

Turning Point

Bethany House - a place to come when there's no place to go...

Bethany House is a not-for-profit agency that was founded in 1978 in response to a growing need for *emergency shelter* for women and children who are caught in the crisis called homelessness. Bethany House defines its **mission** as a **concrete response to the belief that every person deserves and needs adequate food, clothing, shelter and warmth, provided in nurturing surroundings and a sustaining environment.**

Early in September, 1978, three Dominican Sisters from Amityville rented a small house in Roosevelt, Long Island, and began to open their doors and hearts to the frightened families who came to them in need of shelter, guidance and comfort. As the problem of homelessness grew in the mid 1980's, Bethany House expanded into a larger facility which is known as ***Bethany One***, with a capacity for twelve individuals. Two additional residences - "***Bethany, too!***" and ***Bethany South*** - have since been added, giving Bethany the capability to house *twenty-five families and individuals* nightly.

And, with the addition of bedroom space came the important expansion of professional support services so that the crisis called *homelessness* would not only be alleviated, but **ended**. **In fact, of all the families**



who have remained with us at Bethany House for more than two weeks, almost 90 percent have been successful in finding appropriate permanent housing and have been able to stabilize their lives after this crisis.

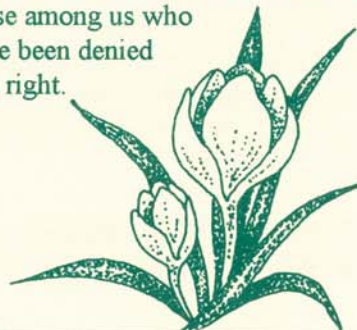
Each case receives individual attention from seasoned case workers who have extensive experience in dealing with the unique problems faced by persons who have become homeless, particularly with *families* who are in this crisis. And, since Bethany is a community - based organization and integral part of the human services arena, we are in an excellent position to channel resources and to affect change.

What is it that makes Bethany "*the place to come when there's no place to go*"? If you have never been to this shelter, it is difficult to understand, but once you have experienced the love and concern of a most unique staff and group of volunteers, you know that there is a

sense of peace and well-being at Bethany 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."

From its earliest beginnings, the *crocus* has been the symbol of Bethany House because *this brave little flower is able to break through cold, hard ground, as it dares to push all obstacles aside and clear 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.

Over the years, Bethany has lived out the message of the little crocus with all who have become part of its community, whether guest, staff, Board member or volunteer. *Join us* as together we "stick our necks out" and break new ground in our efforts to provide good, decent housing to those among us who have been denied this right.



Welfare Bill Burdens Bethany

FACT: *New Welfare Bill ends guaranteed federal aid for the poor*, in that it abolishes a 61-year-old federal guarantee of cash assistance for the nation's poorest children. It will also limit life time benefits to a maximum of *five years*, and will require recipients to work after receiving two years of assistance and will force unwed teen mothers to live at home in order to receive aid for themselves and their child.

The Bill has also cut food stamps for all recipients, and medical, housing, and educational assistance for legal immigrants. All states will now receive a lump sum to run programs for themselves and will have a wide margin of choice regarding which programs are or are not funded.

PROBLEM: *New York will not be able to make up the deficit.* It is important to note that New York already receives **far less money from the federal government than it spends in each year.** In the first year of the Welfare Reform Act alone, New York will lose **1.3 billion in federal money for welfare and Medicaid.**

Due to its disproportionately large *poor* and *immigrant* population, New York cannot afford the extreme cuts in benefits that are slated for disabled children and legal immigrants. In addition, states will not be permitted to use federal funds for non-cash aid such as vouchers for families who have no job at the end of their time limit.

MYTH: *The Welfare Reform Bill will move Bethany residents and*

other adults receiving benefits from welfare to work. The Bill does not state how single **head of the family** mothers will be able to find a job that will allow them time to care for and nurture their children, OR how they will be able to earn enough to pay for rent, utilities, food, clothing, child care, medical expenses, and transportation *when these mothers have not been professionally prepared for a good-paying job with security and benefits.*

REALITY: *Bethany House will have a greater unreimbursed financial burden.* Before the Welfare Reform Bill was passed, Bethany received a reimbursement for *27% of its costs* from the Department of Social Services. All other budgetary monies had to be generated through fund raising and the support of grants. Under the present reform bill, Bethany is daily asked to "**do more with less,**" and its financial burdens are steadily increasing. Also, Bethany's staff has taken on the added case work needed to assist the numbers of families and single adults who do **not** come from the Department of Social Services because they are deemed ineligible for assistance under the Welfare Reform Act.

