

FOR SAMPLE USE ONLY

Community Housing Coalition of Madison County, NC

Local Solutions to the Madison County Housing Crisis

Community Housing Coalition (CHC) of Madison County, NC serves low-income individuals and families by facilitating free urgent housing repair services and affordable new housing construction.

The CHC vision is to create a community in which all residents live with dignity and respect, regardless of their income, background, or circumstances, through access to safe, healthy, and affordable housing options that meet their needs.

Madison County is a rural mountain community characterized by a strong sense of community and pride in its Appalachian heritage. CHC was formed in, by, and for Madison County residents 21 years ago. CHC collaborates annually with over 100 households in traditionally underserved populations addressing the pressing housing need, a key social determinant of health. This is critical to reducing health disparities in the community, while bringing neighbors back together and repairing much more than just their homes.

Innovative Programs Approach

CHC's success in serving Madison County is rooted in its *Neighbors Helping Neighbors* approach, which prioritizes shared leadership, empowerment, and community collaboration. All CHC staff and board members reside within the county, with over half of its leadership living in low-income communities, which builds trust with clients.

CHC engages over 1,000 volunteers annually to repair homes in the Appalachian tradition of community barn-raising called *Neighbors Helping Neighbors* (NHN). It has served over 1200 homes, and nearly 2200 individuals over the past 20 years with local volunteers and summer youth groups, and creative use of direct public support and program grants.

“Ember’s” story illustrates how despite financial, health, and other challenges faced by CHC clients, the Madison County “art of good neighboring” thrives in the work of CHC. When her adult children became addicted to drugs, Ember, an older low-income adult, became the permanent guardian of Ashley, her 1-year old autistic granddaughter. Always one to help others, Ember was now in critical need of support from others to modify her cabin for Ashley’s safety and health. She worked alongside CHC volunteers at a Neighbors Helping Neighbors work

day and reciprocated with gifts of her heritage apples.

CHC ensures those served experience a substantive impact on their *overall* health and well-being. In “Michael’s” case, severe mold issues resulted in regular ER visits for asthma attacks. While doing repairs at his home, CHC learned that he didn’t have enough food because he didn’t have a car and didn’t know about the local food bank. Since CHC intervention, Michael’s ER visits have ceased, he rides County transportation to the food bank, and no longer experiences hunger.

Surveying clients has shown that this holistic approach to assessing and serving client needs results in 18% of clients becoming food secure, 15% gaining transportation, 63% feeling less isolated, 87% feeling safer in their homes, and 92% having improved overall quality of life.

Community Engagement and Leadership

CHC places high value on community engagement. As a grassroots organization, CHC actively involves the community in its leadership, programs, and decision-making process. Its volunteer-based repair programs prioritize local engagement, encouraging participation by the families served, their neighbors, and the greater community. CHC directly empowers clients by:

- Ensuring at least 15% of its board members are clients, or clients’ family members;
- Working with clients to facilitate their friends’ and families’ involvement at NHN workdays; and,
- Including them in strategic planning every three years, incorporating their input with that of the entire community to ensure alignment with community needs.

In the past two years, CHC has developed formal partnerships with four complementary Madison County service providers, increasing weatherization and accessibility improvements to clients by 23%.

CHC actively seeks input and feedback at monthly meetings involving over 30 Madison County organizations working together to coordinate social services and collaborating to address community needs. The CHC Executive Director holds board leadership positions at the county housing authority and the local harm reduction agency. He also convenes regular meetings of other local nonprofit directors, promoting networking, problem-solving, and collaboration.

CHC leadership, along with the skills and passion of the program staff are

behind a 4300% growth of the CHC annual budget, from \$29,281 in 2015 to \$1.3M in 2023. The combination of housing construction expertise, aging-in-place specialization, and social work experience has delivered outstanding results, such as increasing direct client assistance from \$141,000 to \$727,000 from 2016-2022.

CHC leadership actively participates in regional forums, such as the Asheville Regional Housing Consortium, to gain insights into the broader Appalachian community's perspectives and needs. It shares its successes and challenges while creating housing programs that are models for the entire region.

