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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 495

Offered February 9, 2007

*Commending Roanoke Area Ministries and RAM House.*

Patrons—Edwards and Bell; Delegates: Fralin and Ware, O.

WHEREAS, in 2007, Roanoke Area Ministries' RAM House celebrates its 20th anniversary of outstanding service to citizens in need in the Roanoke Valley; and

WHEREAS, Roanoke Area Ministries (RAM), an ecumenical ministry, assists homeless people and poor families with the goal of empowering them so that they might move from dependency to an independent and responsible life; and

WHEREAS, in the 1960s, the clergy and staff of churches and synagogues in the Roanoke area became increasingly aware of a critical need to help area residents, who were being turned away from public agencies, because they did not qualify for financial aid and public services for one reason or another; and

WHEREAS, RAM was founded in 1971 when concerned representatives of nine denominations came together in an urban ministry to help their fellow residents with critical needs, and the organization's first project was to gather and deliver surplus food to the elderly and disabled; and

WHEREAS, with the support of the *Roanoke Times*, the Good Neighbors Fund was established in 1984 to raise money for a more permanent source of funding for emergency assistance; in 1986, the mayor, The Reverend Noel Taylor, launched an initiative to provide shelter for the homeless in Roanoke; and in that same year, the Catholic Diocese of Richmond donated a building for that purpose; and

WHEREAS, twenty years ago in 1987, RAM House, a day shelter for the homeless, opened its doors to Roanoke's homeless and often most vulnerable citizens; and

WHEREAS, RAM, with a motto of "a ministry of caring and sharing," provides people with advocacy, help with information and resources, and many crucial services such as emergency financial assistance, employment counseling and placement, hot midday meals served 365 days a year, and temporary refuge at RAM House; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, RAM provided short-term financial aid for 5,000 people, counseled and assessed 300 potential workers, and placed nearly 150 citizens in gainful employment; and

WHEREAS, RAM also helps young mothers, the elderly, the disabled, and families with emergency aid, rent, utilities, prescriptions, food, and transportation; and

WHEREAS, RAM's exemplary service to its citizens is a reminder of the many organizations and volunteers that help their fellow citizens across the Commonwealth every day, help that sometimes is all that stands between a family and homelessness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend and congratulate Roanoke Area Ministries' RAM House on the occasion of its 20th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Operations Director Debbie Denison, of Roanoke Area Ministries, as an expression of the General Assembly's gratitude for the organization's commitment to citizens in need in the Roanoke Valley and best wishes for the future success of RAM House.

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