SOLUTION: *Increased donations and volunteer support are most necessary* for Bethany to continue to meet its daily obligations of caring for homeless women and children here on Long Island. **WE NEED YOUR HELP, now more than ever before!**

Connie Kerwick

Did you know. . .

- There are at least 40,000 homeless persons on Long Island - 25,000 live in Nassau County and half of these are children.
- 75% of welfare recipients in NY State leave welfare within one year, often less.
- At any given time, there is less than one percent available housing in Nassau County, regardless of income range.
- The whole Income Maintenance budget for NYS consumes less than 2% of the General Fund.
- Over two-thirds of the people receiving AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) are children.
- All of the adults receiving AFDC are caring for children, and most of them work or have worked.
- AFDC costs alone have not been more than 1% of the total federal budget in each of the past ten years.
- At least 22% of the children in our country live in poverty. These children represent 40% of all persons in poverty although they are little more than 25 percent of the population.



Our Title -

Turning Point

was chosen as the title of our NEWSLETTER because **Bethany House** is a true *Turning Point* for the numerous women and children who come to its doors seeking not only shelter, but a new beginning.

THE AVERAGE PERSON SPENDS
365 HOURS A MONTH AT HOME.

Imagine...

WHAT IT'S LIKE NOT TO
HAVE ONE -

[Each issue of Turning Point will feature the story of a family or individual who has struggled with homelessness and how life has changed because of - and often in spite of - this crisis.]

Sarah came to Bethany House with her little girl because they had been evicted - the apartment that they had rented was taken from them as the landlord needed it for a relative.

Until that day, Sarah thought that life was very good to her...she had an excellent job, she was studying at SUNY for her teaching degree, and she had been blessed with a beautiful child whom she had named *Dawn*. At twenty-five, she was well on her way to living out her dreams and helping to create dreams for her daughter.

But life changed quite suddenly for Sarah, and she found herself asking the Department of Social Services to find her a place to sleep that would be safe for her and for Dawn. Fear forced tears to her eyes when she heard that she was to go to "a shelter - in Roosevelt." With no other options available (her family all lived in Virginia, and Dawn's father had left them two months ago), Sarah brushed back her tears and took the slip of paper with directions to Bethany House.

It was cold and dark by now as this young mother and her child walked up the steps to the door that would open new worlds to them. *They had truly come home!*

Warmth spilled out from this special house called Bethany, and drew these frightened souls in as they were welcomed by Lucille and our other guests. For the first time in many days, Sarah smiled - this was a *good place* to be if you had no place of your own.

Within a week, Sarah and Dawn were welcoming the new guests to Bethany as if they had been there for a lifetime. Sarah was back at work and school, Dawn was in day care, and daily living was returning to normalcy even though this little family still had no home of their own. But life held new challenges for Sarah - she learned that she was expecting a baby...also, this was a high risk pregnancy and she would have to stop both work and school if she were to carry her baby safely to term. Sarah was stunned by this news, and came home to Bethany to talk it over with new friends. The staff helped Sarah to put things in perspective as she considered her options. No matter how difficult the path ahead, Sarah chose to walk that path and to nurture the new life within her. About a week before Christmas, Sarah gave birth to a healthy baby boy!

Bethany became an extended family to little Hakeem (named after the father who did not even know of his existence), and we all helped with the tasks of mothering so that Sarah could go back to college.

As months went by, Sarah continued her search for an apartment but, with only \$384 for rent (the welfare allotment for a family of three), there was nothing decent to be found.

At this same time, Bethany was about to open its first permanent housing program at its new facility in

Baldwin. Sarah and her children were the perfect fit for this lovely two-bedroom apartment, and moved there early in March.

Once again, the challenges surfaced. The day care that was provided while Sarah was at Bethany and homeless was not available to her in permanent housing. And, day care provided for a mother to finish her education was likewise denied because Sarah was in her *third* year of college and Social Services only provides day care for the first two years of study. In Sarah's case, she had paid all her child care costs during her first and second years of college because she was working and not receiving any welfare assistance.

And so, Bethany began a search for day care "sponsors" to help with this necessary expense. *Linda*, Bethany's Associate Director, was tireless in her efforts to gather these funds. All in all, Bethany "made the way" for Sarah to finish her courses and to graduate with a degree in elementary education. Recently, Sarah and her family moved to Rochester, New York, where she is teaching the fourth grade. Sarah sent a special note to Bethany to say thank you for all the care and support. She wrote:

As I walked up to the podium to accept my degree, I realized that I was not taking those steps by myself, but with everyone who had believed in me. All of the assistance I have received from Bethany is very deeply appreciated, but your faith in me is by far most treasured.