Impact and Measurement

Since 2002, CHC has stabilized over 1200 homes, most with multiple repairs, and now has programs in place to improve at least 100 more each year. For one family, the *Neighbors Helping Neighbors* program patched the roof and floors to keep them safe. This summer CHC is building them a replacement home that is permanently affordable, allowing them to age in place, prevent them from falling farther into poverty, and provide a strong foundation for improved health outcomes.

CHC works to ensure that everyone served experiences a substantive impact on their overall health and well-being. CHC performs on-going assessment of its program effectiveness, using a comprehensive online client and volunteer management database, with established metrics, goals and tracked progress.

- Central to CHC's work is a swift response to emergency home repair needs in order to stabilize the house and move the residents out of crisis. *Average Emergency repair response time: Improved from 7.5 weeks in 2016 to three days in 2022.*
- In 2022, volunteer engagement at CHC represented \$162,739 of *in-kind labor*, reducing program costs and meeting more repair needs
- Another central focus of CHC's work is client engagement and empowerment. CHC assesses this by tracking the number of clients involved in the home repair projects as volunteers. *The number of clients engaged in repairs: Increased from two (1.5%) in 2014 to 56 (42%) in 2022.*

CHC also surveys clients after the work is completed to understand the impact the work has had on their overall quality of life. *Since tracking began in 2020, 87% of respondents feel safer in their homes and 92% have experienced an improvement in their overall quality of life.*

These metrics, along with others, enable CHC to continually assess program effectiveness, adapt to evolving community needs, and foster impactful, meaningful, and sustainable growth.

Recent Major Milestones and Achievements

Community Housing Coalition (CHC) has recently celebrated major milestones:

- Celebrated 20 years as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization
- Implemented an affordable replacement (new construction) housing program to meet a desperate community need
- Purchased its own facility, a Madison County *Home for Housing*, increasing program efficiencies and client accessibility, while saving on rent
- Launched a carpentry apprenticeship program, developed between CHC, State of NC, and local schools, to provide workforce development and increased CHC home repair capacity

The CHC Neighbors Helping Neighbors program was honored in 2022 by the NC Housing Finance Agency for excellence in housing, citing its ability to effectively deploy resources in rural areas and leverage those resources with volunteers.

CHC volunteers represent races, backgrounds, sexual orientation, and gender identities that are unfamiliar to some CHC clients, who are primarily white and economically poor, creating opportunities to help break down stereotypes, leading to the permanent removal of hate symbols, and creating open-mindedness and respect.

Looking Forward

In early 2023 CHC worked closely with clients, their families, and community members to develop a three year strategic plan. This plan, informed by the Madison County Comprehensive Plan 2030 and the 2021 Western NC Housing Needs Assessment, is in the final stage of development and clearly lays out the critical need to both preserve and create new affordable housing, while honoring the heritage and traditions that define the culture of Madison County.

Based on the identified needs and the fact that demand for housing repairs has increased by 32% since the start of the pandemic, CHC looks to double the number of homes served by 2026. CHC will also create at least two permanently affordable housing units annually, while expanding home repair and construction educational programming, training, and job opportunities for local youth.

July 10, 2023

Supporter's Name

Supporter's Address

To: Coalition for Home Repair

RE: Letter of Support for Community Housing Coalition of Madison County

I write on behalf of the Community Housing Coalition of Madison County North Carolina as they apply for a \$5,000 grant from the Coalition for Home Repair (CHR). *Supporter's Name* offers financial support to CHC and we have partnered with them on Neighbors Helping Neighbors workdays with volunteer support.

As an organization dedicated to supporting an ethical and exceptional real estate environment, *Funder Name* recognizes the affordable housing challenges that exist across Western North Carolina and in Madison County. CHC's work alleviating this crisis through *Neighbors Helping Neighbors*, their other home repair programs, and their housing replacement efforts make them a valued, trusted partner.

