

CAP opens shelter house

By BARBARA BLUMENSTEIN

The Washington County Community Action Program (CAP) in Hillsboro now has an emergency shelter house which will directly benefit poverty-level people within the county.

The large four-bedroom house, located at 672 E. Washington St. in Hillsboro, was leased to CAP in December. The house was in bad disrepair, but through a series of "work days," volunteers donated their labor to repair, clean and paint the house to make it liveable.

People who are in an emergency homeless situation will be using the house. "People come to CAP who are absolutely without a place to go," stated Judy Schilling, housing advocate for CAP. "They have absolutely no funds and no resource for finding shelter."

The shelter will be supported by CAP the first year through funds contracted from Manpower Program, which operates in the Community Action Center. Many people who are homeless are referred to CAP through Manpower, welfare and various county community service agencies. "Previously, they were sent to a motel on an emergency basis at cost to the resources of the agencies referring them," explained Ms. Schilling. "Now, they can be housed at our shelter home where they have more space and living facilities — and will save the agencies quite a bit of money."

Homeless people can use the house a maximum of two weeks. "If we can't find a place for them in that time," said Ms. Schilling, "We will review the case and go from there." While at the house, the temporary residents will have better access to job counseling and direction toward solving their situation.

According to Ms. Schilling, the majority of those seeking aid are families just entering the county and women and children who have been abandoned or driven from their homes. "Families are at the top of the list as far as priority in emergency housing goes," Ms. Schilling continued. "We will also take care of handicapped or elderly people. Single people are at the bottom of the list as it is usually easier to find them housing elsewhere."

The shelter may also be used by people waiting for welfare. "An applicant would be excluded only if no space was available," said Ms. Schilling.

The CAP staff and volunteers will maintain and staff the house to provide aid and supervision 24-hours a day. In addition, the shelter will have one permanent resident. More volunteers are needed for counseling, housing location, phone answering, "house-sitting" and cleaning. Persons using the facilities will also be able to donate labor.

Occupants are expected to treat the house as if it were their own, being responsible for their own house-keeping. They may be asked to contribute a service or help in some task. If they own a pet, the CAP staff will try to provide shelter for it elsewhere. No alcohol or drugs are allowed in the house.

"It is a sound house," said Ms. Schilling, "and we've had really good response from people wanting to help work on it." Furniture and carpeting have been donated, but Ms. Schilling says there is a need for bedding. CAP also has plans for a vegetable garden beside the house to supplement food for the shelter's occupants as well as others in need.



THIS LARGE four bedroom house was leased in December by the Washington County Community Action Program to serve as an emergency shelter house.