

WINCHESTER — Moving feet will provide shelter Saturday.

The third annual Heart Havens 5K Run and 1K Fun Walk, sponsored by Valley Health, gets under way at 8 a.m., followed by food, drinks, and a tour of the Heart Havens home at 3050 Saratoga Ave.

Heart Havens is a ministry of the United Methodist Church. It is a residential home for people with cognitive disabilities.

Almost 10 years ago, said Fred Rathel, a past president of the United Methodist Men's Group here, the Church formed a ministry to construct and operate homes for the disabled.

Parents were concerned about the fate of their disabled children when they could no longer care for them, he said.

In Virginia, the first home was constructed in 1996, Rathel said. The state now has nine, with a new one due to open this year in Newport News.

Jim Green, immediate past president of the Winchester District United Methodist Men, said the Winchester home has a waiting list of 130 names.

"The need is great everywhere," said Rathel.

In Winchester, the local Methodist Men bought the lot on Saratoga Avenue in 1999, while Rathel was president, and began raising the \$309,000 necessary to construct the five bedroom, 3 1/2-bathroom home.

Rathel said neighbors were fully informed about the home before it opened. "Our residents couldn't wait to meet the neighbors, and the neighbors felt the same way. They enjoy us and we enjoy them."

The home became operational in November 2002, he said, and within five months of the opening, a resident's parents died. A year later, another resident lost a parent, making the need for the facility apparent.



Residents of the Heart Havens Home in Kernstown will hold an open house for those taking part in Saturday's run and walk to raise money to continue the ministry of the United Methodist Church for perpetual care for those with disabilities. Herb Drake (left, top row) and Jim Green, current and past presidents of the United Methodist Men's group, are helping to publicize the run. Nicole Pangle (left, second row), executive director of the Arc of Northern Shenandoah Valley, is the run manager. Next to her, resident J. L. Snider and home employee Rebecca Garrett will be on hand Saturday with (seated, from left) residents Steven Tarrant, Charles Hale, and John Mason. *(Photo by Scott Mason)*

The home accommodates five residents, cared for by three full-time and four part-time staff members.

“We have around-the-clock staffing,” said Caroline Soden, supervisor for the home, “but only the residents live here.”

Each resident helps with the chores of keeping the home up and most have jobs at NW Works, a sheltered workshop.

“We teach daily living skills here, including cooking and laundry,” Soden said. “It’s their home. We’re here to help them out.”

February is Heart Havens Month in the United Methodist Church, Rathel said. Most churches have special collections to support the homes in the state.

Locally, the Methodist Men also organize three fundraisers a year to support the home, according to Herb Drake, current president. A bowl-a-thon is held in February and a golf tournament in the fall, in addition to the 5K Run.

The run travels the streets around the Heart Havens Home and the scenic Kernstown Battlefield, just to the west of the facility.

Awards are presented to men and women in seven age groups, according to run organizer Nicole Pangle, executive director of The Arc of Northern Shenandoah Valley — an advocacy group for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Arc’s mission is to work to improve their quality of life, she said. It offers information and referrals “so people can live a life like you or I do.”

Pangle, an “occasional” runner who is overseeing the 5K this year, noted that there is “always a need for people to get services” such as those at Heart Havens.

The 1K walk is routed around the neighborhood next to the battlefield, on pavement, to accommodate wheelchairs, and strollers and those who need a level surface for walking, she said. Pets are welcome, too.

On race day, Soden said the house is open to everyone taking part in the event, runner or walker.

“People get to see what we are about,” Soden said, as they come by for a snack, to collect their ribbons or door prizes.

The home traditionally holds an open house at Christmas, too.

Run/walk participation

Anyone wishing to participate in the 5K run or 1K walk can do so online at <http://runwalkjog.com/HeartHavens>.

Registration on race day begins at 7 a.m. and costs \$20 for adults and \$15 for children under 12. Members of the Shenandoah Valley Runners can save \$1 on registration. The race begins at 8 a.m.; the 1K walk begins at 9:30 a.m. The entry fee is \$5. For information, contact Jim Green at 540-678-0243.