

Volunteers: The Wind Beneath Our Wings

It's a typical Tuesday evening; there are seventy-two clients in the center. Dinner is done and one client family is handling clean up. Other families are taking care of personal matters. One mother is busy changing a diaper. Ten clients are finding their course material and settling into the chairs in the living room/study room to participate in a course on self-esteem.

For the next eight Tuesdays and Thursdays the rhythm of the center is the same. Dorothy Ramsdell is leading a workshop to remind clients that they are lovable and capable and they should act that way; and that self-esteem is a family affair. Being homeless is the pits. The clients need help to re-invent themselves, set goals, and turn their lives around. This workshop is one of several that are offered on site. There are additional workshops on financial management, resume writing, conflict management, hygiene, responsibility, and relationships.

Dorothy is a long time volunteer. On this particular evening, joining Dorothy in assisting the center were John and Kathleen Simpson, Vicki George and Georgia Shurts. This foursome, partnered with two staff members, worked with 18 children in the dining room providing activities to teach the character value of *respect*. The center is an old nursing home with no extra room. While the parents are in the living room, fifty feet down a corridor their children are in the dining room. The children have to be kept occupied and relatively quiet so the workshop for their parents can continue uninterrupted.

One needs to see the Homeless Family Center as a large extended family. There are rules. There are chores. There is little space. For the Center to function, there is a high need for cooperation, coordination, and caring. The volunteers are an integral part of

helping the center run effectively. They are truly the wind beneath our wings by being there to assist the staff and teach the clients.

If you have been sitting on the sidelines wondering how and if you can help the Homeless Family Center, contact Jodi Simon the Administrative Assistant at 772-567-5537. She will walk you through the sign up process, get the necessary background check completed, and talk about your interests and skills. Every effort is made by the department heads to match project needs with a volunteer's interest and skills.

The Homeless Family Center provides opportunities for homeless families to end homelessness by achieving self-sufficiency through education, living wages, and permanent housing. For general information or a tour of the Homeless Family Center call Julia Keenan at 772-567-5537. Check out the HFC website at www.homelessfamilycenter.com so you can see the faces, read the stories of the people you will be helping, and see the awards we have received for the work we do. The Homeless Family Center needs your on going support to be successful in fulfilling our mission.