

Women's Shelter Defies Court

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By Tim Mead
Staff Writer

The owner of a Hackensack shelter for homeless women has defied a Superior Court order to comply with the city's occupancy laws, and says she won't comply until the county provides a shelter.

Eleven persons spent last night at the Shelter Our Sisters (SOS) center on Cedar Avenue — three more than allowed by a limit set Tuesday by Judge Theodore Trautwein.

The court order took effect yesterday. It was obtained by the city after shelter owner Sandy Ramos balked at the city's order Saturday to close the center to bring her legally overcrowded home into compliance with the city's zoning laws. Officials found 17 persons living in the home in an inspection Monday.

"It's news to me," City Welfare Director George Yidi said last night when told a woman and her three children chose to stay in the shelter rather than move to the \$36-a-day motel room the city had reserved.

According to Ms. Ramos, the woman said she would be afraid to live alone in the motel room.

"We feel there have to be shelters, not just more places to plug in coffee pots," Ms. Ramos said, criticizing the city's arrangements. "A shelter is more than a roof. Women need comprehensive services [psychological, medical, and legal] but, most of all, they need to be in a supportive environment with other women."

Ms. Ramos said she made a proposal to the county Board of Freeholders that it purchase an abandoned hotel on Passaic Street for \$110,000 and make it a battered wives shelter, but the board rejected it. The board, however, says it will announce plans to fund a multipurpose crisis center May 4.

Ms. Ramos, a divorcee, opened her home eight years ago to women fleeing unhappy marriages. Most of the women who came to her shelter were victims of wife beatings.

Ms. Ramos will appear in state Superior Court next Thursday to contest the city's zoning ordinance that allows no more than three unrelated persons to live under the same roof. She has been cited for violating the ordinance.

She also has been summoned to appear in Municipal Court May 3 on charges of overcrowding and operating a business in a residential zone. She denies that her non-profit center is a business.