



# Dakota Woodlands

Dakota Digest



MAY 2007

**DAKOTA WOODLANDS IS THE ONLY FACILITY FOR HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DAKOTA COUNTY. OUR MISSION IS TO EMPOWER HOMELESS WOMEN TO CREATE STABLE FUTURES FOR THEIR FAMILIES.**

## News and Events

**June 7, 2007**  
5-8 p.m.

### End of School Year Party!

For more information  
Please call  
Carmen  
at 651-456-9110

**Saturday, June 23**

8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

### ComBATTING Homelessness

5<sup>th</sup> Annual Slow Pitch  
Co-Rec Softball  
Tournament

For information, or to  
register your team  
Please call  
Jennifer Groebner  
651-270-0239

### Visit us online!

[www.dakotawoodlands.org](http://www.dakotawoodlands.org)

Learn more about  
Dakota Woodlands!

Learn about  
Homelessness in  
Dakota County and  
Minnesota!

Read our new Blog!

Watch our DVD on  
YouTube!

## From our Executive Director

Reyne Branchaud-Linsk



**“When we feel good about ourselves we are better parents, friends and employees. Our self-confidence affects every area of our lives including the people in our lives.”**

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## Empowering Women

At Dakota Woodlands, we know that the first priority for our residents is to secure permanent housing. But we also know that each family has different issues and needs to get there. We want to make sure that once they find a safe and secure home for themselves and their children, that they will be able to keep it. Our mission is **to empower** homeless women to create stable futures for their families. This means we are serious about building up the women’s self-esteem and boosting their self confidence. Since May is **Mental Health Awareness Month**, I would like to share with you some of the services and support that we offer our residents. We help them find themselves. When we feel good about ourselves we are better parents, friends and employees. Our self-confidence affects every area of our lives including the people in our lives.

### Here are a few of the supportive services we provide:

- Exercise Classes
- The Power of Positive Thinking Classes
- Journaling
- Self-Esteem Classes
- Healthy Relationships Classes: feeling good about yourself despite your circumstances, dealing with shame and guilt, taking care of yourself, and setting goals.
- Improving Job Skills
- R.E.N.T (Raising Expectations for Next Time): a responsible renter’s series.
- On-site GED preparation
- Parenting Education
- Health Related Issues: getting the families dental and medical care
- Independent Living Skills: helping residents plan for living on their own. Some residents have never lived on their own and need a lot of individual skill building, support and counseling. We assist families with improving their skills in nutrition, cooking, cleaning, parenting, time management, building

See Photos from recent events!



support systems and accessing resources.

***Thank you for your continued support of our work with families in need.***

*Reyne Branchauck-Linck*

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## Volunteers of the Month



## Seniors from SES Plant Gardens and Collect Clothing

An organization like Dakota Woodlands simply could not exist without the help of volunteers. Everyday, people dedicate their time and talent to serve others and this month we'd like to introduce you to just a few of them.

**Jaime and Lisa** are both seniors at **SES** (The School of Environmental Sciences) in Apple Valley and will be graduating this June. For their Senior Project they chose to "beautify" the grounds of Dakota Woodlands. They spent a recent afternoon planting a colorful array of petunias, marigolds, zinnias, and calendula. "We asked a few of the local gardening supply centers to donate the plants, garden tools and even the mulch and planting soil," said Jaime. "Everyone we asked said yes and one man even gave us each a pair of gardening gloves!"

Jaime has been a volunteer at Dakota Woodlands for several years and wanted to do even more. "We wanted families to feel welcome when they come here, that this isn't just a shelter, but it's their home, even if it's just for awhile. Plus, this is a way that we can show them teen-agers in their community care," said Jaime. "It's just a small thing, but small things can make a big difference."

**Izzy and Mattie** are also seniors at SES and organized a **Clothing Drive** at their school. The students at SES responded so enthusiastically that they collected 5 bags of clothes, mostly for teenagers! Izzy said, "It's been really great to see how much people are willing to support Dakota Woodlands. Since your organization does so much, we just wanted to try and give something back."

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## OUR SPECIAL MOTHER'S DAY EVENT



On May 12<sup>th</sup> we held our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Mother's Day Breakfast, **HOMES** (Helping Our Mothers Experience Success). It was a wonderful morning with over 100 guests in attendance. Reyne spoke about our mission and what brings people to Dakota Woodlands. She talked about our services, challenges and successes. Then, Reyne and

our **Program Director, Barb Nicolazzi**, led a discussion with former residents (women and children) who shared their experiences at Dakota Woodlands. One of the children shared that she was proud of her mom, she loved it that the people here had nice things to say about her. The adults talked about their successes...owning a home for a year now, having good friends, going to college and living happily with their kids.

**Thank you** to those of you who shared your Saturday morning with us and for your generous support of our organization. If you missed this year's event, we hope you'll be able to invite friends and join us next year.

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## Volunteer Opportunities

We know that summer means varied schedules, vacations and life is a little less predictable. But, we would be happy to have you come and volunteer with us. We welcome your support once, once in awhile, or regularly. Please call our **Volunteer Coordinator at 651-456-9110**, ext 15, for more information about volunteering at Dakota Woodlands.

### ***WE COULD USE YOUR HELP WITH:***

- Childcare
- Sorting Donations
- Playing educational games with school-aged children
- Cleaning and organizing
- Kitchen help: helping to prepare meals and clean-up

### ***Special Needs...***

- Perhaps you and your friends would like to prepare Saturday or Sunday Brunch.
- Think of us when your garden's produce is ready... or when you stop at the Farmer's Market.
- If your neighbors are having a party or barbecue this summer, consider passing a container to collect change for Dakota Woodlands, or collect paper products or food for us. A special treat would be having you collect perishable foods...like different types of cheese, yogurt or other items.

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## Current Needs

If you have questions about donating items, please call our House Manager, Jill Hogan 651-456-9110 or e-mail [jillh@dakotawoodlands.org](mailto:jillh@dakotawoodlands.org)

### ***WE COULD USE:***

- Paper Products: Paper Towels, Napkins, Toilet Paper, Paper Plates
- Crib Sheets: Gently Used or New
- Garbage Bags: 32 Gallon Size or larger
- Disposable Diapers: Sizes 5 and 6
- Bathing Suits: New or Gently Used, Adult and Children's Sizes
- Children's Summer Clothing: New or Gently Used, sizes 2-16



**DAKOTA WOODLANDS**  
**3430 WESCOTT WOODLANDS**  
**EAGAN, MN 55123**  
**PHONE: 651-456-9110**  
**[WWW.DAKOTAWOODLANDS.ORG](http://WWW.DAKOTAWOODLANDS.ORG)**