

This is a printer friendly version of an article from the **Daily Record**  
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

11/8/07 - Posted from the Daily Record newsroom

## A place to turn for area's homeless

### Morristown facility can now serve more women

**BY MINHAJ HASSAN**  
**DAILY RECORD**

MORRISTOWN -- Crystal was not able to afford a place of her own and didn't know what she was going to do until she heard from a friend about Homeless Solutions.

The 38-year-old mother from Morristown has spent the last two weeks in the shelter, which is located in the county buildings complex on West Hanover Avenue.

She said she's now feeling like she'll be back on her feet soon and able to reunite with her 14-year-old daughter, who is staying with family.

In the meantime, she can find comfort in the new ward for single women that was recently created at the facility.

Previously serving as office space for the organization's administrators, the room now holds 10 beds, most of them bunk beds, as well as a few chairs.

"We are really proud that we're able to offer shelter beds and additional room," said Elaine Johnson, director of programs. "This will make a positive difference in their lives."

Crystal, whose last name was withheld because of her situation, agreed with Johnson.

"It's going to help me do the things I need to do," she said.

The transition started in the summer, when Homeless Solution move its administrative offices to a building on Dumont Place.

The organization received grants to help make the move: The Hyatt Watson Foundation gave \$25,000; the Morris County Department of Community Affairs gave \$50,000; and the Boye Foundation gave \$70,000.

The center also contains 10 family rooms, 25 beds for single men, and 16 beds for men in the safe haven program, which assists men with mental illnesses or other problems.

The organization helps approximately 300 people each year. There is a waiting list of approximately 20 people.

Homelessness has risen in recent years due to escalating housing costs, leaving few options for those with jobs that don't pay living wages.

"They are the witness to the fact that there isn't enough low-income housing," said Elizabeth Hall, the shelter's executive director.

Hall said 54 percent of the approximately 50 families in the shelter had individuals who were working full-time, but wound up at Homeless Solutions.

While staying at Homeless Solutions, a temporary resident is required to work a job, save money and take classes on childcare, relationships and making budgets, among other topics; all the classes are taught by volunteers. Also, they regularly meet with case workers.


Individuals stay at Homeless Solutions for three months and then go on to transitional housing.

Homeless Solutions has apartments on Jean Street that serve that purpose, and individuals can stay there for as long as 18 months. While that is the preferred time limit, officials are willing to work with individuals in particular circumstances.

[Buy this photo](#) 

**KAREN MANCINELLI /  
DAILY RECORD**

After staying at Homeless Solutions in Morristown for two weeks, client Crystal (whose last name was withheld) says she's getting the help she needs.

[Buy this photo](#) 

**KAREN MANCINELLI /  
DAILY RECORD**

Elaine Johnson, director of programs and services for Homeless Solutions, talks about a recent expansion that was kept inexpensive because volunteers did much of the work.

When they successfully make it through transitional housing, individuals move to affordable housing units located in the county, officials said. Recently, new units were created on Abbett Avenue, and some single-family houses were converted to multi-family dwellings.

Johnson said the goal for the individuals is to learn about survival.

"It's hard, but you can do it," Johnson said.

In the near future, Crystal said, she intends to get her graduate equivalency diploma and work toward becoming a youth counselor.

Homeless Solutions operates on a \$2.3 million budget, of which 55 percent comes from corporations and citizens, 40 percent from government funds, and 5 percent from rental income.

---

Minhaj Hassan can be reached at (973) 267-9038 or [mhassan@gannett.com](mailto:mhassan@gannett.com).

---