

Domestic abuse situations create need for shelter help at holidays

By LINDA BALDWIN STAFF WRITER

WANAQUE — In TV commercials, the holidays are portrayed as happy and festive times, with families gathered around the fire. There is an abundance of food, decorations and toys. Smiling faces are everywhere.

Life does not always imitate art, however, especially for victims of domestic abuse. Frequently, these individuals view the holidays as times of despair, not rejoicing. Mothers who are suffering from physical and emotional pain sometimes cannot even begin to think of where they will find sufficient clothing and food for their children. New toys are often out of the question, entirely and the season only becomes one of loneliness and depression.

In fact, some families won't even have a place to spend the holidays at all, as homelessness is yet another byproduct of domestic abuse.

The staff and volunteers of Save Our Sisters are trying to do something about this national problem. Belle Wilson, SOS community

liaison, reported recently that the organization is asking area businesses and individuals to share its concern about local people in need.

"Some of you are already acquainted with us as Another Woman's Treasure, the Haskell-based thrift store, a place to find unusual bargains in a congenial atmosphere, while knowing the money you spend goes directly toward helping homeless, battered and low-income women and children," she explained.

She went on to add that SOS works to maintain a battered women's shelter, refers clients to permanent housing and jobs and provides occasional emergency money for household expenses. Volunteers and staff also work with victims of abuse to help them develop their self-esteem, help them guide others toward appropriate drug and alcohol counselling and assist them in furthering their own educations.

With Christmas and Hanukkah fast approaching, the SOS staff is hoping to make the season a better one for battered spouses and their children. The organization needs monetary

funding and donations of cash, food, new wrapped toys and children's and adult's winter clothing in good condition.

Contributors can use the new and convenient "Adopt-a-Family" program, in which they would be linked up with a particular family and given information on members' names, ages and more. Businesses can receive a tax deduction.

"The number of families and individuals we are reaching out to this season has more than quadrupled," Wilson said, adding, "requests for help are still coming in."

Interested individuals or businesses can receive further information on helping this holiday season by calling 728-5888, 831-0898, or 835-0741. Monetary donations may be made by mailing a check to Save Our Sisters, c/o Mable Wilson, 54 Tintle Ave., West Milford, NJ, 07480. Checks should be made payable to Save Our Sisters, with the notation, "for Family Fund."