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A Celebration of Families and Individuals Achieving Self-Sufficiency

In the News

Reprinted from the Southtown Star

Southeast CEDA helping people get back on their feet

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By: Donna Vickroy

Southeast CEDA in Robbins is a hive of activity.

Inside the former elementary school, people from all walks of life are receiving assistance with job training, utility bill paying and early child care.

"It's all designed to help people get over that hump, to help them achieve self-sufficiency," executive director Anthony Welch said.

The troubled economy has brought even more clients to the resource center - clients who likely never even noticed the building before, Welch said.

"This recession is hitting across the board," he said. "We're seeing people who've never needed assistance before in their lives now need it."

For the first time, Welch said, some of the housing programs have expended all of their funds well before deadline.

Southeast CEDA, which stands for Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County, is one of 10 agencies participating in Project Share, the SouthtownStar's annual holiday food drive.

Money collected will be used to buy food for holiday baskets at greatly reduced prices, courtesy of Walt's Food Stores. Southeast CEDA volunteers will distribute more than 200 of these holiday baskets to needy families in its service area, which consists of Alsip, Robbins, Blue Island, Midlothian, Posen and Crestwood.

Feeding the hungry is nothing new to Welch's staff. Each day volunteers deliver close to 200 meals to mostly homebound seniors through its Meals on Wheels program.

"We're a lifeline to these people," he said. "This may be the only meal they get and it may represent the only contact they have with another human being. It's so important for us to be there every day."

Demand is growing for help with housing issues, re-education and job training, he said. Through a Comcast Foundation grant, Southeast CEDA has been able to develop computer labs in which adults can get customized help for earning their GED or finding new employment.

"Unfortunately," Welch said, "organizations like CEDA grow during tough economic times. There is so much need out there now."

Southeast CEDA is located at 3518 W. 139th St., Robbins. Information: (708) 371-1220.

To contribute to Project Share, send checks to Project Share, The SouthtownStar, 6901 W. 159th St., Tinley Park, IL 60477. For more information, call Project Share coordinator Jeannie Kadner at (708) 633-6750.