

1977

County Life



Sandy Ramos, SOS organizer

Staff photo by Gordon Corbett, Jr.

County to fund wives shelter

By Craig Reiss
Staff Writer

The Bergen County Board of Freeholders apparently will donate funds to Shelter Our Sisters — a private program to house battered wives — even though the county's antipoverty agency runs a similar program.

To get the funds, SOS, a nonprofit group organized by feminist Sandy Ramos, must agree to limit the use of the shelter primarily to Bergen residents, avoid duplication with the county program, and comply with local zoning laws.

If the compromises are acceptable to the state Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) — the agency doing the funding — the freeholders will enter into a donor's agreement with the organization at its next meeting on Wednesday.

SOS is asking the county for a 25-per cent matching grant in order to receive a total of \$75,000 from DYFS under Title 20 of the federal Social Security Act.

Both SOS and the Bergen County

Sets stipulations for SOS to gain money for program

Community Action Program (CAP) applied for the Title 20 funds in October. The county Title 20 Coalition — an advisory committee appointed by the freeholders — reviewed both proposals and recommended funding SOS.

The DYFS has approved the money for the organization. The program was found to be "frugal and well managed," according to Frances J. Treanor, an assistant manager for the Social Security Administration who is a member of the Title 20 Coalition.

Verbal confrontation

The freeholders had refused to fund SOS last May, which led to a verbal confrontation between the board and SOS leader Ms. Ramos.

"I may not agree with Ms. Ramos's confrontation politics," O'Connor said after last night's meeting, "but maybe that's what's needed sometimes."

The freeholders' agreement is contingent on three compromises:

- The donor agreement must stipulate that the program will primarily serve Bergen County residents. Under DYFS guidelines, residents of nine New Jersey counties would be eligible to use the SOS facilities. The compromise, if acceptable to DYFS, would limit the use of the facilities to non-Bergen residents for short-term care only.
- SOS representatives must meet with CAP officials to prevent any duplication of efforts.
- The freeholders are asking that

each shelter location comply with local zoning statutes. This point has been a stumbling block for the CAP program, which received a \$174,000 U.S. Labor Department grant last May but has been unable to secure space for a shelter. Efforts to place the county shelter on Union Street in Hackensack met stiff opposition from local officials and residents, and CAP must place the women and children in motels.

SOS was formed in 1971 and was the first shelter established in the United States to accommodate battered women and their children.

SOS plans to put the shelters in several convents and private homes in Bergen County. Representatives have refused to disclose which communities are involved, fearing that husbands of battered wives would then create problems. The freeholders did not indicate whether they would know the shelter locations.

The freeholders must take action on the donor agreement before Jan. 1 or the DYFS funds will be lost.

1977