

Franciscan Center adapts to anyone in need



YOUR NEIGHBOR
A column by
SALLY LEY

In 1989, Jean Kelly and I founded The Franciscan Center as a homeless shelter and sack lunch program. We created the organization based upon the example of St. Francis of Assisi, who advocated a life of poverty, humility and love for the disadvantaged.

After a four-year "retirement" to enjoy my 22 grandchildren, I returned as CEO of the organization last fall.

Over the years, The Franciscan Center has changed to serve the needs of our community. While starting as a homeless shelter, we have transformed into five distinct programs that serve the Fort Wayne community:

◆ **Sack Lunch Program**, where we create nearly 1,000 free sack lunches

every week to be delivered to the hungry on Saturday mornings;

◆ **Clothes Closet**, where we provide clothing and toys at a minimal cost;

◆ **Food Pantry**, where we provide free food for nearly 300 clients a week, 52 weeks a year;

◆ **Feed My Sheep Ministry**, where we provide the tools for community groups to operate food and item drives to supply our Food Pantry, Sack Lunch Program and Assistance Ministry;

◆ **Assistance Ministry**, our newest program, where we provide free personal and health care items weekly to people in need, and other assistance in times of emergency and special circumstances.

Through generous donations of money, food, time and gifts, we are able to make a difference in our community for those who need our help with no questions asked. We do not require our clients to prove their need before we offer them help. Instead of demanding paperwork

If you want to help

For more information on how to volunteer or help the Franciscan Center, call 744-3977 or go to www.thefranciscancenter.org.

demonstrating financial difficulty, we only ask for identification as a method of keeping track of how often clients visit the program.

In order to accommodate the demand for our programs, The Franciscan Center budgets nearly \$75,000 a year to purchase food and other items that are not donated. We need people, school groups, youth groups, Scout troops, corporate groups, neighborhood groups, senior citizen groups and any other special groups throughout the city who want to help to eliminate as much of this expense as possible by organizing food and item drives.

Should a group contact us prior to their

drive, we can provide a number of tools to help their efforts, including a box truck for pickup/delivery, collection bags and barrels and staff to help with the project.

We rely on more than 4,300 volunteers every year to help with our programs, including organizing drives, making sack lunches and distributing food at the pantry. Our volunteers have enabled us to serve Fort Wayne for the past 16 years, and will do so for years to come.

We look forward to your support.

Sally Ley is founder and CEO of The Franciscan Center. To submit a column about your organization or event, e-mail neighbors@news-sentinel.com. Include your photograph as an attachment in JPEG (.jpg) format. Submissions may be mailed to Neighbors/The News-Sentinel, PO Box 102, Fort Wayne IN 46801. Call 461-8261 or 461-8266 for assistance.