



'We're a little slim on bread this week,' said volunteer Myrtle Calhoun as she sorted donations at the Food Bank. Staff photo by Ted Richardson



Danny Royale, 17, left, and Hakeem Gary, 12, load food for the New Christian Food Pantry in Wilson at the Food Bank in Raleigh. Staff photo by Ted Richardson



Volunteers (front row, from left), Skip White, Phil Betts, Jay Brown, Carole Brown and Linda White sort donated medicines in front of empty shelves in a warehouse at the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina. Staff photos by Ted Richardson

Nonprofits scrambling to meet demand

More than half have trimmed budgets, and most are getting more requests for help.

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DURHAM - Most nonprofit organizations in the Triangle are seeing increased demand for their services as their income from donations and government grants are flat or on the decline, according to a survey by the Triangle Community Foundation.

More than half of the 251 organizations surveyed had to trim budgets this year; more than a quarter of them cut programs and services. Nearly one in five had laid people off.

At the same time, more than 80 percent experienced an increase in demand, often for services for the elderly, children and the disadvantaged that are unavailable through the government.

The wait list for Meals on Wheels of Wake County has increased from 195 to 315 in the past year, just as giving from individual donors and corporations took a nosedive, said Alan Winstead, executive director. Demand on the charity increases every year because of population growth in the county, but this summer is especially taxing.

"Having that large increase in population plus the recession limiting our ability to serve more people, that's a double-whammy," Winstead said. "We are spending as much money as possible to deliver meals while at the same time trying to remain financially stable.

"We just have to get through the tight times."

Some worry that the worst is yet to come as cuts in government and foundation support continue to trickle down. The Achievement Academy of Durham, which helps high school dropouts earn their GEDs, was asked to expect at least 6.6 percent less from the county.

Meanwhile, individual donations to the academy have dropped 20 percent. One grant provider isn't sure whether it will support the academy next year. Another has said it will not be giving any grants.

"Developing next year's budget is a challenge," said Sandy Ogburn, the academy's administrative director, who says she often has to put prospective students on a wait list or refer them to another program. "You start thinking, will we have to lose one of our employees?"

Raleigh cut funding to nonprofits by about 12 percent, or \$225,000, in its \$697 million budget for the year beginning July 1. Some nonprofits, such as the Downtown Raleigh Housing Improvement Corp. and Raleigh City Museum, saw their funding cut by 10 percent. Other groups, such as the Raleigh Area Development Authority and the outreach program SouthLight, had their funding eliminated.

The budget cuts could have been much worse. The City Council restored \$605,000 in nonprofit spending that City Manager Russell Allen had proposed to cut. The money was used to keep funding level for a number of nonprofits, including Legal Aid, the Tammy Lynn Center and the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle.

Economic stress prompted the Triangle Community Foundation to hold a nonprofit strategy workshop this week, with sessions on fundraising, marketing, budgeting and tapping federal stimulus funds and other new sources of money.

"We got a thriving nonprofit sector, and there's a lot of hope and opportunities that can come out of these challenging times," said Andrea Bazan, foundation president. "We wouldn't be having this meeting if things were going well."

Federal stimulus money and steady donations have helped the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina keep food coming into its warehouse in Raleigh. This year, though, the food goes out almost as soon as it comes in, said spokeswoman Christy Simmons. The organization provides food to soup kitchens, food pantries and shelters.

"[Partner organizations] are seeing anywhere from a 30 to 60 percent increase in those who are coming in for help," Simmons said. "A lot of those are new faces who have never before been in this predicament."

Staff writer David Bracken contributed to this report.

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