

St. Philip Neri parishioners H.O.P.E. for storage

H.O.P.E., Inc., a nonprofit organization which has furnished the homes of needy families while providing clothing and other supplies since 2004, will lose its chief storage warehouse by the end of October.

The organization was founded and is operated by Leo and Diane Zerhusen, parishioners at St. Philip Neri, Linthicum Heights, to address the needs of the poor in Baltimore City, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore and the Appalachian portion of West Virginia.

A local businessman who had donated a 3,000-square-foot storage space to the Zerhusens recently told them that he was seeking a new tenant. The Zerhusens had used the Glen Burnie space to store donated clothes.

“We’ve made a commitment,” Mr. Zerhusen said of his group. “We’re not going to shut it down. We feel the potential is basically unlimited in terms of the services we can provide to an area. There is more need out there that we’re not even touching.”

Services could be scaled back if the organization does not find a new location in northern Anne Arundel County by October.

Mr. Zerhusen said he harbors no bitterness toward the owner of his current storage space and is actively seeking a new location with up to 7,000 square feet.

H.O.P.E., Inc. boasts more than 200 volunteers, including some in West Virginia. During its four-year existence, it has delivered furniture and household goods to previously homeless families at their new homes. Clothing and school supplies have regularly been provided through donations to Anne Arundel County students and families.

“It’s all donated time, service and love,” Mr. Zerhusen said.

Volunteers visit the homes of families to survey their potential needs.

Mr. Zerhusen, a former Redemptorist seminarian who is a teacher at St. Philip Neri School, said H.O.P.E., Inc is operated out of his home, with an outdated computer, fax machine and printer. Mrs. Zerhusen teaches at a local public school. Much of the couple's free time is spent planning and executing weekend deliveries for their organization.

Despite the uncertain status of storage space for the organization, Mr. Zerhusen believes that providence will help secure a new location.

"I think He has a plan," he said. "I really do."

For information on how to help H.O.P.E., Inc., telephone 410-859-1297; e-mail lzerhusen@peoplepc.com or write to: Hope Inc.,

329 Double Eagle Drive, Linthicum, MD 21090.