

**FISCAL YEAR
2025-2026**



ANNUAL REPORT



Our Mission

The Community Shelter provides emergency shelter, food, and rehousing. Our low-barrier services support equitable opportunities because safe, affordable housing and access to food are basic human rights.



Letter From Our CEO

FY26 told a complicated story about need in Union County.

Community Shelter served 3,062 unduplicated individuals during the year, fewer than the year before. But that number alone does not tell the story. While the number of people served decreased by 8.6%, the volume of services we provided increased nearly 16% to more than 321,000 service units.

We saw that pattern across our programs. Fewer individuals stayed in Emergency Shelter, yet shelter nights increased slightly. Food Services provided nearly 290,000 meals, including a 29% increase in pantry meals. The number of people identified as experiencing unsheltered homelessness during the annual Point-in-Time Count increased nearly 49%, and our Street Outreach team responded by engaging almost twice as many people as the year before.

The need is not disappearing. It is changing, deepening, and requiring us to respond differently.

One of the most meaningful examples is our triage work. During FY26, we increasingly began working with people before they entered the emergency shelter. While individuals and families remained on the Emergency Shelter waitlist, case managers assessed needs, maintained contact, and connected households to food, employment services, identification, transportation, public benefits, and other community resources. Waiting for a bed no longer had to mean waiting for help.

The year also brought challenges. Affordable housing remained scarce, making it harder for shelter participants to move into permanent housing. Coordinated Entry referral limitations affected the number of households we could serve through Rapid Rehousing.

Our Economic Mobility Program experienced an eight-week staffing vacancy that reduced capacity during part of the year. Yet our team continued to adapt, partner, and find ways to meet people where they were.

Through it all, one thing remained constant: our commitment to helping people move from crisis toward lasting stability.

As we enter FY27, we will continue strengthening the connections between Emergency Shelter, Street Outreach, Food Services, Economic Mobility, and Rehousing while advocating for the affordable housing and community solutions our neighbors need.


Melissa McKeown, CEO



Our Mission

The Community Shelter of Union County provides emergency shelter, food, and rehousing. Our low-barrier services support equitable opportunities because safe, affordable housing and access to food are basic human rights.

Our Vision

To end hunger and homelessness in our community.

What We Do

Since 1993, the Community Shelter has been Union County's leading organization dedicated to providing crisis response, long-term housing stability, and pathways to economic mobility. Through innovative programs, compassionate care, and strategic partnerships, we help individuals and families move from crisis to stability and build a foundation for lasting success.

How We Help

EMERGENCY SHELTER

Provides short term emergency shelter and seasonal Warming & Cooling Stations during extreme weather while helping individuals and families stabilize and move into permanent housing.

FOOD

Provides three meals every day of the year through our Dining Hall and distributes groceries twice each month through our Food Pantry.

REHOUSING

Helps individuals and families move quickly from homelessness into permanent housing in their own community.

ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Helps Community Shelter participants increase their income and overcome employment barriers so they can move more quickly toward housing stability.

STEP IT UP BICYCLES

Bridges transportation gaps by providing gently used bicycles to people who need reliable transportation to work, appointments, and other essential destinations.

HOME AGAIN

Provides furniture and essential household items to individuals and families moving into permanent housing.

STREET OUTREACH

Meets people where they are, providing basic needs, relationship-based engagement, and pathways to emergency shelter, behavioral health care, benefits, and permanent housing.



By connecting urgent assistance with housing and income supports, we help people move from crisis toward lasting stability.

Our Impact

EMERGENCY SHELTER

457 individuals sheltered
30,685 overnight stays

ECONOMIC MOBILITY

64 enrolled
21 gained employment
830 Employment Lab visits

FOOD SERVICES

290,124 total meals
80,499 dining hall meals
209,625 pantry meals

STREET OUTREACH

143 individuals engaged

REHOUSING

110 individuals moved into
permanent housing

HOME AGAIN

48 households furnished

EXTREME WEATHER RESPONSE

140 Warming Station guests
741 overnight stays
Cooling Station available during
extreme heat

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

13,758 volunteer hours
2,880 unique volunteers
130,777 pounds donated

3,062 unduplicated people served

321,293 service units provided
up 15.8% from FY25

Service units include meals, Emergency Shelter stays, and individuals enrolled or engaged through Street Outreach, Economic Mobility, and Rehousing.

