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## Takin' It to the Streets reaches out to those in need in the community

*Sherry P. Shephard*



Reaching out to those in need is something the Rev. Ronnie Hampton takes very seriously.

So serious, in fact, that after moving from Shreveport two years ago to plant a new Free Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., Hampton continues to spearhead "Takin' It to the Streets," a nonprofit outreach program geared toward helping those in need in the community. And he has plans to return to Shreveport later in the year to start a new Free Methodist Church on Flounoy Lucas Road called New Vision Community Church Shreveport.

Hampton organizes the annual Shreveport event by reaching out to others through mass emails and support from different partnering agencies.

"We're going to have partners coming from D.C. all the way here just to share in ministry with me just because we shared with them," Hampton said. "That's the way we network. You get stuff done when you do it in partnership."

The ministry began in 2009 as a partnership with the Shreveport-Bossier Rescue Mission but later branched out on its own. It will be held Saturday at the Centenary Gold Dome and will include musical ministry, free food, clothes and health screenings.

"Jim (Brackman) with the Shreveport-Bossier Rescue Mission, Eddie Rivera and myself conceived this idea five years ago while we were chaplains at the Rescue Mission," Hampton said. "What we were doing was community outreach to get the community to come together to serve the residents."

Hampton said this year's event also will include new vendors and support groups and a job fair.

"We've incorporated a job fair and targeting people who were in prison and now trying to get their lives back in order," he said.

"These people we minister to are not used to people showing them love," said Hampton, founder and president of Takin' It to the Streets. "They believe that when somebody gives them something, there are strings attached. We're breaking that yoke because that's a bondage yoke."

The Rev. Terrance Trammell, executive vice president of the Takin' It to the Streets board, said the more the event is talked about, the more excited the church becomes.

"When people understand the need that's out there, it's a blessing when you're not one of the people in line to get help," he said. "But you can help the people, and one of the greatest things we can do is to give to those who are in need."

This year's event will be dedicated to Kerry Hemphill, who died in April. Hemphill was director of social services at the Rescue Mission.

"He was part of this in the initial conception of it," Hampton said of the outreach ministry. "Kerry was one of those guys who didn't talk much, but whenever he said something, it was profound. That brother had a heart of gold."

Brackman, director of men's programs at the Shreveport-Bossier Rescue Mission, said Hemphill never forgot a face or a name.

"Talk about taking it to the streets, everybody on the streets knew Kerry," Brackman said. "Kerry knew every homeless camp, every person on the street struggling. He knew where everybody was and if they were doing OK or not. There were a whole lot of hurting people on the street who I cried with when he died."

Hampton said, "We're dedicating this to him because of what he meant to us, what he meant to this community and what he meant to the people he served."

Volunteer Jan Core is proud of her involvement with Takin' It to the Streets, saying it is an awesome event.

"I'm so pleased to be a part of this," she said. "United we stand keeps coming to mind because it's truly a united effort. We're real excited about this community spirit we see, and we're looking forward to some new and different things."

Rebecca Huff, with the Shreveport Kiwanis Club and Kiwanis Club of Southern Hills, has been a part of the program since the first event.

"We take children's books, toys and new and gently used clothes to give away to the families that come out," she said. "I hope people in the community recognize that we love them and we want to help in any way we can. Our (Kiwanis Club) motto is 'serving the children of the world,' so we mainly focus on the younger children, but we believe that we're all God's children."

Rivera, outreach board second vice president, said the event brings about an awareness.

"It sparks people to keep on their minds that it's not about us. It's not about our challenges or our dysfunctional homes," he said. "So many times we focus on us, but Takin' It to the Streets brings an awareness and gives a spark to reach out again."

Brackman said Takin' It to the Streets is about providing everything they can provide to hurting people.

"It's about helping folks get out of darkness," he said. "We're going to have some great music, but they're also going to be sharing Gospel, and that's what all of this is about."

The event proves that people will come together when resources are combined, Hampton said. "But it also reflects a dismal portrait of the poverty level in this city."

Rivera looks at the event as having a ripple effect.

"Whether you look at a glass as half empty or half full, it could be a drop of water in it, but at least that drop will have a ripple effect," he said. "I believe that's what Takin' It to the Streets does. It kind of gives a ripple effect to help others."

Trammell added, "I think people will come with expectations and they are going to get what they are looking for."

## Additional Facts

If you go

**What:** Takin' It to the Streets Outreach.

**When:** Noon to 5 p.m. Saturday. Centenary Gold Dome, 2911 Centenary Blvd., Shreveport.

**Features:** Music, free food, clothes, health screenings, Kids Zone.

**Admission:** Free.

**Information:** (406) 545-9167.