

A CASE OF NEGLECT

Hearts and help go out to brothers

Center coordinates fund for abused boys

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A fund has been established to handle what has become an outpouring of offers of aid from concerned citizens responding to the shocking story of child abuse involving young brothers who were left abandoned and starving in the basement of a Newark home.

Both University Hospital in Newark, where the two surviving children are being cared for, and the office of Newark Mayor Sharpe James, have been inundated with hundreds of calls from people worldwide seeking to donate cash, toys and other gifts to the boys.

The Newark Day Center, the social service agency that administers the Greater Newark Fresh Air Fund, announced it will step in to coordinate donations for the youngsters.

"We will be the conduit for anyone who wants to send funds in on their behalf," said Trish Morris-Yamba, the agency's executive director.

"Our heart goes out to these children," said Morris-Yamba. "Every penny that comes in will go to these children."

Morris-Yamba said the Day Center will not disperse the money but will coordinate efforts with other social service agencies, which will decide how best to allocate the funds for the future care of the children.

Morris-Yamba advises those who want to help that it would be better to send money rather than gifts of clothing or toys because the agency has no way of storing such material over a long period.

At the same time, she said, the agency doesn't want to discourage anyone from making any type of contribution.

Meanwhile, the offers of aid have been coming in from a wide variety of sources.

"Everyone is simply devastated about this," she said.

Linda Pham, an Elizabeth teacher, said students from her eighth-grade class have raised money to contribute to the youngsters.

People as far away as California have also volunteered to help. Holly Wolcott of Pasadena sent an e-mail asking: "What can I do to help those two children in your community? I don't live there, but I would really like to help."

James said his office has been swamped with an "overwhelming outpouring" of assistance of all types from around the state.

"People want to do something," James said. "They want to help (the children's) future."

Rich's Flowers, a Newark florist, has offered to donate flowers for the funeral of 7-year-old Faheem Williams, whose body was discovered in the Newark apartment where his two brothers were found near starvation.

Rogers Ramsey, a spokesman for University Hospital, said hundreds of offers of aid have been pouring into the hospital, but the hospital is not equipped to handle the donations.

He said hospital workers have been taking the names of interested persons and will forward them to the Newark Day Center for follow-up contacts.

Morris-Yamba said that, as disturbing as the current case may be, it is not an isolated situation, but a symptom of a "systemic problem" in our society.

"We know that this happens more often than we would like," she said. "The problem is not just the end result; it is what leads up to that."

The Newark Day Center, which is preparing to celebrate its 200th anniversary, was originally orga-