Iris Gold

Dear Bethany,
Thanks for all you
have done for us!
Love,
Dawn & Hakeem
x x x

If you can help provide *the rest*
(Food, shelter, and safety for the night)

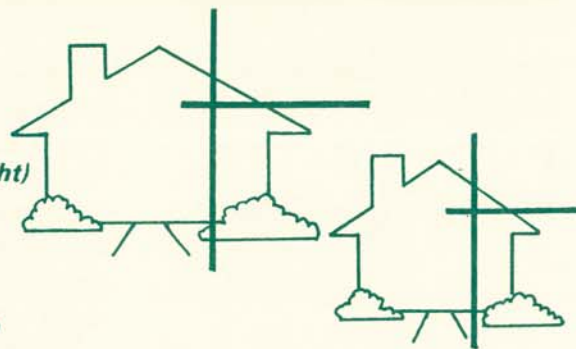


then Bethany House can provide

all the rest...

(the counseling, referrals, and human warmth needed to restore dignity and purpose to those who are homeless)

REST STOP



- **Problem:** The immediate and growing need on Long Island for **housing** for people in crisis at a time of dwindling Federal funding and more stringent eligibility requirements for obtaining emergency assistance.
- **Solution:** Boldly expand "*Bethany, too!*" to twice its size and open the facility to people who desperately need emergency housing and the support services required to overcome their immediate crisis but are not able to access this assistance **because they are deemed ineligible under the guidelines of the Welfare Reform Act**---and, when they are able, arrange permanent housing for these, Bethany's most fragile guests.

Sister Aimee and the Staff at Bethany House have put together a creative and cost-effective plan for the funding, staffing, and provision of support and placement services that are needed by those in an immediate housing crisis.

960 square feet will be added to "*Bethany, too!*", expanding it to a seven-bedroom house which also includes a small library, a full dining room, spacious kitchen and living room and an office. Completion of the expansion is projected for November 1996. The major part of this renovation will be paid for under the *Emergency Shelter Grant for '95-'96*, a federal HUD grant to assist agencies that work with homeless persons and families. Also, a good chunk of the *Emergency Shelter Grant for the '96-'97 cycle* is earmarked for this project if the funding is provided.

Bethany has received a grant of **\$10,337** from the *Ministry Fund of the Amityville Dominicans* to help support this new project, and the funds to purchase a new van were donated by The Hackett Foundation, thereby freeing up **\$5,000** from the sale of the old van to likewise use in this project. The caption above, "if you can help provide the *REST* then we can provide *ALL THE REST*" is the central theme of a marketing plan

(about which, more anon) that will hopefully generate additional funds to support this project. In addition, Bethany will request some partial reimbursement from DSS whenever the guests do qualify for such assistance.

The innovative marketing plan is inspired by the need to bring Bethany's expertise and vast experience to people whose crises are caused by a variety of diverse factors. The women and children sent to Bethany House are not only provided with a bed and good food, but also with the professional care of seasoned social workers and case workers who provide for the needs of *each individual*, whether this means arranging counseling for a victim of domestic abuse, confidential quality care for one suffering from a mental illness or an emotional disturbance, or a comprehensive case plan for those who struggle with substance addictions or face the complications of severe illnesses such as AIDS and HIV related diseases.

A marketing agency has offered

to kick off a fund raising campaign utilizing Bethany's slogan, "If you can help provide the *REST* then we'll provide *ALL THE REST*." The campaign is designed to solicit *specific commitments* from a variety of sources such as schools, churches, temples, corporations, local businesses, community and civic groups and, of course, from generous individuals.

Each donor will have the opportunity to "**provide the rest**" by donating the *cost of housing for a night, a week, a month* - whatever one is able to do. Funds are also needed to furnish the **rooms** at "*Bethany, too!*" for the homeless women and children who will come there for a peaceful night's sleep and a hot, nourishing meal shared with friends.

People in an immediate crisis need basic human comforts provided so that they can focus their energies on resolving the crisis at hand - *you provide the REST*... Then, Bethany's expert staff and its network of health and social services agencies can step in and provide all of the support needed to help the guests to make the difficult transition from *crisis housing to permanent housing* as soon as each one is able to function independently once again - we provide *ALL THE REST*...

