



MEDIA RELEASE: HOPE CENTRE TO OPEN IN 2010

Released 17 December 2009

The Directors of Hope 4 (Rugby) have now signed a lease to secure town centre premises for the new Hope Centre. These will be on the first floor area 45-6 Church Street – formerly the Patio Cafe. They have also this week authorised refurbishment work to begin using the expertise of a local company - Bilton Design. **“These are exciting times for us,”** said the Hope 4 Chairman the Revd Michael Bochenski, **“we have been fund-raising, praying and working towards this for several years. Now we are seeing the dream become reality.”** At the Hope Centre, homeless or badly housed guests will have access to laundry facilities, shower rooms, somewhere to sit and relax with newspapers and magazines, tea and coffee and - between 12.30 -13.30 - a cooked lunch initially on 3 days of the week: Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Later in the year - if funding and volunteers allow - these opening hours will be extended.

Mr Bochenski , who is the Minister of Rugby Baptist Church, was appointed Hope 4 Chairman following a process of consultation with local churches: **“ In these times of economic difficulty more and more people in towns like Rugby are in danger of homelessness or are experiencing unacceptably poor housing conditions,”** he said. **“ I hope to be able to draw on my previous experience to help establish a day centre here in Rugby Hope 4 over 2010. Somewhere that will be a refuge from the streets, a place to get hot food and an oasis for body, mind and soul.”**

The Revd Bochenski comes to his new appointment with a lot of previous experience of working with homeless and badly housed people. While at his former church in St Albans, he helped to establish a Night and Day Shelter for homeless people called “Open Door.” For many years, Mr Bochenski served as a volunteer, a trustee and then chairperson of Open Door’s governing body, helping to build a cross party coalition of support for the project.**“Many of those who are homeless or badly housed in Rugby are under 25. Rugby has relatively high house prices, a growing number of unemployed people and workers from abroad needing suitable accommodation. Family breakups also add to the numbers of those seeking good housing,”** Mr Bochenski added. **“These factors compound the problem of homelessness within the Borough.”**

Hope 4 has already caught the imagination of many churches, businesses and schools in the town. Sainsburys make regular donations of fresh fruit,vegetables and bread. Greggs also make donations of bread and cakes. Marks and Spencers have this year raised over £2700 which was recently presented

to the Charity. The Co-operative have made vouchers for goods/food available and Tescos have donated socks and clothing. Several local schools have also collected food or made donations over the course of the year.

Those wishing to volunteer should contact Cathy Hemsley on 01788 553245. And those wishing to donate towards the work of Hope 4 can do so via the Hope 4 Treasurer, Peter Davies: 01788 810630.

Or via the Hope 4 web-site: www.hope4.org.uk/

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Background Information:

Hope 4 was set up in Rugby in 2004 to create a drop-in centre that would provide food, practical support, laundry facilities and shower facilities for its guests. Longer term the vision is that Hope 4 will also be able to offer some kind of overnight sleeping accommodation for homeless and badly housed people. With the generous support of the Parish Council of St. Andrew's church, Hope 4 already provide food regularly to around 30 people each week. More recently an occasional Saturday breakfast service has been provided in partnership with the local branch of the Salvation Army. In addition to food, other essentials for life are also given free of charge to homeless and badly housed people who attend. These include sleeping bags, coats, gloves, scarves, hats and toiletries. A team of 120 volunteers, drawn mainly from 12 churches across the town, already work with Hope 4. **More volunteers** will, however, be needed in 2010 to work in the new day centre and **additional funds** will also be necessary as Hope 4 develops in new ways.

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