

As holidays pass, homeless stay

Giving aid: a need for all seasons

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

The holidays always focus attention on the homeless and the have-nots. But that doesn't surprise many involved in programs to help those in need.

"In the winter, people can see the cold. You just don't feel it, you see it," said Lillian Schneble, director of the Royal Oak-based South Oakland Shelter. "People say, 'Oh my God, how can they sleep out in the cold.' But what do you do in July when you have to go to the bathroom?"

The homeless don't go away and don't necessarily find a permanent

place to live when the holidays come to a close or when the weather improves. It's a year-round problem.

"This week, the people are still out there. These people everyday need a place to stay and food," said Farmington Hills city councilman Aldo Vagnozzi. Vagnozzi and his wife, Lois, volunteer in the SOS rotating emergency shelter program at St. Alexander's Catholic Church, 27835 Silvassee, Farmington Hills.

The church is among more than 30 involved in the SOS rotating emergency program operating September through May. The rotating program emerged about four years ago when 25 churches got together as the number of homeless swelled and existing permanent shelters, such as Baldwin House in Pontiac, continued to overflow.

VOLUNTEERS AND program leaders would like to see the SOS program open 52 weeks a year. But it takes the public's help.

For those interested in helping the



Aldo Vagnozzi
SOS volunteer

homeless, Schneble suggests donations, encouraging your religious institution to get involved in the SOS program and volunteering. In 1987-88, for example, the cost of the rotating shelter program topped more than \$31,000, according to a 1988 SOS brochure.

The SOS brochure also suggests contributing to program staff salaries, providing the organization with a list of available jobs or low-cost housing, purchasing or providing low-cost housing, adopting a guest from the shelter to help with their employment, job training, housing, medical assistance and other services.

Donations can be made to SOS at 431 N. Main, Royal Oak, MI 48067. Those interested in volunteering may call Schneble at 546-6566.

Vagnozzi suggested strong public interest in increasing the \$3.35 hour-

ly minimum wage. Even though many of the 27,000 estimated homeless in southeastern Michigan have jobs, they don't earn enough for a permanent residence.

"The minimum wage is a factor. These people can't afford an apartment, a house. People on minimum wage — and many of them working only part time, don't have health insurance or other protections," Vagnozzi said.

THE HOMELESS minimum wage earners may, for example, earn about \$194 weekly. That makes it tough when apartments require a security deposit and the first and last month rent. "You do have to deal with stuff like that," Schneble said.

Perhaps they should consider waiting lists for apartments. A lot of them (homeless), for whatever reason, have lost control of their residences. You're talking \$1,200-\$1,500 to get going again," Vagnozzi said.

Having a permanent shelter for the homeless is the continuing dream for people like Schneble and Peggy Harris, who runs the program for St. Alexander's. But it's tough to find an adequate facility and in an area where residents won't complain and zoning is appropriate.

"We need a permanent place for these people where they can be counseled, get on their feet," Harris said. "When we do find a building, there's a problem with zoning or residents rebel. If we could just find a building where these people can go . . ."

In addition to the Baldwin Center, Pontiac, and SOS, some other shelters providing emergency assistance to the homeless in Oakland County are Pontiac Area Lighthouse, Pontiac; Oakland-Livingston Human Service Agency, Pontiac; The Sanctuary, Royal Oak; Pontiac Rescue Mission, Pontiac.

Ideas join grammar as writing priorities

A sample of student writing, Page 3A

By Casey Hans
staff writer

Farmington schools will continue to focus on writing — not only teaching students grammar skills but encouraging thinking skills as well.

"To a large degree, it seems we're emphasizing the right things," said the district's Language Arts coordinator, John Barrett.

"But Barrett said a recent seminar at the University of Michigan will prompt the district to continue to improve its writing program.

"It gives us some hard-core statistics to use," he said.

Barrett and high school English department heads Kathy Nyberg from Harrison, Pat Tompkins from Farmington and Glen Garhart from North Farmington all attended the U-M seminar, which focused on writing into the next decade.

"Instead of looking only at correct spelling and grammar, teachers today are emphasizing ideas and the thinking skills that will be necessary for the future. Content is the key, Barrett said.

"I'm not saying we should de-emphasize spelling and grammar," he said.

But the four most important things in writing, determined by educators at the conference, were: selecting an idea, developing it, organizing it and bringing balance to the piece.

THE SEMINAR was attended by 22 teachers from around the state. It was hosted by the U-M English Composition Board, which determines which incoming college students need remedial work, who needs to take an introductory composition class, and who can be excluded.

Barrett has been encouraged by the university to work on seminars on writing curriculum and skills, he said.

This is the first time U-M's done

this. I've been talking with them for over a year to do a consortium with us," he said. "They finally came up with the money."

The university plans an entire series focusing on writing skills. Future seminars will involve teachers from other areas, including science and social studies, where the impact of writing in non-English courses will be stressed.

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