the individual
- b. Plan would access local resources and mainstream benefits
- c. Plan would include mental health treatment (as needed)
- d. Plan would include addressing physical health issues
- e. Plan would include training, education, and work
- f. Plan would outline steps for moving through emergency shelter to transitional housing, Shelter+Care program, to independent housing, as appropriate
- g. Plan would include a contract agreement (individual responsibility), but would allow an individual to leave and re-enter the program as many times as is necessary

*Lead Organization(s):* Highland Rivers CSB

*Time Frame:* Short-term

## Action Item #8 – Community Education Program

Outreach means more than connecting with persons and families experiencing homelessness. It also means reaching out to the larger community with opportunities to understand the problem and to help others in need.

- a. Provide ongoing opportunities for community leaders and the public at-large to understand the problem of homelessness and housing instability
- b. Provide volunteer opportunities with service providers and at events.
- c. Create activities such as a “walk for the homeless” to give people an opportunity to get involved and to connect with people in need.
- d. Develop an ongoing media relations program to inform the wider community about homelessness, the progress and status of the *Breaking the Cycle* plan, and available resources.

*Time Frame:* Short-term

## Action Item #9 – Service Need Coordination

Because of Rome’s role as a regional service provider, coordination of housing and homeless prevention services is an important part of “closing the front door” to homelessness. Pre discharge and prerelease planning, along with cooperative agreements with neighboring jurisdictions, must be established or strengthened.

- a. Coordinate pre discharge planning with local medical and psychiatric facilities. While pre discharge planning is already taking place in these facilities, it is important to strengthen the partnerships between them and local service providers.
- b. Work with staff of the Floyd County jail on a pre release program to offer services to homeless persons who have been incarcerated.
- c. Begin a dialogue with neighboring jurisdictions that look to Rome’s service providers to help meet regional needs. In particular, find ways to encourage coordination with service providers on program and space availability prior to transporting people from other jurisdictions.
- d. Coordinate with local 911 emergency service dispatch on procedures for calls from local service providers and on assistance from service providers to calls involving homeless persons.

*Time Frame:* Short-term

## Action Item #10 – Day Center for Families

Create a day center for homeless families that would provide centralized access to services and a refuge from the streets. Services offered at the family day center could include:

- a. Computers, laundry facilities, showers, mail boxes, lockers, voice mail, etc.
- b. Case management
- c. Day care center for pre-school children
- d. Assistance with housing and employment searches
- e. Counseling, support groups
- f. Job skills training, space for classes

*Lead Organization(s):* Interfaith Hospitality Network (new organization described under Housing Recommendations)

*Time Frame:* Mid-term

## **Action Item #11 – Transportation**

For families and individuals facing homelessness, transportation is an important aspect of obtaining the employment and services needed to reestablish housing.

- a. In collaboration with the City of Rome, provide bus passes for employed shelter guests.
- b. Establish an after-hours transportation program for program participants working late shifts.
- c. Explore alternative transportation options including bicycles, car share programs, and vans.
- d. Look for opportunities to partner with other service provider organizations that also have client transportation needs

*Time Frame:* Mid-term

## **Action Item #12 – Child Care**

For families facing a housing crisis, obtaining employment is often a key component to gaining housing stability. Many of the best paying jobs require night and weekend shifts. Affordable child care outside the hours of traditional day care make it possible for parents to take these better paying positions.

- a. Establish an after hours child care program for families participating in transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, homeless prevention, or rapid rehousing programs.
- b. Seek opportunities to partner with other service providers that also have clients with after hours child care needs.

*Time Frame:* Mid-term

## **Housing**

Affordable housing is essential to housing stability for families and individuals. Additionally, the structure and services associated with emergency shelter and supportive housing can play an important role in helping people reestablish their housing. While Rome and Floyd County is blessed with a range of housing options and prices, additional housing units directed specifically toward particular housing needs are still required.

## **Action Item #13 – Weather Emergency Beds**

Weather emergencies can endanger the lives of unsheltered homeless persons. Both extreme cold and extreme heat require additional short-term shelter beds and proactive outreach to prevent people from succumbing to weather emergencies. The RICH should establish a subcommittee to review current procedures and resources related to weather emergencies. A weather emergency protocol may be needed for Rome/Floyd County that identifies weather conditions (extreme cold and heat) that trigger a community response. Depending on the assessment of the current weather emergency response capability, RICH should consider:

- a. Creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish responsibility for:
  - calling a weather emergency,
  - bed provision (number and location), and
  - outreach responsibilities to make sure that people on the street know about the weather emergency and know where to obtain shelter.
- b. Coordinating with public safety organizations, 211, and service providers to insure that the weather emergency protocol is understood and followed.

