

# VISTA... Helping People Help Themselves

By CHARLES RANDISI

How does a native-born Iron-quoiter find himself working at a Sioux Reservation general store in North Dakota?

Paul Thayer did just that before returning to his hometown to take on the job of program coordinator of VISTA in Rochester.

He says that the North Dakota job was something he did on his own, with no organization backing. Prior to that, he worked with WEDGE and the Rochester Action Coalition. At 25 years of age, he has been VISTA's top man in Rochester for only a few weeks.

In a recent interview, Thayer explained his relationship to VISTA and its relationship to the community.

As program coordinator, Thayer sees his job as one of administration and management.

VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) began several years ago with President Kennedy's

"War on Poverty." Originally it served as a domestic Peace Corps. Volunteers received a subsistence wage, determined by the areas in which they worked.

The national VISTA program is now a part of ACTION, which is the government's attempt to consolidate all volunteer agencies, such as VISTA, the Peace Corps, and Foster Parents...

VISTA has been in Rochester for three years. Genesee Ecumenical Ministries (GEM) is its "umbrella sponsor."

Thirty-four VISTAs, as the volunteers are called, work in Rochester with 14 community organizations. More than half of the community's VISTAs are native Rochesterians, and the rest come out of the National Pool of Volunteers.

"VISTA is a diverse urban project representing most problem areas in Rochester," Thayer says. "VISTAs aren't responsible for making changes in the community, or for providing leadership. They are there to

mobilize and make resources available to the community for its own goals."

Explaining the word "mobilize," Thayer gave an example. "One volunteer has the assignment of working in the area of developing health services. She initiated a committee of neighborhood residents who determined the extent of support from the community."

The 14 Rochester agencies that have VISTAs working with them are Better Rochester Living, East Side Community Center (formerly the Lewis Street Center), Edgerton Day-Care Center, Legal Assistance Corporation, Ibero-American Action League, Northeast Area Development, People's Defense Commission, Rochester Action for Welfare Rights, Rochester Community Involvement, Southeast Area Coalition, YWCA Woman's School, WEDGE, Rochester Bail Fund and Middle Earth.

"All these agencies deal mainly with the poor and have the concept of self-help as a common goal," said Thayer. "Their

function is to help residents develop their skills so they don't feel alienated.

"VISTA can provide a resource person for developing the multiple resources of a community," he continued.

Thayer also explained some of the changes that VISTA has undergone since he worked with WEDGE out of the National Pool of Volunteers. "VISTAs were predominantly young, college-educated people in the past," he said. "Now there is much more diversity in their age and background. Another important tendency has been placement of volunteers within their own communities."

"One of the problems that VISTA faces is inadequate funding," Thayer said. "There has been some action by the Nixon administration toward limiting the funds of volunteer agencies."

"We are concerned that this will reduce the number of volunteers. There has also been the tendency of the government to place volunteers in gov-

ernment agencies not dealing specifically with the poor."

However, Thayer cautioned that VISTA can only work as a tool of other agencies. "VISTA is only as effective as the agencies which it supervises. By itself, VISTA is nothing."

He said that the agencies seemed to him to be "quite effective," and cited some examples.

Better Rochester Living is a private, non-profit agency that advises people who are looking to buy homes. WEDGE is a "grassroots organization in the Brown Square area that provides residents with access to new housing, legal services, medical aid, and employment."

Middle Earth deals with young people, particularly those with drug problems.

Thayer says that VISTA is technically not involved in political causes, "but we are political in the sense that we try to make the institutions responsible to their citizenry."



Homeless

Their home lost in the flood, Corning Glass worker James Delorenzo and his wife Verna sit and wait for relief in the Beaver Valley evacuation center.



Mrs. Minne Emery, 98, is welcomed to the new Downtown Senior Center by Sam Fisher, vice president of Columbia Banking, Saving & Loan Association.

## Center Opens

A centralized administrative center serving Monroe County's 96,000 senior citizens was officially opened last week at Columbia Banking, Saving, & Loan Association, 40 N. Clinton Ave. It is believed to be the first such facility in the nation.