Through this letter we express our hope that your organization will support CHC by granting them the Pinnacle Award. We look forward to continuing our partnership and working with them on *Neighbors Helping Neighbors* and other initiatives in the future.

Sincerely,

Contact Name

Supporter's Name Affordable Housing Committee Chair



**Home is where we go for comfort and safety.
It's not easy to define, but you know when you are there.**

At Community Housing Coalition of Madison County, we believe that everyone deserves to live in a home that is safe, healthy, and affordable. For more than 20 years, CHC has facilitated urgent home repairs for Madison County residents in need of assistance -- *at no charge*.

You can help our community-based non-profit serve more than one hundred households each year by becoming a volunteer or making a financial gift.

www.chcmadisoncountync.org





Critical Race Theory is topic at UNC Asheville talk

INSIDE, 7A

The News-Record & Sentinel

MARCH 8, 2023

SERVING MADISON COUNTY SINCE 1901

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Nonprofit breaks ground on home replacement program

Community Housing Coalition seeks to help with affordable housing options in area

Johnny Casey
The News-Record & Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK

MARSHALL - The lack of affordable housing has been an issue in Western North Carolina for years, as many Madison County residents struggle to make ends meet while rent prices soar.

But one Madison County nonprofit organization is doing its best to ensure county residents can stay in safe, stable, affordable homes.

Community Housing Coalition is a community-based nonprofit agency that facilitates urgent home repairs to low-income Madison County residents in need of assistance. But the organization broke ground in February on a new program that offers affordable replacement housing to low-income residents.

The idea for a replacement housing program was laid out in a strategic plan in 2019, according to CHC Executive Director Chris Watson.

"The board identified that one of the strategic paths we wanted to take was to start looking into how we could build affordable housing, and determined that the best path for us to do that was to develop new construction experience and knowledge and bring that skillset to CHC through the housing replacement program," Watson said. "We meet an existing need in the agency, and also gives us the experience and skills to go out and build new affordable housing at some point in the future."

Watson said CHC participated in a replacement housing pilot project in 2020 and secured grant funding in 2020 and 2021.

CHC will be partnering with Asheville Regional Housing Consortium, Dogwood Health Trust and WNC Bridge Foundation for the replacement housing program, Watson said.

Four houses should be completed through this program by the end of 2024, with plans to expand that number in the works, according to Watson.

According to the team, the replacement housing program will help offset the outdated housing stock featured in many Madison County homes today.

"We've been repairing homes in Madison County for more than 20 years now," Watson said. "For the majority of the time, the only tool we had in our toolbox was repairs. With the housing stock in Madison County, there are lots of folks out there living in pre-1940s stick-built, or 40 years and older manufactured homes, both of which are getting to the end of their useful life."

Matt Bennett is the program's construction manager.



Community Housing Coalition's construction manager for its new Affordable Replacement Housing Program Matt Bennett, left, joins CHC Executive Director Chris Watson, right, and the program's first client, Celina Uribe, at the program's groundbreaking ceremony in February.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF COMMUNITY HOUSING COALITION



Celina Uribe's Marshall home is the first to be replaced by Community Housing Coalition as part of its new Affordable Replacement Housing Program.

"A lot of the (early) houses were built on rocks, stone foundations without mortar, rather than actual footers, so we have a lot of houses that are sinking or sliding," Bennett said. "They don't have good water management around them, a lot of houses, so they'll be rotten underneath, or plumbing will be leaking without people knowing it, so they have rot or mold in their walls."

"I think that what we're looking at is safety, health and accessibility. It's not just that the house is in bad shape, but it often doesn't suit them. As they get older, it can't really be made into a healthy

home because of the various issues that are coming up."

Celina Uribe is the recipient of the program's first replacement home. In the past, Uribe's home was a frequent recipient of CHC's repairs and joked that her home has "seen more of CHC than she had."

"(My home) has required so many necessary repairs - just to keep water running, plumbing going, roofing, the list goes on and on," Uribe said of her Marshall home on Kelly Hunter Road.

