



I advise and enjoin those who direct the paper in the tomorrows never to advocate any cause for personal profit or preferment. I would wish it always to be "the tocsin" and to devote itself to the policies of equality and justice to the underprivileged. If the paper should at any time be the voice of self-interest or become the spokesman of privilege or selfishness it would be untrue to its history.

— from the will of Josephus Daniels, Editor and Publisher 1894-1948

A time to heal

A pledge from WakeMed toward a substance abuse treatment center for the homeless should be a lesson for Raleigh and Wake County officials, who need to settle on a site for a year-round shelter.

How refreshing, in the midst of all the city-county shilly-shallying about a permanent shelter for homeless people in Raleigh, to see the organizers of The Healing Place moving with such dispatch. A WakeMed pledge of \$2 million for the proposed \$4.5 million facility, which would provide substance-abuse treatment for the homeless, is a major breakthrough. The principal organizers began their work only last June, shortly after visiting The Healing Place in Louisville, Ky., to look at its widely praised residential treatment program.

WakeMed's pledge is, to be sure, a conditional commitment, offered as an incentive for those behind the project to raise the remaining \$2.5 million from other sources. That shouldn't be a huge problem given the enthusiasm of such organizers as Maria Spaulding, Wake County Human Services director; Barbara Goodmon, a member of the Human Services board, and Fred Barber, senior vice president of Capitol Broadcasting Co. But looming as a problem, perhaps larger than the one of raising money, is agreeing on and obtaining the best site for such a facility.

Choosing a site for a year-round shelter has been a major stumbling block for the Raleigh City Council and Wake County commissioners. The county has an estimated 1,900 homeless people,

and of that number, it's estimated that at least 1,250 need treatment for abuse of drugs or alcohol. But The Healing Place's backers can at least move ahead with more confidence given this commitment from WakeMed.

Certainly there is enlightened self-interest in the medical center's pledge. Each year after all, more than 2,000 homeless men and women, impaired by the use of drugs or alcohol, are taken to WakeMed for emergency treatment. Ambulance costs alone run to \$1.4 million or more. Thus, an effective residential treatment program that would sharply reduce those figures would be a boon for both WakeMed and the taxpayers. Further, the \$2 million grant from WakeMed will come from its Community Health Initiative Fund, which is intended for care of the indigent.

There's a caution here, even so. The Healing Place's organizers have a laudable goal of housing and treating 165 homeless men by the fall of 2000. They also intend to start a separate women's shelter three years later. Considering the numbers of Raleigh-Wake homeless, however, the need for year-'round shelter for those not being treated at the new facility will remain. Where agreement on an adequate and permanent central shelter is concerned, Raleigh councillors and Wake commissioners still need to find the healing touch.