

## **Local Committee Tour Little Rock Homeless Shelter**

By Michelle Page

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LITTLE ROCK - The effort to develop a homeless shelter in Phillips County is in full swing and members of the committee went to Little Rock Tuesday To tour one the most successful shelters in the country.

In 1987, Our House opened its doors to the homeless people of Pulaski County, rooted with the vision of the Interfaith Council of Churches. Their commitment is the same as the committee here in Phillips County - to helping the poor and homeless individuals and families re-enter productive society.

The group first went to a department of Housing and Urban Development seminar to learn all they could about procuring a grant for Phillips County and the homeless shelter. HUD Director James E. Slater was very excited about the prospect of having the services offered by the shelter in Phillips County. The members of the team went so far as to offer any assistance they could toward any kind of development in Phillips County.

"Y'all are doing great things down there," he said.

Many other members of his team came forward to offer their help as well. Sandra K. Lewis-Payne, from the Community Planning and Development Department also was looking forward to helping in the endeavor.

"The level of support the county received from those in the capital city was very encouraging," said Grace Gonner, executive director of The Family Center. The Family Center administers many services for the county and the homeless shelter is the current pet project of the center.

The tour of Our House showed the impressive leaps that shelter has made. A new emergency shelter adorns their campus and houses hundreds of needy individuals. They offer their residents free daycare and even have a computer training center that is scheduled to re-open soon.

The facility employees 17 workers, which means that many of the residents at the shelter can find employment with the facility. Besides

the current programs, the shelter has some transitional housing available.

The members of the Phillips County committee hope to incorporate some of the ideas of the Our House facility into the proposed shelter for the county. The proposed project for the shelter has acquired the help of the Clinton School of Public Service. Two of the students at the school have made the homeless shelter their project and incorporate the shelter into their studies at the school. The students are even graded on their efforts.

Malcolm Glover and Joe Ballard are two excited and dedicated individuals and are earning their master's degrees in social and/or public service. George Davis, Grace Gonner, Kirk Doering and other members of the committee look forward in their effort to see the homeless of the area offered a way to become productive citizens.