But Uribe remembers when her

See REPLACEMENT, Page 3A

Madison group to host tree giveaway and seed swap event

Rural Organizing and Resilience will conduct workshop March 11

Johnny Casey
The News-Record & Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK

MARSHALL - Madison County is increasingly gaining a reputation as a haven for residents interested in homesteading and DIY/off-grid lifestyles.

But giving away free trees might be a first for even the most seasoned homesteaders.

Rural Organizing and Resilience will host a tree giveaway, seed swap and seed saving workshop March 11 on Blannahassett Island's outdoor stage.

Attendees at the rain-or-shine event are encouraged to bring their empty containers for swapping seeds. Attendees will choose from mulberry, persimmon, paw paw, black walnut, hazelnut and elderberry trees.

ROAR was formed in Madison County in 2017 in response to what the organization calls on its website "the need for a rural voice working for all who call these mountains home."

ROAR works to strengthen connections and respect among all people in our mountain communities by countering systems of oppression through education, outreach, empowerment and mutual aid, according to its website.

The goal of the event is to "grow resiliency and food security together in Madison County," according to ROAR's website.

In October, ROAR hosted a daylong "skill share and harvest swap" event on the island, featuring workshops on homestead first aid, cooperative land access, reproductive justice, fire cider making and plant walk.

According to ROAR's Laura Keyes, the purpose of the fall event was to "learn new skills, share your harvest bounty and grow community resiliency in these hard times."

The events underscore a concerted effort by ROAR to bring Madison and WNC residents together through skill sharing and hopefully bringing the community together while also spreading knowledge.

Kendra Shillington owns Villagers, which currently operates a brick and mortar in Burnsville but is looking to find a new location and "something that's big enough to support what's happening and what's needed in the community, but

See SEEDS, Page 5A

Madison library program allows children access to real science

Rita Pelczar
Special to The News-Record & Sentinel

Want your kids to turn off the tv and get outside? A program at the Madison County Public Library may be just the ticket.

ecoExplore is an incentive-based citizen science program that encourages kids from kindergarten to eighth grade to observe nature and record their findings. It combines science exploration with kid-friendly technology and rewards kids

who actively participate with a variety of prizes. Conceived and launched by the North Carolina Arboretum, the program in Madison County is jointly sponsored by Madison County Public Library, Marshall Native Garden Initiative and the North Carolina Arboretum.

Kids who participate in ecoExplore contribute to real scientific nature study. Once a child signs up for the program, they observe plants and/or animals, snap a photo and record information such as the time, location, and number or size of

the plant or animal and its identification (if they know it). Then they log onto their ecoExplore online profile and share their observations with the Arboretum staff who review the data and send approved submissions to the iNaturalist Network.

This network is used by real scientists around the world who gather data to help understand how changes in the environment are impacting plants and animals and other natural resources across the globe. Observations can be made anywhere — from your own backyard or at

one of the library's "Hot Spots" — to anywhere in the world.

A number of ecoExplore Hot Spots are located throughout the region. These are designated areas where kids are encouraged to make observations about plants and animals. Six Hot Spots are prominently placed in Marshall Native Gardens at the main branch of Madison County Library on Main Street in Marshall. Their locations on the library grounds include

See ECOEXPLORE, Page 5A



Officials recover body of Marshall's Philip Shelton

Discovery made below Redmon Dam on March 1

Johnny Casey
The News-Record & Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK

MARSHALL - The body of 64-year-old Marshall resident Philip Shelton was discovered just before sundown on March 1, according to Madison County officials.

In a press release issued by County

Manager Rod Honeycutt's office, the county said Shelton's body was discovered just below the Redmon Dam around 6 p.m. by Walnut Fire Department Water Rescue Team.

A family member said Shelton went missing the afternoon of Feb. 18 after heading to the French Broad River with his dog, Zip.

According to Honeycutt, search officials discovered his dog, canoe, as well as his vehicle, a red Ford Explorer, on the evening of Feb. 18.