**88% did not return to Community Shelter with a
new episode of homelessness within three years.**



Help Begins Before Shelter Entry

During FY26, Community Shelter used its triage process to begin the case management relationship while individuals and families remained on the Emergency Shelter waitlist. Rather than allowing the waiting period to become a time of inactivity, case managers assessed immediate needs, maintained contact, and connected households to resources that could support safety and stability before an Emergency Shelter bed became available.

431 triage
referrals made

21 resource
categories
addressed through
triage

92% of triaged
households
received at least
one referral

More than 2 triage
referrals on average
per household

Of the 431 referrals made through triage:

187 were to Community Shelter's Food Pantry and Dining Hall.

51 were to Economic Mobility for assistance with employment, education, training, identification, transportation and other barriers to income.

Our response does not begin when someone walks through our doors. It begins when they ask for help.

Volunteers and Community Partners

2,880
volunteers



13,758
volunteer
hours



130,777
pounds
donated



Community Shelter engaged 2,880 unique volunteers during FY26, who contributed 13,758 hours of service across our programs. Volunteers served meals, supported pantry distributions, sorted donations, helped with special events and projects, and brought their time and talents into every corner of our work.

That generosity extended far beyond volunteer hours. Our community donated 130,777 pounds of food, household goods, clothing, and other essentials during the year, a 17% increase from FY25.

Businesses, faith communities, schools, civic organizations, healthcare partners, local government, and nonprofit collaborators continued to strengthen our ability to respond to needs that no single organization could meet alone.

Together, our volunteers and partners expanded our reach, strengthened our programs, and reminded us that change happens fastest when a community works side by side toward a shared goal.

When Persistence Becomes Progress

A Story of Lasting Stability

Since 2019, one woman had turned to Community Shelter 23 times. Her repeated stays reflected the reality that homelessness, substance use, and family separation are rarely resolved in a straight line.

Each time she returned, staff welcomed her back, rebuilt trust, and helped her take another step toward stability. Progress came slowly, but the relationship continued.

During FY26, those steps became a new chapter. She moved into permanent housing, continues to strengthen her recovery, and is working toward reunification with her daughter.

Her story reminds us that lasting change often takes time, persistence, and more than one opportunity.

At Community Shelter, returning for help is not failure. It is another chance to move forward.

