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Jackson Park Ministries counting on donors

[Todd Cohen](#) |

CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- In the past year, contributions to Jackson Park Ministries have plunged 30 percent while demand for services has soared by half.

"We're trying to serve more people with less money, and that gets a little tricky," says Bill Reid, the charity's executive director.

Founded in 1985, the organization serves over 7,000 people a year and operates with a staff of eight people, three of them working full-time on a voluntary basis.

Reid, who helped found Jackson Park Ministries, joined the staff seven years ago as full-time, unpaid executive director.

In the past, the nonprofit has counted on contributions from churches, individuals and businesses but never developed a formal annual fund drive.

But with its annual budget dropping to \$506,000 this year from \$650,000 last year, the group has launched its first fundraising effort, which it plans to continue on an annual basis.

"We're formalizing our fundraising efforts," Reid says.

Initially a partnership of Baptist Metrolina Ministries and Jackson Park Baptist Church in West Charlotte adjacent to Charlotte Douglas International Airport, Jackson Park Ministries was formed when the church outgrew its chapel, moved and changed its name to Steele Creek Church of Charlotte.

The nonprofit occupies an eight-acre campus that has grown over time and now includes 13 buildings.

Those include the church's former chapel, a full-sized gym, a fellowship hall for families and children, and 10 two-story apartment buildings.

Once the remaining four of those buildings are remodeled, the nonprofit will have facilities to house 33 families.

Its largest program currently provides housing for 12 families, as well as support services to help them become financially independent.

Those services, offered through a "Transformational Housing" residential program that typically lasts 12 to 18 months, aim to transform the families' lives by providing parents with skills to better manage money, raise children and handle their marriage and spiritual life.

Jackson Park Ministries also offers programs for the community and neighborhood, and for children and youth.

The nonprofit, for example, provides 200 to 250 families a month with emergency food supplies, up from 150 to 175 families a month last year.

"We're inundated with families coming for food," Reid says.

The group provides Christmas services and toys for children, and offers a camp all summer for kids whose families participate in its residential program or live in the neighborhood.

It also offers after-school programs for kids that include tutoring and supervised play.

And it provides child care for children of adults who take its financial classes and seminars weekdays and nights.

The inaugural annual-fund campaign, which kicked off Sept. 15 and runs through Dec. 31, aims to raise \$400,000, says Susan Ingle, who works on a voluntary basis as the group's director of philanthropy.

Chaired by John Berry, senior vice president at Bank of America and chair of the nonprofit's board of directors, the campaign already has raised about \$30,000.

Reid says Jackson Park Ministries, which receives no government funding, is struggling to continue to meet the rising demand for services despite the drop in contributions.

To meet that demand, he says, the charity is counting on donors who have supported it in the past, as well as additional churches, individuals and businesses from the community.