On the afternoon of Feb. 20, officials



Shelton

"Just like any of us growing up, I mean, we were on that river our whole lives - he has been, I have been, my dad. We're all very familiar with the river," Lisa Shelton said. "It's just one of those

discovered a backpack carrying some of Shelton's belongings, Honeycutt said.

According to Honeycutt, the family called 911 around 6 p.m. on Feb. 18 to notify officials that Shelton was missing.

things. It's tragic. He was a super good guy, and he was very knowledgeable about the outdoors. He was an avid hunter, fisherman, outdoorsman. This was nothing unusual for him."

Shelton's niece, Lisa Shelton, told The Citizen Times Feb. 21 the family may never find out what caused Shelton to end up in the river.

Shelton said she is grateful for the community's support during this time.

"We appreciate everybody that has helped us look," Shelton said. "We appreciate everybody's help."

Replacement

Continued from Page 1A

home became so dangerous to live in that it almost cost her everything.

"In 2021, right before Thanksgiving, we had a huge pipe break under the house," she said. "When they went to fix it, they said it looked like it had been broken for several years. They fixed the pipe, and in the ensuing three weeks when the walls dried, it warped the walls enough to pop the cabinet that held about 300 pounds worth of dishes off the wall while I was standing in front of it. It broke my nose, tore my face and I needed quite a bit of reconstructive repair, a bunch of stitches and lots of blood.

"I had my back to that cabinet (or else) I would probably be dead. It probably would have broken my back or my ribs and I would have bled out."

Uribe said it was hard to pit that horror story against the news of her replacement home, as it almost seemed too good to be true.

"I kept wanting to say, 'It's not going to happen,'" she said. "Until the bulldozers arrived, I was trying to convince myself 'Don't get your hopes up,' because everything has gone wrong in this house. Everything. Then the bulldozers arrived. I know it's like a stupid movie. It's like the cavalry came over the hillside. There's hope again that maybe I can just live peacefully in a home that's not going to try to kill me.

"I feel really blessed and honored that I was given this opportunity. It's an amazing program that I'm so, so excited about, and so proud that our county is taking part in this program and that Community Housing Coalition is leading the force in affordable housing in this community."

Bennett said the team hopes to finish construction of the house by mid-July, and to break ground on the second replacement home around that time.

The program's importance to the county

As Madison County has a sizeable population of older residents, ensuring these older residents' homes are safe is an important goal, according to Watson and Bennett.

"So many of those older adults are living in houses they've lived in for decades, but even if that house is kept up, it's just beyond its useful life," the executive director said. "In many cases, it's toxic. It's unsafe. So, it's contributing to poor health, and it's not accessible as they age and need modifications. They also have huge energy needs to heat them and cool them.

"The goal of this program is ... everyone deserves safe, healthy and affordable housing. You shouldn't have to move off your property to get that. We know in

Madison County and in the region there's a huge housing shortage - especially for folks over 62. There is nowhere for folks to go. So, our goal is to help them utilize the resources they have - their land, their infrastructure - and to give them a home that's safe and accessible as they age and their needs change.

According to Watson and Bennett, the team is building to Energy Star standards, working alongside Rural Studio, an off-campus design-build program of Auburn University's architecture program.

"It's super energy efficient, so it's not costing them very much," Watson said. "They're not paying \$400 a month in heating bills. They're paying \$400 a year, or something like that, which makes a huge difference to their health, their mental well-being, their finances, and just their whole quality of life."

"As houses have become tighter and tighter, indoor air quality in new houses has become an issue, too," Bennett said. "So, we're trying to address that and also using environmentally friendly materials and installing energy recovery ventilators."

Bennett has a background in construction management and solar power systems. The construction manager said the houses will also be solar ready, so the homes can potentially be "essentially a zero-energy house."

Housing blueprints, income qualifications

Bennett said the team is employing two-bedroom homes at roughly 800 square feet per unit.

"A one-bedroom house isn't that much less expensive, and it's worth less. So for us to meet our goal of keeping these homes in the affordable housing stock in the long term, we want them to be usable by small families, so we're shooting for mostly two-bedroom homes. We're basically acting as general contractor."