23 STAYS SINCE 2019

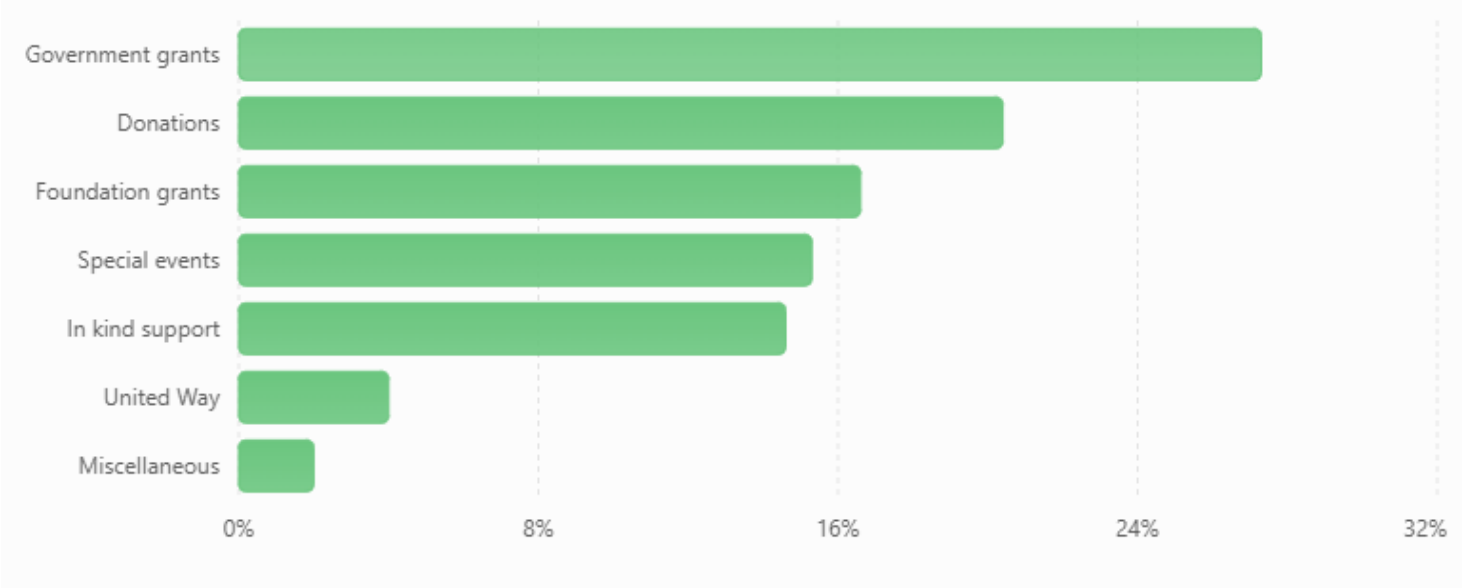
ONE PERMANENT HOME

A FUTURE BEING REBUILT

Financials

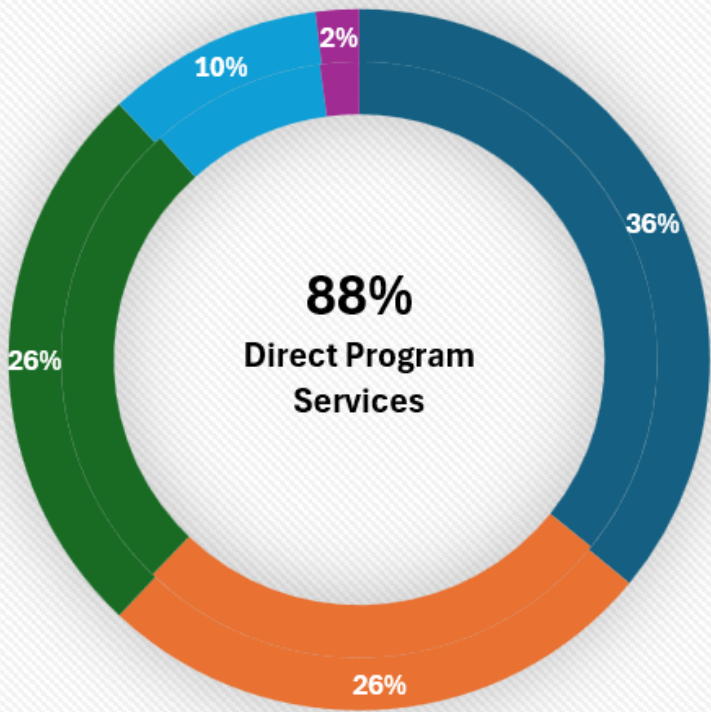
Where our support came from

FY26 revenue by source as a percentage of total revenue.



Total FY26 revenue: \$1,702,704. Percentages may vary slightly due to rounding.

FY26 Expenses



■ Housing ■ Emergency Shelter ■ Food ■ Management ■ Fundraising

Total FY26 expenses: \$1,999,132

FY26 expenses exceeded revenue in part because of planned investments aligned with our current Strategic Plan. Changes in federal funding will be reflected more fully in FY27.



LOOKING AHEAD

As we enter FY27, Community Shelter remains focused on strengthening the pathways that help people move from crisis to lasting stability.

We will continue expanding collaboration around unsheltered homelessness, strengthening Street Outreach and our pre-shelter response, and working with community partners to build solutions that connect people more quickly to Emergency Shelter, behavioral health care, income, and permanent housing.

Affordable housing will remain one of our most urgent priorities. We will continue advocating for deeply affordable housing options, strengthening landlord partnerships, and supporting households as they navigate an increasingly difficult rental market.

We will also continue investing in food access, Economic Mobility, housing stability, staff development, and strong internal systems that protect the quality and sustainability of our work.

FY27 marks the final year of our 2024–2027 Strategic Plan. This fall, we will begin developing the next plan, using what we have learned from changing community needs, program outcomes, and the voices of participants, staff, Board members, and partners to shape the work ahead.

Through collaboration, accountability, and a continued focus on long-term stability, we will keep working toward a Union County where everyone has a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home and where hunger and homelessness are effectively addressed.



Contact Us

Learn more, volunteer, donate, or partner with us at
www.unionshelter.org.

COMMUNITY SHELTER OF UNION COUNTY

*EMERGENCY SHELTER * FOOD * REHOUSING*

160 Meadow Street, Monroe, NC 28110
704.289.5300
www.unionshelter.org



Thank you for helping our neighbors
move from crisis toward lasting stability.