

CONTACT: Jane Banks
Jessie's House
413-658-0060

CHILDREN AT JESSIE'S HOUSE ENJOY NEW PLAYSPACE COURTESY OF HORIZONS FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN

Amherst, MA – December 12, 2006 – The youngest residents of Jessie's House, Hampshire County's only emergency family shelter for families, are enjoying a new playspace, thanks to the generosity of Horizons for Homeless Children, a nonprofit organization that works to improve the lives of homeless children and their families in Massachusetts.

Located in the shelter's community living room, the colorful new playspace is a kid-friendly space equipped with a library, building blocks, art supplies, games and toys that challenge children physically and creatively and allow them to have a place to play and use their imaginations. The new facility is targeted to children 5 and under.

"We're thrilled to have this wonderful new resource for the kids at Jessie's House," said program director Jane Banks. "Meeting the developmental needs of children is especially hard in a shelter and this generous gift goes a long way towards helping the parents and our staff address that challenge."

Horizons for Homeless Children has built similar facilities at over 130 shelters across the state. The program also provides trained volunteers, known as Playspace Activity Leaders (PALs), who participate in educational play activities with the children at Jessie's House each week. Across the state, over 800 PALs volunteer in the program each week, working with over 2,000 homeless youngsters.

Headquartered on Boston, Horizons for Homeless Children opened an office in Holyoke in 2005 to better serve the needs of homeless children in the western part of the state. The charity's goal is to create a playspace at every family shelter in Massachusetts.

Jessie's House serves approximately 40 families each year. "During 2006, we've had 23 children in the shelter who were age 5 or younger," said Banks. "So this new resource serves a very important need for our families—having a bright, cheerful place to go where kids can play and just be kids."

For more information on Jessie's House, visit www.jessieshouse.org. For more information on Horizons for Homeless Children, visit www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org.

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