*Time Frame:* Short-term

### **Action Item #14 – Interfaith Hospitality Network**

Rome/Floyd County does not have a family shelter other than Hospitality House, which provides a 27-bed domestic violence shelter for women and children. Establishing an Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) would help meet that need. The IHN concept is based on:

- a. Hosts – 10 to 13 host church congregations in the network would each provide lodging, three meals a day and hospitality for a homeless family for one week per quarter.
- b. Day Center – Discussed under “Outreach and Services,” the Day Center is a key part of the program and helps families move quickly from the emergency church-based housing to transitional or permanent housing, as appropriate.
- c. Volunteers

*Time Frame:* Short-term

### **Action Item #15 – Rapid Rehousing and Homeless Prevention**

Under the federal stimulus plan and the new Hearth Act, HUD has expanded programs for rapid rehousing and homeless prevention. These programs offer the potential of financial resources to assist families and individuals with rent, utilities, storage expenses, and moving expenses to prevent homelessness or help people reestablish housing quickly. The RICH should work with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) contractors to insure that Rome and Floyd County residents have access to these programs.

*Time Frame:* Short-term

### **Action Item #16 – Permanent Supportive Housing for Families**

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is affordable rental housing with accompanying supportive services. PSH is for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who also have chronic health conditions. Chronic conditions can include mental illness, substance abuse, and/or medical conditions that pose long-term barriers to housing stability. The grand opening of Pine Ridge, new PSH developed by Charles Williams REIC specifically for individuals, was held in June and qualified tenants are currently moving in. However, Rome and Floyd County do not have a similar development for families where the head of household needs ongoing supports. This action item is for the creation of approximately 30 Permanent Supportive Housing units for homeless families. Preliminary work has begun to secure development funds for this project.

*Lead Organization(s):* Appalachian Housing and Redevelopment Corporation with Highland Rivers CSB

*Time Frame:* Short-term

## **Action Item #17 – Medical Shelter Beds**

When homeless persons experience accidents or illness or are faced with terminal illness, their already difficult circumstances can quickly become a crisis, for both the homeless individual and for the medical and service provider community. Specialized facilities are needed for these situations.

- a. **Recuperative Beds** – When homeless persons have been hospitalized for accidents or illness, recuperative care becomes an issue for the patient and for the health care provider. Long hospital stays are expensive and might be unnecessary if there were an appropriate place for people to recuperate. Recuperative beds provide limited nursing/medical care (help with changing dressings and taking medications) and provide the type of support that families and friends normally provide to persons recovering from illness – help with personal care, food, and a comfortable place to rest. Currently, there is no place for a homeless individual to stay who is recuperating from illness. A recuperative shelter would provide 24 hour beds and assistance for a relatively short period of time. A committee comprised of representatives from shelter providers and the medical community will need to work together to determine the number of beds needed, funding, organization, and operating policies.
- b. **Hospice Beds** – When persons come to the end of their lives, hospice services are often needed to provide care in the final days and weeks. It is not clear if local hospice organizations have the capacity and funding to provide end-of-life care to persons who are homeless. A subcommittee of local service providers, the medical community, and hospice organizations should meet to discuss this issue. Depending on the results of that review, the community may need to develop hospice beds and services specifically for its homeless population. One area which should be explored is the feasibility and appropriateness of coupling the recuperative beds and hospice beds into a single medical shelter facility.

*Time Frame:* Mid-term

## **Action Item #18 – Transitional Housing for Families**

Transitional housing is housing that is provided for a limited time, generally up to 24 months. During the time that the family or individual is in transitional housing, they are working to regain permanent housing by addressing obstacles such as unemployment, mental illness, or substance abuse. Action Ministries currently provides 8 units of transitional housing for families. An additional 10 units of new transitional housing units for families would help meet the existing need for assistance to families. In AY 08-09, there were over 900 homeless children enrolled in the County and City schools. Many of these children and their families would benefit from the supports offered through transitional housing.