The 3000-square-foot area in the association's midtown branch was opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony featuring County Manager Lucien A. Morin and Garson Meyer, chairman of President Nixon's Task Force on Aging.

A ribbon of Social Security cards was cut to signify the availability of the new center for the Rochester community which has the highest percentage of senior residents of any area in the nation.

The new headquarters houses The Monroe County Council on Aging, The Senior Citizen Action Council and a Senior Drop-in Lounge. Many services sponsored by such organizations as The Four Downtown Churches and the Family Service of Rochester are located here. Programs include employment, information, referral and counselling.

## Death Claims Palmyra Pastor

Father John J. Healy, pastor of St. Anne's, Palmyra, died at the rectory Saturday, July 22, 1972. He apparently had suffered a heart attack.

A Pontifical Mass of Resurrection was concelebrated at his church this morning.

Auxiliary Bishop John E. McCafferty offered a vigil Mass last night.

During the week preceding his death, Father Healy had made final arrangements for a parish religious education program, in the wake of the people's decision to discontinue the 10-year-old grammar school. He hired Sister Rose Christine Wegman, SSJ, as CCD coordinator.

A majority of the parishioners voted July 16 to close the schools "for purely financial reasons," he said.

"Lack of funds; lack of state aid," the pastor continued. "We foresaw a deficit of \$16,000. We'd have to close during the year, anyway, if we opened in September, because we wouldn't be able to pay the teachers."

The parish referendum confirmed a 10-5 parish council decision that had stirred considerable argument. The vote was sought by council members who had lost their bid to continue the school, Father Healy said.

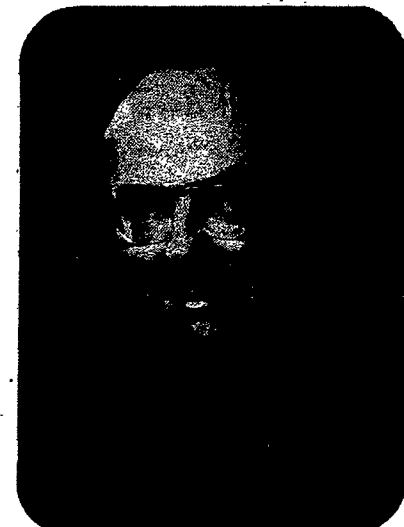
The school had three full-time lay teachers and two St. Joseph Sisters last year for 105 pupils in eight grades. The parish council decided last Spring to cut back to six grades, and an enrollment of 88 was expected for 1972-73.

The school was built at a cost of \$85,000 and opened in 1961.

What turned out to be its final year began with misfortune when the three St. Joseph Sisters who were the mainstay of the staff were injured in an automobile accident.

Father Healy celebrated the 40th anniversary of his priesthood last year at St. Anne's, where he had served since 1957.

Before his appointment to the pastorate he was an assistant



FATHER HEALY

at St. Francis de Sales, Geneva; Holy Family, Auburn, and Holy Family, Rochester. He was chaplain at St. James Mercy Hospital, Hornell, from 1943 until 1951.

He attended St. Monica's School in Rochester, St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries, and was ordained June 6, 1931.

Survivors include his sister, Agnes Keuper, and her husband, John Keuper, of Rochester; a niece and two nephews, Kathleen and John Keuper of Rochester and Philip Keuper of Hauppauge, L.I.

## K of C Elects Capparelli As President

Seneca Falls — Julian Capparelli recently was elected grand knight of the Seneca Falls Council, Knights of Columbus. Also installed were John M. Spos, deputy grand knight; Father Leo Lynch, chaplain; Samuel Graziano, chancellor; Phillip Liberatore, financial secretary; Robert Kendrickson, recording secretary; Donald Verzillo, treasurer; John Widell, warden; Angelo Fornesi, advocate; Gene Martello, inside guard; Richard Cunningham, outside guard; and Joseph DeSarro, lecturer.