



a dozen similar residences throughout the southern counties of the diocese.

Kennedy House technically qualifies as an "agency boarding home" under state law, affiliated with Catholic Charities, but in spirit and philosophy there are some major differences from what social workers usually think of as a group home.

For example, "cottage parents" do not run the place, explains Father Weider: "To set yourself up as a 'parent' when you're not is playing an unnecessary role, and a strict definition of roles isn't where it's at. We find now that three stable, mature adults can establish a creative mature relationship with the boys."

The aim of Kennedy House, says Father Weider, is to provide this kind of caring in a society where there are "too many houses filled with relatives, and not enough homes."

The boys fit into the parish community as one among many families, proving Father Weider's point that "being a family has nothing to do with blood relationships."

What kind of boy lives at Kennedy House? Mostly, says Fran Pierce, they are kids "who can actually function normally in the community, it's just there's no other place to put them." Some are still in high school, but others are working full or part time as jobs are available.

Though life in rural Perkinsville has the advantages of garden fresh vegetables and clean open air, and constant support is offered to the boys, not everything goes smoothly and easily. A staff meeting to work on the personal relationships in a single case can take hours out of an afternoon. However, as anyone at Kennedy House would be quick to remark, growth and maturity come from meeting challenges head on.

Dennis works on his bike, above left, in front of the church. A kitchen garden, right, provides both vegetables and fun. Much of the work, below, is done jointly by Joe and Fran, here scraping porch ceiling as part of refurbishing of house front.

Instead of housing the traditional solitary priest with housekeeper, the parish rectory in Perkinsville is called home by six adolescent boys.

Living with the boys at what has been named Kennedy House are Father Timothy Weider of Project REACH, his brother Joseph, a veteran and student at Alfred Technical College, and Francis Pierce, a conscientious objector from Rochester.

Formerly the rectory of Sacred Heart of Jesus parish, Kennedy House has been officially "full" for eight months, and according to Fran Pierce, "Now things are getting more cohesive."

Father Weider came to Perkinsville in 1967 as an administrator for the parish so that the diocese's Secular Mission could have a base in the Southern Tier for its work with the rural poor.

Soon, says Father Weider, he found that "living alone in a 14 room rectory was unrealistic in terms of the needs of the people." Not only would community agencies call regularly, asking if the church had any residence for boys who needed a home, but "kids would show up at the door" with no place to go.

Since he first offered shelter to homeless boys on an informal basis in 1968, Father Weider's thinking has come a long way. He now talks of setting up as many as



At staff meeting Fran Pierce makes point while part-time case worker Mrs. Nancy Case listens.

