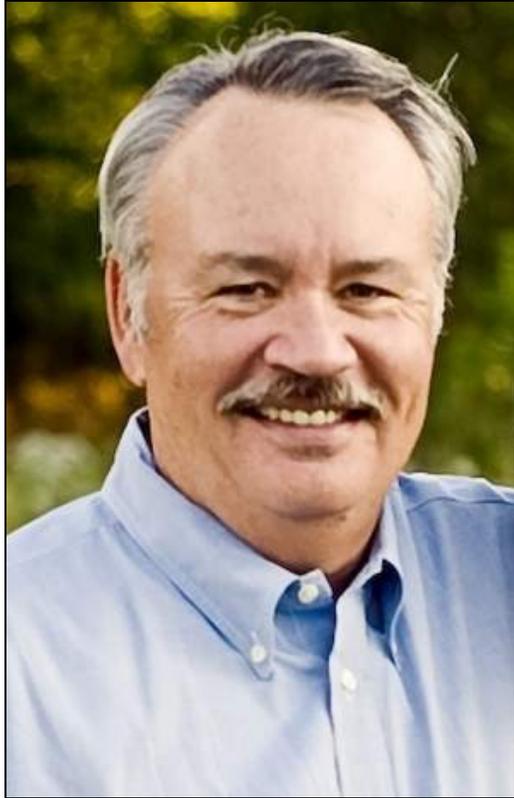


Homes of Hope finding solutions for problems

Tim Brett May 20, 2012



I recently experienced one of the best community partnerships that I have ever seen in Greenville.

I was invited by Don Oglesby, the president and CEO of Homes of Hope of Greenville, to a luncheon downtown. I was greeted with strong handshakes and warm smiles by several men from the moment I parked my car

to the time I walked inside the building. Each one was exceptionally courteous and was as sincere as I could imagine.

And each of them is overcoming an addiction.

Through the work of Homes of Hope and Don Oglesby, these men have been trained in the construction field as part of their recovery.

These men are the main ingredient in Homes of Hope's community stew of making Greenville a better place to live for everyone.

Other ingredients include Upstate Forever, Greenville Forward, the U.S. Green Building Council, Miracle Hill Ministries, the city of Greenville, Greenville County Redevelopment Authority and United Ministries.

While I have known about Homes of Hope's story of recovery for some time, I was impressed to learn about their latest efforts toward creating a stronger community.

This nonprofit organization is upping the ante in its effort to solve some of Greenville's toughest problems, which are poverty-level families having little or no opportunities for asset growth; those families having little or no opportunity for affordable energy costs; and the men in the program getting only limited construction skills they need to earn stronger employment levels.

What I learned at the luncheon is about their new effort, LoCAL Housing, which is an acronym for:

- Longterm — permanent housing.
- Compact — efficient in space.
- Affordable — for poverty level families.
- LEED-certified — the highest in energy-efficiency (evaluation after completion of construction).

In the past, the best housing option for households earning between \$1,000 and \$1,300 a month was either to live in unsafe or crowded homes or to live in often stigmatizing mobile homes that also depreciate in value while incurring high energy costs.

LoCAL Housing will be affordable to poverty-level families, either through lease-purchase, or outright home ownership via the savings from no-cost labor and charitable contributions from foundations and corporations, as well as low-interest financing from similar entities including governmental agencies.

LoCAL Housing will also give poverty-level families the highest energy efficiency possible: LEED for Homes certification. Even for the families who cannot own their LoCAL Homes, this benefit will be tremendous compared to the substandard housing now offered to poverty-level families.

LoCAL Housing will be constructed in part by the men in the Homes of Hope programs, teaching them repetitious job skills, and an opportunity to obtain LEED accreditation which makes them more marketable and able to command higher wages in the growing green economy.

At a time when many people are talking about Greenville's problems, I applaud Homes of Hope for coming up with solutions.