*Lead Organization(s):* Action Ministries

*Time Frame:* Mid-term

## **Action Item # 19 – Additional Permanent Supportive Housing for Individuals**

With the opening of the Pine Ridge Apartments, Rome has its first Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) development. This development provides 30 units of housing with supports to individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who also have long-term disabilities that threaten housing stability. However, based on the results of the two homeless counts, it is anticipated that additional PSH units will be needed for individuals. After Pine Ridge is



completely occupied and under operation, the demand for additional units, as well as the number of additional units needed, can be more easily determined. There is a possibility that Greystone Apartments, also developed by Charles Williams REIC, could be renovated and transformed into PSH. If Greystone Apartments were to become PSH, it would add 71 units (64 one-bedrooms and 7 efficiencies) to the 30 at Pine Ridge.

*Time Frame:* Mid-term

## **Action Item #20 – Transitional Housing for Individuals**

At present, there are limited opportunities for individuals who are homeless to move into a transitional housing program for 12 to 24 months while working to establish permanent housing. The two shelter programs in the community, Davies Shelter and the Salvation Army, offer some opportunities for stays that extend beyond the 30-90 days typical for emergency shelter. However, neither currently have a transitional housing program. Some individuals need more than a short shelter stay to reestablish housing, but do not require permanent supports. For these individuals, the goal is to develop a Single Room Occupancy (SRO) project to provide transitional housing for individuals in the form of furnished efficiency apartments.

*Time Frame:* Long-term

## **Action Item #21 – Family Emergency Shelter**

While homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing is preferable for families and individuals facing homelessness, there will remain the need for short stay shelters that provide housing during the interim. Rome and Floyd County currently does not have a family shelter except for Hospitality House, which serves women and children who have experienced domestic violence. The Interfaith Hospitality Network may not fully meet the need or may not be a viable solution of every family that needs short term shelter. Given that, the RICH should explore the feasibility of developing a shelter for families facing emergency housing loss. There are several location options that might be considered for this type of housing, including former school facilities or commercial properties.

*Time Frame:* Long-term

## Action Item #22 – Additional Affordable Housing

Obtaining quality, low-cost housing remains a serious obstacle to permanent housing for our community's homeless individuals and families. Rome and Floyd County is fortunate to have a regional housing authority that provides a substantial number of public housing units and federal Housing Choice (Section 8) rental vouchers. However, the existing stock of subsidized housing does not meet the need, as is true nationwide. There must be an ongoing effort to create additional quality, low-cost housing through new public housing units, additional rental vouchers, tax credit units, and other types of subsidized housing.



*Lead Organization:* Northwest Georgia Regional Housing Authority; for-profit and nonprofit developers

*Time Frame:* Long-term and ongoing

## Action Item #23 – Housing First Program

Housing First is an approach to ending chronic homelessness that has been tried with success around the country. Generally, persons who qualify for Housing First have been homeless for long periods of time and are living with severe mental illness or substance abuse problems. Through Housing First, chronically homeless persons are provided housing and support services, but, unlike many other housing strategies, Housing First does not depend on abstinence or treatment. The emphasis for participants is on meeting tenancy requirements of safety and acceptable behavior. Many communities have found that Housing First saves money when compared to the public safety and medical costs associated with people who are unsheltered and chronically homeless. The Housing First option, as a potential approach for our community's chronically homeless, requires considerable research and study. Unanswered questions include the potential costs and benefits of implementing Housing First. Available funding options should be explored. And more fundamentally, it is important to determine if Housing First could find acceptance among service providers, policy makers, and the community at large.

*Time Frame:* Long-term



## Where Do We Go From Here

The *Breaking the Cycle Plan* outlines twenty-three action items that will substantially increase the ability of our community to prevent homelessness and achieve the goal described in our vision statement:

Working together, Rome and Floyd County will be a community without long-term homelessness where people have access to permanent housing and the supportive services they need.

Two factors are keys to achieving this vision. First, it will require that we work together. No single entity can accomplish everything that needs to be done. Secondly, this plan cannot be a static document. We cannot simply describe our good intentions, accomplish a few of the action items, and then go back to business as usual. To achieve our vision, we must continually revisit the plan. We must be willing to drop those items that are not feasible or are no longer needed. And we must add other items as conditions change and opportunities present themselves. Above all, the *Breaking the Cycle* plan must be dynamic. It must be a living document.

We will never be done. But together, we will continually work to break the cycle of homelessness one person at a time.



# Special Thanks

This plan represents hundreds of hours of work and the combined talents, knowledge and goodwill of our extraordinary community.

