

**Carol Baumert, a volunteer at the Day-break Homelss Shelter, has been working at the shelter three days a week since it opened Dec. 15, 1989.**



David Hansen/Daily Nebraskan

Inside . . .

# The Homeless Shelter

By Cindy Wostrel  
Staff Reporter

In the front window, an old suitcase sits with a pair of jeans.

It's 7:30 a.m. on a Saturday morning, and a balding, gray-haired man wearing a gray cap, a flannel shirt, a yellow T-shirt, blue jeans and black boots grabs the cold metal handle of the glass door, opens it and smells hot coffee and cigarette smoke.

Through his ill-fitting bifocals that look like they once belonged to a woman, he sees two women standing by coffee machines who greet him by name. He sits at a beige table on a red chair, opens a newspaper and gets out the day's crossword puzzle.

Louis (not his real name), has just entered "Daywatch," a resting place for the homeless which opened Dec. 18 at 1443 O St. The First Plymouth Congregational Church initiated the program as "a place of hospitality," said Otis Young, senior minister of the church.

But visitors hear more than just the sound of percolating coffee and the greeting of the volunteer staff at this office.

From 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. seven days a week, visitors hear the sounds of cards being shuffled, crosswords being solved and conversations ranging from where each person slept the night before to the merits of capitalism and communism.

The initial goals of the program, according to volunteers Mary Markwardt and Jim Johnson, were to provide a warm place and a cup of coffee for the homeless. That has since evolved, however, to include being a place to gather and to play games, they said. One person even brought in a radio, Markwardt said.

The office, located across the street from the Plasma Center, has beige walls decorated with pictures of women with pearl necklaces and earrings, and pictures of

Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Workers Movement.

Those who come here decorate the office. For Christmas, some people made paper chains and drew posters.

Many people walk by and look in Daywatch's window, while others walk by without noticing it.

Louis works on his crossword puzzle with Markwardt. They search



for a three-letter word for a place to sleep. "Bed," someone says.

A blond-haired man asks a man in a cowboy hat where he ended up the night before. The man in the cowboy hat replies, "under the bridge."

At about 10 a.m., Darwin Phillips, a Native American roofer, enters and overhears Louis talking about capitalism. Phillips joins the conversation and tells Louis that the money he makes helps him rent a roach-infested place for his three children and his wife.

Louis, whose 60ish face belies the fact that he is only 44, tells listeners later, around 2:30 p.m., that he advocates violent overthrow of the government because, he says, change cannot come from within the system because the power structure is entrenched.

Louis explains that he has been homeless since he was 25. In his youth, he had run away several times from his family. Despite the fact that his mother was French and he was born in France, his father prevented him from speaking French, which he regrets. He says he is applying to renew his French citizenship.

"Do you mean to tell me that

spot labor isn't slavery?" Louis asks, when told that slavery no longer exists in the United States.

A pair of blue-suited officers enter at about 5 p.m. and ask an inebriated visitor who is unable to function if she wants to go to "detox," the name for the Cornhusker Place Inc., a non-profit corporation partially funded by the State of Nebraska.

She declines their invitation and they continue talking.

"We poor people have to be nice to each other," Louis says to a Native American woman as she tastes the piece of Juicy Fruit gum that he has just given her.

"How would you like to get a bachelor's degree and not be able to find work?" the blond-haired man with metal caps behind his teeth asks. "I know a couple of people like that, one with a master's degree."

The blond-haired man rolls up his shirt sleeve to show a scarred vein on the inside of his elbow and says that he will have to start a new hole for plasma.

At least in Lincoln they'll take plasma, he says. In Florida, he says, they only take whole blood. That causes problems, Markwardt explains, because when a person gives blood, they must wait longer before giving blood again. When they take plasma, they first remove the blood, then take the plasma out of the blood and return what is left over. Since the white blood cells replace themselves faster than red blood cells, she said, people can give plasma more often.

At 5:30 p.m., only one dark-skinned, dark-haired man remains at Daywatch. It is closing time for another day, and Markwardt and Johnson begin stacking the red and blue chairs on top of each other, putting the cards back into the box they came from and cleaning out the coffee machine. They then go to their homestocome back another day. **D**

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University	Thursday, January 25, 8:00 p.m.
F.A.C.	Friday, January 26, 5:30 p.m.
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