You too, gentle reader, have the opportunity to sponsor a guest or cover a night at "*Bethany, too!*" A list of needed items is included on page 7, and *you* just might have exactly what we need! Or, call Bethany (868-6866) if you can help in some way by sharing your

time, talent or treasure.

Key to the success of this new program known as *REST STOP* is the response and commitment of the Amityville Dominican Sisters. In accord with the challenge of their Vision Statement, *to stand with the marginalized*, volunteers from the Dominican Sisters will provide much of the night staffing for the program and, if possible, some of the daytime chores as well. Professionals and para-professionals will supervise the program during the day, and the nighttime volunteers will be specifically trained to respond to crisis situations. A staff person with an MSW will be also "on call" during the night in case an emergency should arise.

This new staffing arrangement marks a unique phase in the long time cooperative relationship between Bethany House and the Dominican Sisters of Amityville. It was a group of three Dominican women who founded Bethany House back in 1978, and the Sisters have been a consistent and powerful presence throughout Bethany House's eighteen years of service. (Note that the emboldened *OP* in the *REST STOP* logo stands for the Dominican "Order of Preachers".) And, once again, the Dominican Sisters are called upon to provide the compassionate and innovative response to a pressing social need at a time of dwindling public resources and governmental irresponsibility.

Stephan Mayo

TO BENEFIT OUR NEW FACILITY,
REST STOP



HOLD THIS DATE

FOR
BETHANY HOUSE'S

Octoberfest

- GERMAN BUFFET - OPEN BAR -
- LIVE MUSIC -

DATE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1996
TIME: 7 PM to 11 PM
PLACE: *The Dining Room* at
The Nassau County Bar Association
West & 15th Streets
Mineola, NY 11501
DONATION: \$100 per person

For tickets and information, please call Janice at 378-6908

BOX TOWN

AT MOLLOY COLLEGE

What is it like to experience a chilly October night without the comfort of food or shelter?

- To lose your job, to be put out of your apartment, to be assaulted by your spouse?
- To let the drink that "drowns your trouble" *becomes* "your trouble" -

The experience can be that of any one of us.

The comforts of home are all too readily available to us and are taken for granted by all of us, and this includes the students, faculty, staff, and administration of Molloy College. But an opportunity to taste a bitter crumb of the *HOMELESS EXPERIENCE* will be offered to the Molloy community (and others who want to participate) on one of this Fall's chilly October nights on Molloy's campus. (*Date to be decided.*)

Sponsored by *HAVEN*, The Molloy College/Bethany House Coalition for the Homeless, a one-night **BOX TOWN** will be erected on campus. Volunteer participants for the token "homeless" night* will be permitted to have only one blanket and wear only one jacket or coat. They will be given a large cardboard box to sleep in and some newspaper to line it. Supper will be skipped that evening, with bread and broth its only substitute. Participants will "brave the elements" just as the homeless do nightly. The difference between the participants and the *truly* homeless is that **the participants have chosen the cold, the homeless have no choice.**

BOX TOWN will not only be an opportunity to raise consciousness for the college community, but will also be a **fund raising event** to support Bethany House in its new project, *REST STOP* (see p.4-5). Participants will solicit sponsors who will agree to donate money for every hour that the participant spends "out in the night" (similar to the Walk-a-thon concept). *HAVEN* is seeking Corporate Sponsors and **individual sponsors as well** to match the funds raised by the participants. All funds that are raised by the **BOX TOWN** event will directly benefit *REST STOP* which provides crisis housing to homeless families.

Molloy College's newly inaugurated President, Dr. Martin Snyder, enthusiastically endorsed this event upon first hearing the concept. He has offered his full support, for which the members of *HAVEN* express their sincere gratitude.

If you or someone you know would like to help (organize the event, participate in it, or sponsor a participant) or...if you are able to sponsor the event with matching funds, please fill out the form below and mail it in the enclosed envelope, *Attention: Steve Mayo or Sister Aimee.*

Yes! I want to get involved in the **BOX TOWN** event at Molloy College sponsored by *HAVEN*.

