

# FORUM

Page 2 - Wed., Oct. 24, 2012

## Helping COP help others

Among Isle of Wight county's most forward-thinking actions was the decision many years ago to creatively re-use the former Smithfield High School on James Street.

The board's decision to help finance the renovation of the property and parcel it out to the Blackwater Regional Library, Paul D. Camp Community College and the YMCA was instrumental in ensuring that these three valuable institutions had the facilities necessary for them to become an asset valuable to the quality of life in Northern Isle of Wight.

The board now has a similar opportunity.

Christian Outreach, which provides an incredible array of services to Isle of Wight County's poorest residents, needs a warehouse and distribution facility for food, furniture and other items it passes on to those who need help. COP also wants to provide a resource center that can be used for student tutoring programs and a meeting place for volunteers, and that will help guarantee that COP is sustainable for many years to come.

Several options have been looked at but, to date, nothing has panned out for the organization.

Last week, COP offered to buy the former Health Department building with \$75,000 it has accumulated to build or outfit a facility.

The building can be put to no higher use than Christian Outreach's ongoing mission to serve the county's less fortunate. The county should decline COP's offer to buy and instead, donate or lease the property long-term in a manner similar to its arrangement with the library, PDCCC and the YMCA. Then, much of the hard-earned money COP holds can be used toward renovating the building and getting on with its programs.

This is an opportunity for the county to turn a depreciated county asset into a major force for good in the community, and it's hard to imagine the supervisors not eagerly embracing the concept.