

Dominion Donates \$50,000 to Beach Homeless Center

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When the aged heating system breaks and the windows don't shut properly at the Judeo-Christian Outreach Center's homeless shelter, resident Bernadette Harp doesn't complain.

But on Friday, she looked pleasantly surprised when Dominion Virginia Power granted the center \$50,000 for repairs.

"We know that this center is funded by donations, but when you see the people behind it, it's even more meaningful," the 44-year-old resident said.

Nearly 50 community and city leaders were invited to the announcement, which took place in the center's dining hall Friday.

Former U.S. Rep. Thelma Drake and members of the City Council made remarks before the check was presented.

"Homelessness is more of a problem these days, and it's getting worse," Councilwoman Rosemary Wilson told the crowd. "Money is in short supply right now, so this is a blessing."

The center - located on Virginia Beach Boulevard near Birdneck Road - provides food, housing, job training and on-site case management for the homeless. There are two shelters for single people and families on the premises that house more than 60 people each night.

Kirk Welch, the center's executive director, said the grant will be used to install an energy-efficient heating and air conditioning system and replace the facility's aging windows and doors. Carpets will be replaced and walls will be painted with any leftover money, he said.

After about an hour of remarks and acknowledgments, Dominion's Chief Executive Officer Paul Koonce presented the check.

He said Dominion appreciates the center's efforts to move the community forward during tough times.

Welch smiled and said: "This means the world to me and the residents here. It makes their lives so much better."