## Organizations Represented on the Task Force on Homelessness

Action Ministries  
Appalachian Housing & Redev Corp  
Appalachian Housing Counseling  
Behavioral Health Link  
Berry College  
Charles Williams REIC  
City of Rome  
    City Manager's Office  
    Downtown Development  
    Community Development  
    Public Safety  
Community Care Center  
Community Kitchen  
Dept of Veterans Affairs (Rome Office)  
disABILITY LINK  
Exchange Club Family Resource Center  
First Christian Church  
First United Methodist Church  
Floyd County Baptist Association  
Floyd County Health Clinic  
Floyd County Medical Center  
Floyd County Schools  
Floyd County  
    Manager's Office  
    Sheriff's Office  
    211  
Free Clinic of Rome  
Garden Lakes Food Pantry  
Georgia Department of Family and Children  
    Services (DFCS)  
Georgia Department of Human Services  
    (DHR), Division of Aging Services  
Georgia Department of Labor  
Good Neighbor Ministries  
Habitat for Humanity  
Highland Rivers CSB  
Hospitality House  
Let Me Help You With That/SOW  
Lovejoy Baptist Church  
Marine Corps League  
Meals and More  
Meth Free Project  
Metropolitan United Methodist Church  
Mountain Top Community Outreach  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
Northwest Georgia Regional Educational  
    Service Agency  
NWGA Housing Authority  
NWGA Regional Hospital  
Rome City Schools  
Rome-Floyd County Commission on Children  
    and Youth  
Salvation Army  
Sarah Hightower Regional Library System  
South Rome Redevelopment Corporation  
St. Mary's Catholic Church  
St. Peter's Episcopal  
Star House  
Tallatoona Community Action  
Thankful Baptist Church  
Third Street Ministries  
United Way of Rome and Floyd County  
Veterans Clinic of Rome  
West Rome United Methodist Church Crisis  
    Ministry  
William S. Davies Shelters

## Special Thanks continued

### Breaking the Cycle Steering Committee

Ann Arnold	City of Rome Downtown Development
Jim Bradshaw	Floyd County 211
Ashleigh Collins	Highland Rivers CSB
Ross Collins	DFACS
William S. Davies	Rome Action Ministries
Tim and Eileen Farrell	Salvation Army
Mike Jones, Co-Chair	Let me Help You with That/SOW
Rich Lampkin	United Way of Rome and Floyd County
Donna Lindsey	Highland Rivers CSB
Allison Mitchell, Co-Chair	William S. Davies Shelter
Cheryl Molock	NW GA Housing Authority
Ron Sitterding	City of Rome Community Development
Amy Weaver	Hospitality House
Eric Williams	Highland Rivers CSB

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#### Families Facing Homelessness

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Sarah Choate	Floyd County Schools
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Patricia Harris	Appalachian Housing Counseling
Teresa Johnston	Rome Action Ministries, Inc.
Rich Lampkin	United Way of Rome and Floyd County
Stefani Ortman	Good Neighbor Ministries
Diane Ray	DFCS
Melanie Watson, Chair	Floyd County Schools

#### Homelessness and Mental Illness/Addiction

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Jennifer Croft	Highland Rivers CSI
Tim and Eileen Farrell	Salvation Army
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Donna Lindsey	Highland Rivers CSB
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Bonnie Moore	National Alliance for Mental Illness
Jim Moore	National Alliance for Mental Illness
Frank Pratt, Co-Chair	NWGARH Social Services
Dan Switzer	Floyd Medical Center
Eric Williams, Co-Chair	Highland Rivers CSB

### **Short-Term Homelessness**

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Allison Mitchell	William S. Davies Shelter
Stefani Ortman, Chair	Good Neighbor Ministries
Robert Shippey	First Baptist Church of Rome
Amy Weaver	Hospitality House

### **Long-Term Homelessness**

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Merrill Davies	Citizen
William S. Davies	Rome Action Ministries
Brad Dillard	Citizen
Tim and Eileen Farrell	Salvation Army
John Hine, Chair	St. Peter's Episcopal Church
Mike Jones	Let me Help You with That/SOW
Allison Mitchell	William S. Davies Shelter
David Norman	Rome First United Methodist Church
Leamon Scott	Citizen
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*Breaking the Cycle  
of Homelessness*

***One Person at a Time:  
The Rome and Floyd County Plan***