



Coffee shop worship at Central



Blankets for the homeless at Norwood



New stories of hope in Holston

► Churches step outside to offer Christ in their communities

Natalie, age 5, was excited when her parents said she was old enough to volunteer at Knox Area Rescue Mission. On a cold night in January, Natalie was assigned the task of handing out beverages, while the rest of her church group served dinner.

The child's enthusiasm turned to confusion, however, when she saw people walking into the cold outdoors after their hot dinners. Natalie wanted to know why they didn't stay inside and sleep in the mission.

"I explained that there wasn't enough room for everyone, and that some people prefer sleeping outside," says Sharon Vaughn, Natalie's mom.

That night, Natalie didn't sleep well because she couldn't stop thinking about people who sleep out in the cold. "It made me feel bad that they didn't have blankets," says the pre-schooler.

She asked her mom: Could the people sleep inside her church? Could she make a big quilt for everyone to share?

Could she ask her church to bring in a whole bunch of blankets?

On the following two Sundays, Natalie stood up in church and asked for dona-

tions of new or gently used blankets. She warmed the hearts of her congregation as well as her pastor.

"We live in a community where there are needs all around," said the Rev. David Green, pastor at Norwood United Methodist Church in Knoxville District. "This little girl has a big heart, and she's really in tune with what people need."

Both money and blankets arrived from her congregation, until Natalie had collected 65 blankets. She informed her mother and pastor that she wanted to hand them out herself.

Green contacted Lost Sheep Ministry, which provides a free, Wednesday-night dinner to people who live under the I-40/ McGhee Street bridge in Knoxville. (www.lostsheepministry.com)

Sharon Vaughn says that Wednesday night, Feb. 4, was "the coldest night of

Mobile food pantry at Valley View

