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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 655

Offered February 10, 2023

Commending the Rescue Mission of Roanoke.

Patrons—Rasoul, Austin, Clark, Guzman, Head, Hope, Hudson, Jenkins, Kory, Lopez, Maldonado, McNamara, Mundon King, Seibold, Simon, Simonds, Subramanyam, Ware and Watts; Senators: Boysko, Edwards, Favola, Howell, Reeves, Ruff, Spruill, Suetterlein and Vogel

WHEREAS, the Rescue Mission of Roanoke, a comprehensive crisis intervention center offering lifesaving services to support individuals' transformation and restoration, celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2023; and

WHEREAS, the origins of the Rescue Mission of Roanoke date to August 3, 1942, when future founder Gus Johnson underwent a life-changing experience at the Chicago United Mission; and

WHEREAS, in July 1948, Gus Johnson and his wife, Lois, opened the Rescue Mission of Roanoke on 111 East Salem Avenue, providing shelter and meals to men in the community in need; and

WHEREAS, two years later, the board of the Rescue Mission of Roanoke was formed and the organization was officially incorporated; then shortly thereafter, the organization began accepting women and operating a children's ministry; and

WHEREAS, after a period of growth and transition, the Rescue Mission of Roanoke settled in its current facility at the intersection of 4th Street and Tazewell Avenue, where it has tended to countless men, women, and children ever since; and

WHEREAS, the Rescue Mission of Roanoke supports an emergency shelter that is the only overnight shelter in Roanoke that is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, providing a vital lifeline to homeless members of the community; and

WHEREAS, in addition to serving approximately 600 prepared meals on a daily basis with the support of more than 70 corporate food donors and various churches, organizations, and individuals, the Rescue Mission of Roanoke also operates its Manna food pantry to give struggling families a regular supply of groceries, helping to ensure that no one in the community goes without; and

WHEREAS, the Rescue Mission Foundation was established in 1991 to create an endowment fund for the Rescue Mission of Roanoke, enabling the organization to broaden its services and increase its impact in the community; and

WHEREAS, since 1994, the Way Forward Residential Recovery Program at the Rescue Mission of Roanoke has helped men and women overcome their addictions to drugs and alcohol through coaching, spiritual guidance, and education; and

WHEREAS, the Rescue Mission of Roanoke opened the G. Wayne Fralin Free Clinic for the Homeless in 2010 to provide primary and preventative care, behavioral health services, medication assistance, dental and vision care, vaccinations, and more to individuals experiencing homelessness or transitioning into permanent housing; and

WHEREAS, in December 2016, Joy Sylvester-Johnson, daughter of Gus and Lois Johnson, retired after 31 years of service to the Rescue Mission of Roanoke, marking the first time in the organization's history that it was not led by a member of the Johnson family; and

WHEREAS, through the tireless efforts of its volunteers and staff and the multi-faceted nature of its programs, the Rescue Mission of Roanoke empowers many in the Roanoke Valley community to escape homelessness and achieve independence in their lives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Rescue Mission of Roanoke on the occasion of the organization's 75th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to C. Lee Clark, chief executive officer of the Rescue Mission of Roanoke, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the organization's history of contributions to the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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