- I want to: work on the organization committee
 Participate as a "RESIDENT" of **BOX TOWN**
 Sponsor a "RESIDENT" by pledging: \$_____ per hour*
 Give a single donation of \$_____

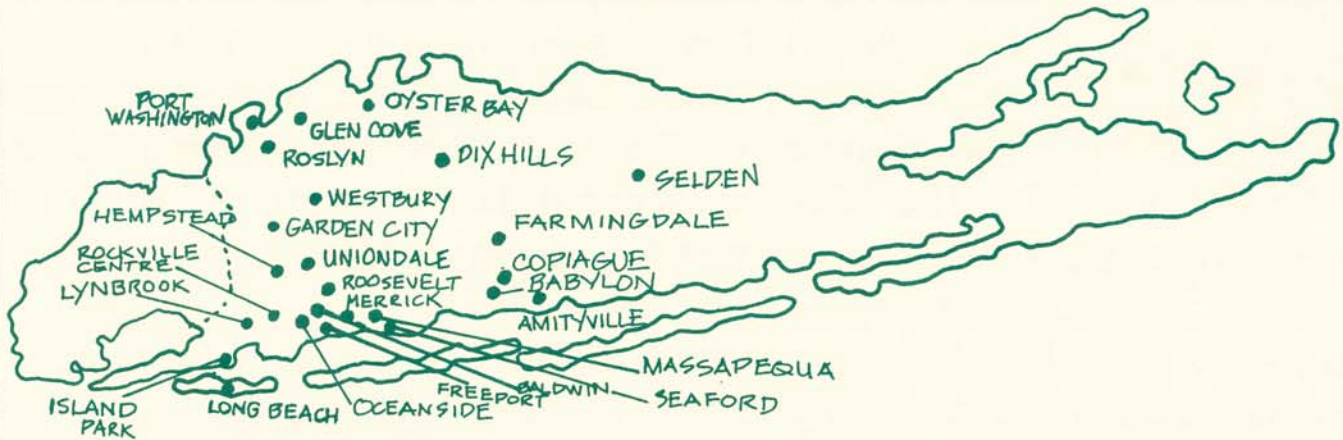
Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: () _____

**Note: The event will begin at 9 PM and continue until 9 AM the following day, a total of 12 hours.*

Homeless Children come from all over Long Island...



Our children are our most precious gift and our most valuable resource for the future.

They are our *hope*, they embody our vision and our dreams.

We look at them and see their yet untapped *goodness* and their yet unchallenged *strength*.

And when they *struggle*, we would move mountains to help them.

Sometimes *our children* must struggle with *homelessness* --- It is hard to believe that there are **at least 20,000 homeless children** here on this island of plenty. And...they come from all over this island to Bethany House when they are in need of shelter.

Some Ways to help...

REST STOP needs:

VOLUNTEERS for *many* things
DONATIONS, large and small!
and -

- 6 Twin -sized BEDS
- 2 Full-sized BEDS
- 2 CRIBS (not too large)
- 8 DRESSERS, 6 NT TABLES
- COCKTAIL & END TABLES,
- OCCASIONAL CHAIRS for bedrooms, living room, and den
- FURNITURE for 2 small offices
- Small Dinette Table & Chairs
- Bed Spreads, Blankets
- Towels, Face cloths, Bedding
- Curtains, Some Drapes
- 8 Waste Paper Baskets
- Floor & Table Lamps - *many*
- Bath Rugs & Mats -*any color*
- Surprises!!*

SHOULD WE OPEN A **THRIFT SHOP** for BETHANY?

The question has come up on many occasions - we get a *large* number of *wonderful* clothing donations but have no storage space. Would it be a good idea to develop a small business in which some of our homeless guests could participate? Can *you* help to **set it up** and **manage it** part time? If so, please call **LINDA (868-6866) asap.**

I would like to help support
Bethany House

Enclosed is my donation of \$25 \$50 \$100 \$ _____

Please add my name to your Newsletter mailing list



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Please make checks payable to: **Bethany House**

The Children's Corner



Hi! My name is Maritza, and you will be seeing a lot of me in the next year. So be sure to read your newsletter! I will be telling you about Bethany House as we children see it. I first came here when I was only two weeks old...my mom lost her apartment while she was in the hospital having ME so we were sent to this special shelter. Bethany has always been HOME to me - we come to visit on my Birthday, for Thanksgiving and for Christmas. I have many friends at Bethany, and I will be telling you all about them. The only difference between

those friends and you, my new friends, is that they are homeless -
...that's really hard on kids, you know.

Right now all the kids at Bethany are boys, but they are ok to play with if you know how to play baseball - I'm the best pitcher in the bunch! We play in the back yard and "Shortstop" (Bethany's dog) chases the ball for me so the guys can't catch it. We have a game later, but first a barbecue - Bethany has the best food! See you all in the next issue. Be good kids, and have fun in school!

Maritza

Bethany House of Nassau County

102 WHITEHOUSE AVENUE
ROOSEVELT NY 11575
516 868-6866



This is the *first copy* of our Newsletter -
We hope you enjoy it!

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" a place to come when there's no place to go..."