

This year's Mission Project for VBS was Stepping Stones Mission of Franklin County

The soup kitchen, which was founded in 2006, by Joanne Patterson is open for lunch seven days a week, including holidays. Their goal is to work toward eliminating hunger in the Franklin County community by providing free food to our patrons that have become victims of unfortunate circumstances and cannot meet their own basic needs. Stepping Stone doesn't just feed its patrons lunch. It also sends them home with food to ensure they don't go hungry in the interim.

"There is no reason for anybody in this community to go a day, a whole day, without a meal," Patterson believes. Stepping Stone Mission is doing its part to limit the number who do. But that's not a small task. Patterson said the soup kitchen needs monetary donations, and would love to get help from a grant writer.

In 2017, Stepping Stone served more than 330 individuals a month. Many of the soup kitchen's patrons live in poverty; 71 percent have an annual income of less than \$10,000. And 59 percent have been homeless, according to data provided by the nonprofit.

Patterson said it's support from the community that "enables us to do what we are doing." The soup kitchen has more than 100 volunteers, and partners with businesses such as Food Lion, Kroger, Sheetz, Little

Caesars and Bojangles', along with Feeding America Southwest Virginia, the regional food bank based in Salem.

"We have been blessed with what we needed to operate it and that's food, and volunteers to come in and prepare it," she said. "They come on their assigned days faithfully."

They recently moved to a new, larger facility at 1105 North Main Street (the old Jones Produce Building)

At its old location on Diamond Avenue, founder Joanne Patterson said the soup kitchen served 50 to 65 meals a day. In about two months at the new location – the kitchen opened Easter Sunday – she said the number of meals served per day is now at 60 to 80.

Manager Timothy Wright said "more and new faces" have been coming through Stepping Stone's doors. **More Information:** 540-482-0775

Lunch is served from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. daily.

Financial donations should be sent to:

Stepping Stone Mission

P.O. Box 141

Rocky Mount, VA 24151

**information gathered from Stepping Stones website and article from The Roanoke Times*