

# The Times

*Serving our community for more than a century*

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2001

## Times launches Holiday Appeal

### \$50G would aid children's agency

By IRWIN STOOLMACHER  
Special to The Times

The 41st annual Times Holiday Appeal begins today with a goal of raising \$50,000 to help pay for the acquisition and renovation of a new home for Prevention Education Inc.

Prevention Education Inc. is Mercer County's most comprehensive provider of programs and services dedicated to the safety and well-being of children. This past year, the agency served about 15,000 residents (14,068 children and 630 adults).

"Since the tragic events of September 11th, Americans have given generously to relief ef-

forts," said Richard Bilotti, publisher of The Times. "Over \$1 billion has been contributed to the more than 100 funds set up to aid the victims of the attack. It's been a heartwarming response.

"There are, however, some indications that giving to local charities has fallen off," Bilotti said. "This shouldn't be. We must not forget our neighbors in need. This year's

Times Holiday Appeal focuses on raising funds for an agency that serves the children of Mercer County. I am confident that our readers will once again show their generosity by supporting this year's holiday appeal."

See APPEAL, A12





Prevention Education Inc. was founded in 1985 to fill a void in Mercer County with regard to education, intervention and training programs relating to sexual abuse and personal safety. As amazing as this seems today, 16 years ago there were no programs in the schools designed to teach children how to exercise their right to be "Safe, Strong and Free." Nor were there any crisis intervention programs available for the victims of child abuse and their families.

For the past 16 years Prevention Education Inc., through its acclaimed Child Assault Prevention program, has taught almost 100,000 Mercer County youngsters how to recognize the tell-tale signs of a potentially dangerous situation and what to do if they should find themselves in such a situation.

Classroom workshops presented in the form of role-playing and guided group discussions help children learn skills to recognize potentially dangerous situations, and to implement effective safety strategies. In addition, its Crisis Intervention Program has provided short-term counseling to help more than 3,000 victims of sexual abuse and their families through the crisis period following disclosure.

"We simply ran out of space to serve the children of Mercer County. There was inadequate space for the agency's current programs, no way to accommodate working parents and absolutely no room for future program expansion," said Evelyn Gill, executive director.

"Increasingly, as a result of a lack of space for private counseling rooms, the agency's counselors had to postpone scheduling crisis intervention counseling sessions for a child who had been sexually abused," said Keith Smith, chairman of the organization's board of trustees. "That was totally unacceptable."

The cramped quarters were also forcing the agency to use administrative offices, which were not "child friendly," for crisis counseling sessions; to use its open waiting area as a visitation room; and to use its child counseling room, filled with toys, stuffed animals and art supplies, for counseling sessions with older children.

For these reasons, Prevention Education Inc. decided to acquire and renovate a building as the agency's first permanent home. Its new home at 231 Lawrence Road, less than a mile from its longtime facility on Princeton Pike, contains more than 4,800 square feet of immediately usable space on one level, compared to 2,318 square feet in its previous building.

Funds from this year's Times Holiday Appeal will be used to partially offset a portion of the costs of acquiring and renovating Prevention Education Inc.'s first permanent home.

Prevention Education Inc.'s new facility will enable the agency to adequately accommodate its acclaimed Child Assault Prevention (CAP) program, which over the years has been presented in eight Mercer County school districts, 22 schools in Trenton and in a hundred preschool programs.

The new building will also house the agency's portfolio of prevention programs — Kids on the Block; No More Bullies, No More Victims; and Peaceful Solutions — which are presented to children in preschool through grade 12.

These programs are presented annually to more than 12,000 children in the elementary grades. The new facility enabled the agency to expand the hours and add a bilingual counselor to its Crisis Intervention Program, which provides short-term counseling for sexual abuse victims between the ages of 3 and 18.

"For the first time, all of our programs, which include our Abuse Reactive Children program that serves children between the ages of 3 and 12 years of age who act out sexually, our Juvenile Auto Theft Prevention/Juvenile Offender Outreach Prevention Program, which provides an intensive 12-week life skills curriculum for youth offenders and their parents; our Supervised Visitation Program for families with children in foster care; and our Transportation Program to assist DYFS in planning consistent appointments and support services will have adequate space. Also, we will no longer be constrained from seizing new programmatic opportunities because of space," said Gill.

The Times Holiday Appeal has raised more than \$700,000 over the past 11 years. Donations have been used to equip the kitchen of the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, expand the Isles Inc. community garden program, purchase equipment for the Rescue Mission of Trenton's industrial salvage program, renovate and equip a learning facility for Young Scholars' Institute, construct a shower and locker room at the boys and girl's shower and locker room at the Boys & Girl Club of the Delaware Valley, renovate a building to provide transitional housing for clients of the Greater Trenton Community Mental Health Center, acquire a facility to house the Mercer Street Food Cooperative, make badly needed capital repairs at Mount Carmel Guild, address pressing financial needs at the YWCA of Trenton, help construct a new home for the Puerto Rican Day Care Center, provide housing for a needy family through Habitat for Humanity and provide a new facility for Womanspace.

Many readers make contributions to the appeal in lieu of mailing holiday greeting cards or as a way of recognizing a deceased loved one. Employees at companies and government agencies take up collections, and clubs and organizations make contributions to the appeal on behalf of their members.

Please make out your check to The Times Holiday Appeal, 500 Perry St.,

P.O. Box 847, Trenton, N.J. 08505. All gifts will be acknowledged, and anonymity, if requested, will be granted.

# Appeal aids children