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THE ENQUIRER

Last Updated: 7:34 am | Monday, August 28, 2006

Group offers charity to NKU community

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When someone in the Northern Kentucky University community has a need, the Wesley Foundation's Grace Place tries to help.

The Grace Place offers food, clothing and household items to anyone of any faith presenting NKU identification. It is also looking for donations.

"Food is the main request," said Rev. Maurice Pugh, director of the Wesley Foundation. "Clothing moves rather slowly. The number one item requested among household items is a vacuum cleaner."

The foundation assists about nine people per month, but is not advertising until it is stocked and able to meet the expected demand. Pugh had to throw out about half his food stock because the products went past their expiration dates. Most of the students served are international students or those who learned of it through the K-TAP tuition assistance program.

The Wesley Foundation is a ministry of the United Methodist Church (UMC), the largest of several Methodist denominations. The UMC provides about two-thirds of the NKU chapter's \$85,000 budget. Other funding comes from local churches and individuals. Pugh is the chapter's only full-time employee, and all other work is done by volunteers. The Wesley Foundation has a presence on every state university campus in Kentucky.

Pugh sees the foundation and the Grace Place as serving the mission of the Methodist church.

"Because of grace, God always takes the initiative to move toward us," said Pugh. "We seek to flesh out the presence of Christ on campus, seeking to communicate that God loves each and every person and that love is not based on what color we are, whether we are male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, what country from which we come or whether we are privileged or not privileged. God's arms are wide."

Brian Combs of the Baptist Student Union said it has similar charitable programs but works through referrals to area churches or to the Grace Place.

The Wesley Foundation hosts a free chili and soup supper each Tuesday from 5:30 to 7 p.m. during the school year.

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