



A thank you note drawn by a child hangs in the office of the Friendship Home.

“I had no idea places like the Friendship Home existed. When I walked through the door that night, I intended to be on my way the next morning.”

-- Ellen

Shari Rayburn is the executive director of the Friendship Home. More than 50 years ago, she said, the home began as a place for women to stay while they were visiting their husbands in the state penitentiary.

At that time, the home was run by Catholic Social Services in Lincoln and was open to anyone who needed shelter.

In 1978, the Friendship Home was developed as a joint project of the Catholic Social Services and the Daughters of Charity.

In December 1978, the shelter opened to receive abused women and children in need of a safe home. Due to an increased demand for services, the shelter moved in November 1980 to a larger rented house.

In February 1984, in response to funding requirements, the Friendship Home was reincorporated into a non-profit organization administered by an independent board of directors. They were no longer affiliated with Catholic Social Services.

In May 1984, a long-term shelter program was added to the existing emergency shelter at the request of the City/County Joint Budget Committee.

In September 1984, the board of directors initiated a capital fund drive to purchase and remodel a permanent facility.

In January 1985, a new house was purchased. In July, the Friendship Home moved to its new location.

The house has six large bedrooms which can accommodate up to 20 women and children, Rayburn said.

Rayburn said the Friendship Home now provides both emergency shelter and long-term shelter for battered women and their children.

Women are referred to the home by the Rape/Spouse Abuse Center, police, clergy and friends.

Emergency shelter lasts up to seven days, providing meals and beds for battered women.

Long Term Shelter was developed to assist families in breaking the cycle of violence by giving them extended shelter. It also has expanded programs for women and developed services for children, Rayburn said.

Families can stay up to six weeks depending on their needs and goals. In long-term shelter, women work with staff members to set and work toward individual goals and participate in educational workshops.

Children receive individual counseling with an “in-house” children’s program coordinator and participate in support groups. The children’s program was implemented in August 1987 through a grant from the Junior League of Lincoln, Rayburn said.

About 75 percent of the funds for the Friendship Home come from the Nebraska Department of Social Services, Lancaster County and the United Way. Rayburn said the rest of the annual budget is generated from private donations.

***Photos by Butch Ireland
Stories by Amy Edwards
Layout by Curt Wagner***