

Absence of Tears - The Place

There is never enough money, space, or resources. Since salaries are low, most personnel don't stay long, so continuity is challenging. The original building was old and ramshackle, so upkeep took major dollars and time. Administrative duties consists of constantly plugging holes, and there is little time for goal setting and establish priorities. The shelter is in a town that sports major money - but not for tackling the homeless problem. Over the years attempts have been made at needs like child care, parenting education, and case planning, but something always gets in the way and suddenly everything goes back to minimums. Politics enters the picture at some point, agonizes over the whole thing, and then hovers in a vacuum.

These are some of the problems of The Place - a homeless shelter for women and children. In the few years it has been existence, they stay the same and never seem any closer to a solution. Try to find a villain, try to locate obvious things to change, try to concentrate on causes and you go round and round in a whirlpool.

For people who think homelessness is an illness needing treatment and prevention, the whole thing is frustrating. For people who think homelessness is a lack of something on the part of just a few people who don't know how to survive in the real world, the whole thing is aggravating. For people who never think of homelessness in *any* context, the whole thing is perplexing. What's the big deal? Take those quarters out of your pocket and hand them to the people on the traffic islands. Never see The Place - it's not there.

But, of course, it IS there. The building is there. The Women are there. The Children are there. The Staff is there. The Day Ladies are there. The Providers are there. They are all in this Place crowded next to the problems - money, space, and resources.

The Place started on a small scale. It was an answer to emergency. In this town there was a service for homeless men but nothing for women and children. A local church was asked to harbor women and children just to get them out of the cold - it was November. From that simple beginning - a