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Office of University Communications

November 14, 2012

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner-Webb University students are participating in Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, sponsored by the Office of Community Engagement, Nov. 14-17. Activities include a documentary screening, panel discussions involving homeless experts, food collection, and activities that will give students personal experiences with homelessness.

The week is being held in conjunction with the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness. “The point of the week is to make students aware of homelessness, and give them practical ways to help make a difference,” said Stephanie Capps, Coordinator for Community Engagement at Gardner-Webb University.

Activities kicked off Wednesday at 9 p.m. with the screening of the documentary “The Line,” a film that follows families and shows how hunger and homelessness has affected them.

Residents of the Men’s Homeless Shelter in Shelby will lead a panel discussion Thursday at 7 p.m. in the Time Warner Movie Theatre, located in the Tucker Student Center. They will share stories about their experiences and what it’s like to be homeless. Audience members will have the chance to participate in a question-and-answer session. As a service project component of the week, GWU students will travel to the Men’s Shelter on Friday at 7 p.m. to assist with building upkeep and give the residents an ice cream party.

Later on Friday night at the University, students are invited to bring a sleeping bag and sleep outside for an event called “One Night without a Home,” which Capps believes will give participants a personal experience with aspects of homelessness.

“The reality is that homeless people right here in this community are sleeping outside, trying to stay as warm as they can, in freezing temperatures,” Capps said. “I’ve been there and done this for multiple years and you never forget how it feels to not be able to fall asleep because you are so cold.”

This week, students are fasting during lunch and donating their food to local shelters and soup kitchens, by filling up to-go boxes from the dining hall. A collection table will be located outside of the dining area for students to make their donations. “The goal of the lunch fast is to donate your lunch to a local shelter and then don’t eat lunch that day, so that

there is an understanding of what it would feel like to skip a meal because you didn't have enough money to eat," said Capps. "The purpose of the lunch fast is both action and awareness."

Capps continued, "I think sometimes we forget, especially Gardner-Webb students, being in Boiling Springs, we aren't in an urban environment where we are confronted with the issue of homelessness every day," Capps said. "We'll be talking more about those types of issues and digging deeper into homelessness in our area."