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# Panel from Miracle Hill shares their testimonies during The Gathering



**Five people from Miracle Hill Ministries spoke about their experiences with homelessness on Tuesday during the Gathering. Photo by Isaiah Johnson.**

By: Ellen Laws

Gardner-Webb's Civitan Club organized a Homelessness Awareness Panel open for all students and faculty during the Gathering on Tuesday evening in Stewart Hall. Three men and two women from Miracle Hill, a rehabilitation center in Gaffney, S.C., shared their testimonies of their experiences with homelessness.

Jerri Bently, gave her testimony first, sharing about her experience in an abusive home. "I grew up with my dad beating my mama. It was constant in my life, the beatings, the cussing, the running, the hiding. I started drinking at the age of 14. By the age of 16, the drinking worst."

Bently's continued drinking eventually cost her first marriage. Bently described working hard to sober up. Now Bently has her own apartment, and she goes back to Miracle Hill to volunteer or to see her friends.

Though Scottie Edwards gave his life to the Lord at a young age, he described a similar downward spiral when

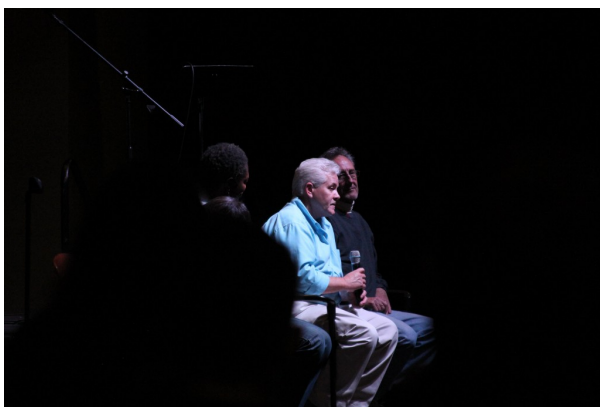
he acquired a drinking problem over the years. Edwards would go on and off of alcohol, even after he got married. "My drinking problems affected my marriage, and that lead to a divorce. I ended up losing my job—everything I had—due to alcohol," Edwards said. "My happiness was gone, but once I came back to the Lord I was introduced to Miracle Hill," Edwards said.

Edwards eventually turned his life around, and is now working full-time in Gastonia. This was his first year sharing his story at the Homelessness Panel.

Tim Raney, was born into a good family and was raised in a Southern Baptist church. "By the time I turned 18, I stopped going to church. I was drinking a lot throughout my life," Raney said. "I lost my job. My friends didn't want to have anything to do with me. I put them through hell due to my drinking problems."

In 2012 Raney was tired of living his life as an alcoholic, and he knocked on the doors at Miracle Hill. From that moment on, his life was different. He said he was set free from alcoholism and "made right with the Lord." Raney is recovering from his struggle with alcoholism and is now an employee of Miracle Hill. This was his second year sharing his testimony at the Homelessness Panel.

Leonia Ray had a different circumstance that brought her to experience homelessness and eventually Miracle Hill. "I suffered from depression since I was a child, and I come from a family where depression isn't recognized," Ray said. "I would always push past it, stayed focus, and always worked hard. Whenever my depression would hit, I would either lose myself or my health would go bad."



**Scottie Edwards, former Miracle Hill resident, shares his story of recovery from alcoholism and homelessness. Photo by Isaiah Johnson.**

Students also had the opportunity to ask the panel additional questions once everyone on the panel had shared their testimonies.



**After worshipping, the students were able to hear about how the Lord worked in the lives of women and men who experienced homelessness. Photo by Isaiah Johnson.**

Ray currently lives at Miracle Hill, and continues to share her story to help spread awareness within her community.

"Throughout my experience with depression, I have learned to let go and let God," she said.

Terry Black, case manager at Miracle Hill, spoke at the panel for the second time at Gardner-Webb that night and emphasized the importance of speaking about issues that are difficult realities for many. "Homeless is not a bad word... Homelessness is a real issue," Black said. "I have a passion to help people and see them delivered from drugs and alcohol and all other addictions."

Miracle Hill Ministries are always in need of volunteers. If you are interested, email Terry Black at [tblack@miraclehill.org](mailto:tblack@miraclehill.org).