

## Shelter needs your help

The first sentence of a Dec. 20 letter from the Brother Francis Shelter in Anchorage to supporters tells it all: *Brother Francis Shelter may close in 1987.*

The letter states that although the shelter is winning gold pans, as well as city, state and national awards, it is losing the economic battle. About \$17,500 is needed each month because the shelter is currently operating at a deficit.

The Brother Francis Shelter, started by Brother Bob Eaton and Brother Dave Sifferman in 1982, serves a vital need in Alaska. And the need for this place of refuge for those who have literally nowhere else to go is only going to increase as Alaska's economy continues its nosedive.

Although it operates in Anchorage, the shelter actually serves a statewide need. Many villagers come to Alaska's largest city hoping to find opportunities that are not available to them in rural Alaska.

Whatever their hopes and dreams about Anchorage, many eventually find themselves without resources in a city that can be a very cold place. Often they are caught between two cultures.

And for many, the shelter is the last stopping place on their way down the economic ladder.

For those of us who have regular jobs and incomes, the shelter seems like a bleak place. It provides people only a place on the floor to sleep, and this is only between the hours of 5:30 p.m. and 7 a.m.

What doesn't show quite so clearly to outsiders, however, is the love and understanding that is offered to people who go there. The shelter is a place where *someone cares*.

The shelter's financial picture is bleak. Revenues for 1985 totaled \$172,269. The amount for 1986 dropped to \$135,687. At the same time expenses for 1985 were \$193,863, leading to a deficit of \$21,594. Expenses in 1986 were \$192,521, leading to a deficit of \$56,834.

Those expenses last year included \$133,000 for 15 paid staffers, \$28,540 for administration and insurance and \$30,981 for supplies and miscellaneous expenditures.

A quick look at the salaries alone shows that the average pay for those 15 people is less than \$9,000 a year.

We here at the *Tundra Times* are facing very serious financial difficulties of our own, as our readers are well aware. But this is the time to think about the shelter and its needs. It's not funded by state or federal money. It survives on donations, a lot of hope and much love.