Shelter continues help for battered women

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For the last two years, battered women have had a retreating place.
That is reason enough to celebrate.
However, at The Battered Women's
Shelter's second birthday party Jan. 28 at St. James Episcopal Church hall, board
members, volunteers and friends of the
shelter will be honored as well.

Presently, 45 volunteers assist six full-
time and four part-time shelter employees
in their effort to accommodate 15 occupants.
Shelter residents can only be housed for
30-day periods.

"We have a 30-day limit in a six-month period that a person can stay here," explained Alice Lauve, volunteer coordinator for the shelter. "They have to make a lot of decisions in that time. If they want a new life, they need a job, housing, legal aid, child care . . .

The volunteers provide a lot of functions. It depends on what the volunteers want to do. A lot of them work with the children who stay here, providing them with outings and activities. Some work one-on-one with special children.

"Our crisis line counselors are caring listeners, who work in their own homes. We have a call-forwarding system so they don't have to leave their homes at all.

"We also have some volunteers who work directly with the women — providing them with transportation and things like that."

The program's crisis line is celebrating its first birthday. One of the telephone volunteers, who asked not to be named, learned about the shelter and its activities at a fund-raising party.

"This is just something I believe in . . . something that makes me so angry," she said. "People don't take it seriously and it (See SHELTER, Page 3-D)
needs to be taken seriously. That’s one of my pet peeves. Just mention an animal getting hurt and people get hysterical. Mention battered women and suddenly everyone is quiet.”

Telephone volunteers undergo a 30-hour intensive training stint to learn how to handle calls.

“We learn what to listen for, what kinds of questions to ask, how to pick up on certain clues,” the volunteer explained. “We always have a backup. Anytime we’re unsure, there’s a counselor or staff member on duty and we call them.”

“Telephone volunteers work two shifts a month,” said Ms. Lauve. “They’re all-night shifts but they work in their home.”

“I rarely have any calls after 11 at night,” the volunteer added.

Susan Morgan is an LSU graduate student in sociology who provides transportation for women at the shelter. She started as a telephone counselor and one summer served as a resident assistant at the shelter. She has also babysat for the children housed there.

“A Academically and personally, I have an interest in women’s issues,” said Miss Morgan. “I thought this was a good way to put my thoughts into action.”

Miss Morgan said there were about 10 student volunteers. Her roommate also does volunteer work at the shelter.

One place she transports the women is to ex-residents’ support group meetings.

“At the support group meetings, it’s really rewarding to see the progress the women have made,” said Miss Morgan. “I admire them a lot.”

Wray Logan is a volunteer who works with children housed at the shelter.

“I come two to three days a week from 3:30 to 5:30 . . . after the kids get home from school,” said Logan. “We go to parks or to movies at the library when the weather is bad.

“Usually these kids are starved for affection. They’re easy to get along with. They’re so different from any other kids. They appreciate the attention that other kids take for granted.”

“The children have been witnesses to and traumatized by the violence in their homes,” said Ms. Lauve. “About 60 percent of violent adults have witnessed violence in their home while growing up.”

Ms. Lauve said shelter volunteers work an average of eight hours a month. A training program for new volunteers will begin Feb. 18, she said. Interested persons should call the shelter at 389-3001.

“We have middle to lower income women here at the shelter because this is only for women who have no where else to go . . . no other resources,” said Ms. Lauve. “Many women in the upper income bracket come for counseling. We talk to a lot of upper class women.

“The problem certainly cuts across all socio-economic, race and age lines. Our objective is to support them where they are in life rather than have someone telling them what to do.”