



HomeAid
Houston



Opening Doors

HomeAid Houston Partners with Mission of Yahweh, Wellsprings to House Katrina Evacuees

Two deserving Houston homeless agencies, The Mission of Yahweh and Wellsprings, Inc., are looking forward to having new facilities on their grounds, to help ease the crisis in the Houston population caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The HomeAid board of directors has approved a 16-bed facility for The Mission of Yahweh and six eight-bed homes for Wellsprings, Inc. under the Gulf Coast Rebuilding Fund.

“Because of the generosity of Ameriquest Mortgage, the fund’s primary donor, we are able to approve two projects to begin immediately for HomeAid Houston,” said GHBA CEO and HomeAid board member, Toy Wood. “Since approving the project, board members have been working diligently to secure builder captains and donations of labor and materials. In addition, we have met with city officials, who have lent their support to the projects by streamlining the permitting and platting process.”

The Mission of Yahweh (www.missionofyahweh.org) has empowered homeless and abused women and their children for 44 years in Houston. It began with a vision given to Helum Gay, or Sister Gay, as she is known to residents and neighbors. In 1961, Sister Gay opened her home to women in crisis and began driving her truck through wealthier areas of Houston, seeking donations. Soon, many families, churches and civic organizations lent their support and in 1971, a board of directors was elected to further her work. Sister Gay retired from the Mission as director in 2003.

The doors are always open for women in crisis. The Mission not only gives food, clothing and shelter, but is committed to rehabilitating women to become self-sufficient, productive members of society. Through the Mission of Yahweh’s series of programs, the physical, educational, psychological and spiritual needs of each resident are addressed.

More than 700 women and children are sheltered, fed and clothed annually and the mission also supports more than 4,000 neighborhood residents with donations of food and other necessities. The campus currently contains a learning center, which includes children’s daycare and library, and a 22-station computer room, administration, food pantry, resale store and two residential dormitories, housing up to 87 women and children at any given time.

The proposed 3,400 square foot dormitory is a welcome addition to the campus. By building the facility, with its configuration of 16 bedrooms and baths, The Mission will be better positioned to deliver transitional shelter needs.

“There is a pressing need to provide shelter and services to our Katrina evacuees in Houston,” stated Mission board member Randall Blanchard. “With these additional 16 beds, we will be able to open our doors wider to neighbors from Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi and provide a badly needed permanent asset to serve our Houston homeless population.”



The Mission of Yahweh holds a Community Outreach clothing giveaway at its headquarters. HomeAid Houston has approved a 16-bed addition to this facility, dedicated to sheltering and rehabilitating women in crisis.

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www.HomeAidHouston.org

HomeAid Houston will construct six eight-bed homes in Wellsprings Village to house Katrina evacuees and provide a stable environment for other temporarily homeless women.



Wellsprings, Inc. (www.wellspringsinc.org) was founded in 1988 by two Dominican Sisters, Sister Rita Owens and Sister Justin Farinella. After researching the availability of services for women who needed more than emergency shelter, Wellsprings found there was a desperate need for stable, residential environments for women 30 to 50 years of age, without children in their care.

Wellsprings envisioned a setting that would give women the opportunity to become self-sufficient – to become empowered by increasing their income level through job skills training and educational programs, as well as increasing self worth and self determination. In time, these tools would break the cycle of homelessness, abuse, poverty, addiction and illiteracy.

During the late 1980s and the 1990s, Wellsprings provided services to transitionally homeless women through five homes that were eventually sold. In 1996, Wellsprings added another facet to its program services and began providing rental assistance and support services to women with or without children in a scattered site setting, through grants received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In July 2004, the agency purchased a three-acre tract of land to establish an on-site transitional residence program, “Wellsprings Village.” There are currently two homes on the site, each able to house eight women. These women are often fleeing domestic violence situations or recovering from the devastation caused by substance abuse, poverty or illiteracy.

“For some women living in Wellsprings Village, this is the first real ‘home’ they have ever had,” said Executive Director Valerie Beckham. “And for others it can be their first opportunity to take some serious time to address their personal issues and work on breaking destructive habits and cycles that have ultimately resulted in their homelessness.”

In the summer of 2005, Wellsprings approached HomeAid Houston to help complete the residential portion of its Village by constructing the remaining six homes. When Ameritrust Mortgage partnered with HomeAid after hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and construction funds became available for agencies willing to house evacuees for up to 24 months, Wellsprings became the recipient of a portion of those construction funds.

The homes are a simple design – four bedrooms and four bathrooms. Each houses eight women and includes a common living and dining area, kitchen, laundry facility and study.

For more information on HomeAid Houston, visit www.homeaidhouston.org.