For over thirty years, Bethany House has been very busy growing and adapting to the changing needs of the homeless community here in Nassau County. However, the need for emergency and transitional housing and services for families has never been so great as at the present time. Due to the economy, Bethany has been called upon to open its doors wider and wider in response to the pressing needs of homeless families. In the past three years, we have grown more than 400%, from a bed capacity of twenty-two to that of ninety nightly. Permit me to begin with a short profile of Bethany’s history and amazing growth, and to then tell you how we “do what we do” with your help and support.

Bethany House is a nonprofit agency that was founded in 1978 in response to a growing need for emergency shelter and services for women and their children who are caught in the crisis of homelessness. Bethany House of Nassau County was incorporated in 1987 and had developed a full, energetic Board of Directors by early in 1990.

Bethany House has defined its Mission as a call to provide a concrete response to the belief that every individual needs and deserves to have adequate food, clothing, shelter and safety. And, in addition, these essential resources should be provided in nurturing surroundings and within a sustaining environment.

In September of 1978, before homelessness had become a common term, three Amityville Dominican Sisters rented a small house in Roosevelt, Long Island, and opened their doors and hearts to the frightened families who came to them in need of shelter, guidance and comfort. As the crisis of homelessness grew in the mid 1980’s, Bethany House expanded into a larger facility which is known as Bethany One. Two other residences, “Bethany, Too!” and Bethany South, and the Bellmore Apartments have since been added, giving Bethany the present capability to house up to eighty-five women and children nightly.

With the additional bedroom space came the expansion of professional support services so that crisis of homelessness would not simply be alleviated; it would actually be ended. In fact, of the homeless women and children who have stayed with us for longer than two weeks, 94% have found safe and adequate permanent housing and have successfully stabilized their lives after their homeless crisis.

Each family’s case receives individual attention from Bethany’s seasoned case workers who have extensive experience in dealing with the unique problems faced by persons who have become homeless, particularly with families who have special needs. And, because Bethany is a community-based organization and an active part of the human services arena, we are in an excellent position to channel the resources to better serve our families and to effect positive, lasting change.

What is it that makes Bethany “the place to come when there’s no place to go?” If you have never been there, it is difficult to understand. But once you have experienced the love and concern of our unique staff and volunteers, you will know Bethany’s sense of peace and well-being that softens the most hardened heart and revitalizes the most exhausted spirit. As one of our guests put it, “There is a presence in this house that reaches out and encircles you with its energy and strength - most say it is irresistible; all say it is from God.”

Since our beginnings, the CROCUS has been the symbol of Bethany House because this brave little flower breaks through cold, hard ground as it dares to push all obstacles aside and clears new ground for growth. This has been Bethany’s history as well, and the crocus has come to stand for the determination, strength, and quiet resiliency of Bethany’s spirit.

We want to thank you for all you do to help us to continue the work of Bethany. We could not do it without good friends like you - your support is one of our most priceless blessings!

Sister Aimee
Executive Director