

# The Post and Courier

## New Year to offer hope

Event to bring food, clothing to homeless

By [Prentiss Findlay](mailto:pfindlay@postandcourier.com)

[pfindlay@postandcourier.com](mailto:pfindlay@postandcourier.com)

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Church members from a variety of denominations and four state lawmakers will gather at a Charleston street corner on Saturday to deliver food and clothes to the homeless.

"This is the first time this has ever occurred," said the Rev. Gordon Cashwell, founder of Without Walls Ministry.

Cashwell said the effort will offer a bit of holiday cheer to those who don't have a lot to celebrate on New Year's Day. "The Bible clearly teaches us that as Christians we are to help people in need," he said.

Cashwell is pastor of Hope Assembly of God on King Street. The event will include volunteers from a variety of faiths, ranging from Anglican to Baptist.

"Jesus' ministry wasn't focused around a building. It was focused around people, particularly people who are on the fringe," he said.

Sen. Robert Ford and Reps. Wendell Gilliard and David Mack, all Democrats, and Rep. Chip Limehouse, a Republican, will participate.

The homeless assistance will be offered from 2 to 5 p.m. at Meeting and Harris streets, near Crisis Ministries. "We want to start the New Year off by helping people in need," Gilliard said.

Four truckloads of clothing and food have already been collected. Other donations are welcome the morning of the event. "If people come Saturday and give, that will be icing on the cake," Cashwell said.

Donations are coming from as far away as Georgetown and Beaufort, Ford said. "I'm going to clean my closet out. Come early Saturday and bring clothes and canned goods," he said.

Cashwell coordinated the Convoy of Hope in early December on Charleston's East Side. Hundreds of volunteers from 85 churches and community organizations distributed food and clothing, as well as offering services such as health care and job counseling.

Gilliard estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 people are homeless in South Carolina. The U.S. gives billions in aid overseas but has 3 million homeless, he said.

### **For info**

For more information about the event Saturday, call Ford at 813-1777 or Gilliard at 209-3123.

Gilliard is sponsor of three measures to help the homeless. One would require the state to count the number of homeless in South Carolina as a way to get a better handle on the problem. Another would establish severe penalties for crimes against the homeless. And the third bill addresses the needs of homeless veterans, including those with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The legislation will be considered in the upcoming 119th session of the General Assembly. Gilliard said that he hoped the event on Saturday will help him to gain support for the bills.

Gilliard held a homeless summit two years ago and plans another for the spring. He has been to homeless camps and shantytowns in Charleston and North Charleston to learn more about the situation. Videos of those visits are posted at YouTube under his name.

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