

## **Services for those in need - February 1999**

by Victoria Reinhardt

In June the Ramsey County Board voted to move forward on developing a the Family Service Center on the Ramsey County Campus on White Bear Avenue in Maplewood. At that time I voted no, because I did not feel at that time that Maplewood was the best location. At that time I felt that transit opportunities were inadequate and that another location was more conducive to helping families in crisis.

In January the Maplewood City Council granted the County a conditional use permit. I want to applaud the City Council for making the right choice on a very tough issue. With the proper enforcement of the 22 conditions the Family Service Center will not adversely affect the quality of life in Maplewood. The conditions are a key part to making this project a success. For example, the one condition is that the County have a negotiated agreement with School District 622 on logistical and financial ramifications of the new facility. I will work with the City of Maplewood and the school district to make sure the County lives up to its word.

Over the summer the building will be built and it is scheduled to open by the end of the year. Families will continue to be taken in and screened in downtown St. Paul. Those families who have no other alternatives for shelter (i.e. family in the area or money for a motel) will be taken in at the Family Service Center. When they are at the center families will be focusing on stabilizing their lives; finding a place to live, job, school for their children, accessing health care, etc. The new facility will offer on site classes through a partnership with the Ramsey County/University of Minnesota Extension Services.

Last year I wrote a column on the importance of the services provided by emergency shelter. It is not only the compassionate thing it is also the fiscally responsible thing to do. Providing emergency shelter is much less expensive than dealing with the social problems of not providing shelter. Such as foster care instead of keeping families together and emergency room visits instead of preventative care. With the wealth of volunteers in the Maplewood area, the promise of better transit opportunities on White Bear Avenue, and the partnership of City, County, and School I know the Family Service Center can be a success. Let us put the disagreements behind us so we can all go forward together.