

Bowers-Rodgers Home protects neglected children

By Keiana Page 10-3-07

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(Fourth in a series about United Way-funded agencies in Laurens County.)



For victims of child abuse and neglect, life in foster care can be as difficult and confusing as the home environment means they escaped from. But, the Bowers-Rodgers Home for Abused Children helps these children have a smooth transition into a safer life.

The Bowers-Rodgers Home provides child abuse prevention and emergency shelter to abused, abandoned and neglected children taken into custody by the Department of Social Services. The non-profit organization, located in Greenwood, was founded in 1990 through the efforts of Carol Mauldin

who wanted to help relocated abused children stay closer to their homes in the upstate. Each year, Bowers-Rodgers serves an estimated 70 children, ages birth to 17, from Greenwood, Greenville, Abbeville and Laurens counties, as well as the entire state.

"It's our mission to be a safe haven and improve their quality of life while they are here," said Bowers-Rodgers Executive Director Nicole Pierce.

Children come to Bowers-Rodgers from various abusive situations and stay at the home up to several months.

Pierce said drug abuse in homes and physical neglect are some of the prevalent forms of abuse seen at Bowers-Rodgers.

"They're a lot of people dealing with substance abuse and the children are suffering for it," she said, adding often times in this situation the children's basic needs aren't being met and children are put at risk by people coming in and out of the home.

Bowers-Rodgers offers 24-hour care and the comforts of a home. The two-story home, located in a residential Greenwood neighborhood, includes a

playroom, living room, den and a grassy green yard.

Bowers-Rodgers residents attend public schools and participate in social activities. Not only does the home offer children refuge, but it also prepares them for permanent placement.

Bowers-Rodgers works with therapists to help children work through the emotional issues they may face. It strives to intervene in abuse patterns in a child's life so that they won't become abusive adults.

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The home's staff also teaches children expectations for appropriate family roles and provide them with a structured environment.

Bowers-Rodgers is able to provide these services with the help of grants, donations and revenue from the Bowers-Rodgers Resale Store in Greenwood. The home holds an annual bass tournament fundraiser and is planning a fundraising event featuring Doo-ley and Pals next year.

The United Way of Laurens County also helps Bowers-Rodgers meet its \$650,000 budget. The United Way, which is currently holding its annual fundraiser, allocated \$7,000 to Bowers-Rodgers this year.

"Their funding goes directly to the children of Laurens County," said Pierce.

Last year, 40 percent of the home's residents were from Laurens County. So far, this year 20 percent of Bowers-Rodgers residents came from the county. When children leave Bowers-Rodgers they may go home to their biological families, be adopted or go to another foster care program. Wherever they go, they leave differently from how they came.

"I think the biggest change is their self-esteem and self-confidence," said Pierce. "They're much healthier physically and mentally."

For more information about the Bowers-Rodgers Home for Abused Children, volunteer or to make a donation, call (864) 229-1240 or visit www.bowers-rodgers.org.