



New Orleans Women's Shelter

January 29, 2008

A Letter from the Directors

Imagine having had to relocate to an unfamiliar city and live there for as long as two years and finally returning to New Orleans to discover that you can no longer afford to live in the city. The Echo Effects of Katrina continue to be felt by most residents in the form of a lack of job opportunities, rent increases as high as 200%, post-traumatic stress disorder, an increase in domestic violence, and a shortage of medical and social services in the city.

The New Orleans Women's Shelter was established after the storm to assist women in regaining their independence in a city that is more difficult than ever to afford. Our mission is to provide a resource-rich, safe space that promotes personal empowerment. To these ends, we provide a comfortable, home-style housing space with intensive case management to assist our residents in achieving goals they set for themselves.

The Women's Shelter encourages women to take one of two paths to independence, one that emphasizes immediate employment, or the other that encourages residents to pursue additional education. The second path is an attempt to address one of the root causes of concentrated poverty in the New Orleans area. Residents stay in the shelter as long as they are actively working to accomplish their goals, with a usual stay of four to six months.

Our newly renovated 4,000-square-foot facility is located in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans. We provide family rooms for women and their children, a children's resource room replete with hundreds of books, movies, toys, games, and other items to stimulate child's play and learning. Our Women's Resource Room has two computers for resident use, as well as a library and resources for local services. Local college students offer computer tutorials to improve residents' professional skills, and case managers work with residents to generate housing and job opportunities.

In addition to providing a space that encourages women to build their confidence, the Women's Shelter offers on-going programming in the house, including yoga, self-defense classes, workshops on financial management and educational resources, a shared Sunday Brunch, a weekly movie night, and regular outings in the community. Residents are active in establishing the rules and norms of the house, as well as coming up with programming ideas to enrich their lives.

The winds of Katrina are still blowing violently in the lives of some New Orleans residents, and the New Orleans Women's Shelter is one of several shelters that are dedicated to addressing the lingering impacts of this natural and man-made disaster. We hope that you will join us in our effort.

Sincerely,

Jackie Silverman
Caroline Heldman, Ph.D.