Chandler Construction Services was selected as the builder for Uribe's home.

"Then, we'll probably bid out additional parts like the roof, the siding, and we'll also do some of it with our volunteers," Bennett said.

Watson said CHC hopes to work with a vocational program through the high school or A-B Tech in the future also.

Eventually, Watson said CHC hopes to provide new housing to clients. For now though, the team's primary focus is on replacement homes.

To be eligible for the program, residents must be under 80% of the county's average median income (AMI). Rather than apply separately, a client applies through one outlet, and the team deems what next steps should be taken.

"If you have a housing need and you qualify based on income, you'll get an assessment by our repair manager, Eric Patton. Homes that are beyond reason-



Last month, crews broke ground on Celina Uribe's home, which will be replaced by CHC as part of its Affordable Replacement Housing Program this spring and summer. COURTESY OF COMMUNITY HOUSING COALITION

able repair are added to the list for potential replacement. Ultimately, a committee including members of the CHC Board of Directors will prioritize and approve homes for the replacement program," Bennett said.

From there, a case manager will go out to the home to help make a decision for the best resources for the home, according to Bennett and Watson.

While Uribe was a home repairs client, she also served on CHC's board.

Uribe said the organization has "been such a relief" as she inches closer to finding safe and affordable housing.

"There have been times when I didn't know what I was going to do - how I was going to make this work. I would have other people in the county say, 'Well, call up Community Housing Coalition.' The first time I did that reluctantly, and they were out there helping me dig up plumbing so I had running water in my house.

"When I think of CHC, I kind of think of them rescuing me from situations that I felt like I didn't have a way to solve on my own. As adult humans, we want to do it on our own. But there are some times when you have to reach out and ask for

help. The hand that reached back was warm, comforting and reassuring that they were going to help me get my house back in order again."

The organization's director said the best way to maintain the spirit and culture of Madison County is by ensuring the people who made the county what it is today have a place to come home to.

"We want to keep people in their community," he said. "What makes Madison County great is all the small communities that are out there. The way you keep these communities great is you keep the people in them. That's where their support networks are. It's where their families are. It's where they want to live out their lives.

"Not only is there a shortage now, but the shortage is just getting worse as our housing stock depletes. We want to be able to provide good housing, and housing that's safe long term so they can continue to provide affordable housing for the next generation."

For more information on Community Housing Coalition, visit the organization's website.

Madison County Partnership for Children and Families, Inc. Request for Proposals

The Madison County Partnership for Children and Families, Inc. is seeking contractors to operate the following services: Smart REWARDS; Child Care Resource & Referral; Raising A Reader; Lending Library; Dolly Parton's Imagination Library; Kindergarten Transitions; and Public Awareness.

Eligible applicants include non-profits, government agencies, community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, and other entities with experience in delivering services to children, their families and child care professionals. Contractors may be approved for a multi-year period beginning July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2026, depending on acceptable performance and the availability and allocation of funds. A budget and contract will be required annually. If submitting a multi-year bid, separate budget proposals for each fiscal year must accompany the original bid. Proposals will also be required to include most recent financial audit, proof of insurance including fidelity bond insurance, and service logic models. Proposal packages should be submitted in electronic format AND via hard copy no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, March 20, 2023. Late proposals will not be accepted.

To request a proposal package contact Whitney Nazari at whitney@madisonss.org or MCPCF, PO Box 1657, Mars Hill, NC 28754. Messages may be left at 828.689.1525.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Take Comfort In

Blossman Gas & Appliance

2138 US 19E, Burnsville, NC, 28714

828-682-2118

Call today for your free tank set and safety check when switching from a competitor on an above ground tank. We offer payment plans and financing on appliances.

CALL TODAY FOR YOUR FREE QUOTE!

We are a full service propane company offering the following:

- Propane Delivery • Appliance Sales • Installations and Service

We offer a full line of gas logs, fireplaces, washers and dryers, kitchen packages and outdoor living products such as firepits and grills.