

APPRECIATING OUR FIREFIGHTERS

The Professional Firefighters of Greensboro – Local Union IAFF 947 – delivered 175 winter coats to students in need at Gillespie Park Elementary and made \$10,000 in charitable contributions to our community last year.

When Hurricane Florence hit North Carolina, The Disaster Relief Team of IAFF set up their first-day command post in The Guilford Building in Suite 921-23 where 947 is based. There they coordinated relief efforts to help member firefighters stop immediate damage to their own homes. As Dave Coker, president of 947, explained, “that gives firefighters peace of mind while fighting the public disaster.”

People often ask Dave if Local 947 is a regular, traditional labor union, and the answer is “yes.” Its purpose is defined by four pillars: 1) to support members -- during emergencies such as Florence and through disciplinary processes – and to advocate for pay benefits; 2) to serve the community through charitable activities; 3) to participate in political action that supports and furthers the members; and 4) to advocate for health, safety, and training.

The firefighters of Local 947 are popular at The Guilford Building. They have been here since March 2012 when they moved to the 5th floor. In August 2018 they expanded to suite 921-923.



Dave Coker

HOW TO HANDLE REQUESTS FROM STREET PEOPLE

Do not give money to people you encounter on streets or parking lots around The Guilford Building. This is advice from our local police officers. The reason for this advice: usually the money will be used to buy drugs or alcohol; seldom will the money be spent for food or necessities.

Sometimes money can hurt or further damage a street person. For example, suppose a person uses the money to “drug up” on a very cold night and then stays outside oblivious to frost bite or other ravages of extreme temperature.

The Urban Ministry at 305 West Gate City Blvd. (about half a mile from The Guilford Building) is excellent at assessing indigent people and making sure their basic needs are met and that they are out of immediate danger. So start any conversation with a street person by referring him or her to Urban Ministry. Usually you will get push back. “I just need a little money now, and I don’t want to walk over there.” or “I’ve been to Urban Ministry, and they’re no help.”

The Urban Ministry offers breakfast and lunch daily with second helpings to go. Through their networking with local churches, a person seeking shelter can get a warm place to sleep. Families in crisis can get immediate help. What many street people do not like about

Urban Ministry is that the organization probably will not hand out cash or meet specific requests such as “I want money to buy propane or buy a bus ticket.” If the Urban Ministry will not fulfill a request, there is good reason for you not to do so either.

White flag warming centers save lives, and the City and its partners including Urban Ministry, swing into action whenever the weather forecast calls for temperatures of 25 degrees or below for at least two consecutive hours. When the temperature dips and you see a homeless person outside, encourage him or her to get to a warming center. A white flag will be flying out front. The nearest warming center from here is located at 407 East Washington Street.