Shelter Sought In St. Mary Parish For Battered, Displaced Women

by KATHLEEN MCNEELY
Area Adviser Writer

FRANKLIN - A group of concerned citizens are trying to raise funds to open a shelter house in the Franklin area.

Mrs. Elizabeth Richmond, who is spearheading the shelter house project, said she first became aware of the need for a shelter house through her job at Techeion Clinic.

Mrs. Richmond said the idea is to provide a temporary home for battered men or families who find themselves in the area without a place to stay. She said the group is in the process of seeking funds through a federal grant.

“The grant proposal is due in March. Some time after that, we’ll know whether or not we’ll have state funding,” she said. “We’re a block grant, so we’ll know if we have funding for at least one year.”

The board of directors consists of 12 persons. Mrs. Richmond said because some of the members are Mennonite and Jesuit volunteers, board membership will change from time to time as they complete their volunteer service in the community.

“We’ve contacted local politicians and other local residents to gain their support for the project,” she said. “We are contacting state legislators also. We don’t know all the ins and outs and the only way to get all the bases covered is to contact as many people as we can.”

Part of the project is to put together a group of volunteers to provide a number of professional services for the shelter house. Mrs. Richmond said she had contacted the St. Mary Mental Health Agency and they have been very supportive of the project. She said there is the possibility that the agency will provide some counseling for residents of the shelter.

She said the board also wants to work with protective services because more often than not shelter house residents bring children with them.

She said the board has contacted local real estate agents in their efforts to find a suitable house. If a house can’t be found that fits the needs of the shelter, the only other option is to build one.

Mrs. Richmond said she doubts the board will be able to find a house that meets all the necessary requirements, such as fire codes because in the Franklin area all the houses that were built nearly 100 years ago. She said bringing those houses up to standards would involve a considerable amount of work and money.

Expenses for operating the shelter house include rent on the building, insurance, food, utilities, and medical expenses. She said the cost of running the shelter house could be compared to those of a small business.

She said normally a shelter is designed to house only battered women, but she hopes to have the shelter in Franklin service both battered women and families who have come to the area to look for work. The shelter would provide a temporary place for these families while the head of the household gets a job.

General support of the community is good, she said. Nearly all the social agencies in Franklin have given the board their support as they have several of the churches.