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PADS seeks shelter site, volunteers

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By **KATHY MILLEN** Staff Writer

Although the weather may be warmer, the problem of providing interim shelters for homeless people living in DuPage County doesn't get any easier.

DuPage Public Action to Deliver Shelter is struggling to find summertime shelter sites and volunteers to man them.

According to Kathleen Johnson, director of development, area churches and synagogues that serve as shelter sites on assigned nights from October through April usually take a break during the summer months. As a result, DuPage PADS must find interim housing and volunteers to man the facilities from May through September.

"We scramble for how we can get through summer months," she said. "Some think the summer is easy, but can you imagine living through storms and mosquitoes? It really is a 365-day challenge. It's not just when the weather is not good. What happens is we can't provide housing every night in the summer."

Right now, it's Tuesday nights that DuPage PADS has no shelter site available. Beth Webb, interim house coordinator for DuPage PADS, said the organization is currently looking for the use of either a church, synagogue, school or other building that night through September. The building should have a kitchen, working phone, restroom and be close to public transportation.

But even sites that are available the other days of the week have occasionally had to close their doors on their assigned night for lack of volunteers to assist PADS staff members in serving food, cleaning up and monitoring the shelters, which currently are located in Wheaton, Glen Ellyn, Wood Dale, Hinsdale, Lombard and Lisle. Volunteers are assigned shifts from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Last year, 942 people received food, shelter and safety at DuPage PADS overnight housing sites. About 68 percent of that number stayed less than 30 days. Johnson said that on any given night between 140 and 160 men, women and children in DuPage County have no place to call home.

"For many (non-homeless residents) that's not on their radar screen," she said. "This will be helping people who are somewhat invisible in our community. It's a pressing issue."

For more information, call 630-682-3846, Exts. 265 or 234.

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