



Stanton

feeding Haywood

Blessed to be a blessing

By **Mattie Ford**
Staff writer

"Father, we are grateful for these people who love You and love their neighbors," spoke a crisp voice into the humid June air of Stanton's Town Hall Saturday morning. "We ask that our hands become Yours today. Thank you. Amen." And with this, the action portion of Stanton Feeding Haywood was birthed into life.

"Birthed" is a word Director Linda Jones uses a lot when describing her journey with this initiative. "You know women have nine months of pregnancy and then they give birth," she explained between laughs. "This was nine years of pregnancy until it was final-

ly birthed. I carried that idea around for nine years before God finally said it was time."

Stanton Feeding Haywood is an initiative that uses the community to feed the hungry each month of the year. Using food that has been donated by churches or individuals, groups of volunteers bag donations, assuring that a variety of food is distributed to each family. Then, on the second Saturday of each month, registered participants line up in their cars to receive their food for the month.

Registration occurred twice before this month's distribution and will be held monthly before each event in the future. Qualification is based upon income and is closely connected to government assis-



The smiling faces behind Stanton Feeding Haywood line up for a picture after a long morning's work.

tance programs.

The idea for Stanton Feeding Haywood came from the Feeding Fayette program, which Jones heard about in a Local Leadership meeting. "The director of Feeding Fayette mentioned something about having Haywood residents participating and I thought to myself, 'Why aren't we feeding our own'," she explained.

Because the program is just getting its start, it has been fairly confined to Stanton. But soon, the outreaching hands will extend further and further, reaching all of Haywood County and hopefully eventually having a site in Brownsville for distributions.

Jones spoke of God's orchestrating hand in this whole process by saying, "He sent me. I

feel like anything that happens to me happens for a reason; I'm not just there to be there. I feel like He sent me to Fayette, allowed me to go through Local Leadership; it wasn't just to go through. It had a purpose. It was this purpose."

And Feeding Fayette's role in Stanton Feeding Haywood didn't stop there; volunteers from their program joined workers at Saturday's kick-off distribution. Volunteers from Brownsville Baptist Church's Food Distribution program joined other volunteers as well, lending both hands and expertise.

"This morning went great," said Mayor Allen Sterbinsky. "The first time is always a bit of a zoo, but it wasn't much

of a zoo today. We were able to borrow expertise from other people and places. It's phenomenal to see people sharing because their common purpose is God's work."

Momentum is high: the first event went well, plans for a new building will quickly be under way and the Board along with volunteers are quickly getting a feel for how this program will progress. But this is only the beginning, and supplies will still be needed. Any donations of food, money, time or resources are greatly appreciated so that this program can continue its momentum. Conversations of that nature can be held at Stanton's Town Hall, which can be contacted at 731-394-9967.

For Linda Jones, Mat-

thew 25:35, which states, "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat," has been on the tip of her tongue and in the back of her mind while getting this program on its feet. "I know it was God," she said with a smile. "It was He, not I, so I just thank him for allowing me to be his vessel."



Bags are overflowing and ready to be loaded into recipients' cars.



Director Linda Jones and Mayor Allen Sterbinsky