

Eighty-seven parents at Webster's Holy Trinity parish have begun to involve themselves deeply in "alternative education."

This group is called TAG, short for Teacher's Aide Group; and instructor Paul Pierce of Monroe Community College's Human Services department suspects it is "the largest program of its type in the area."

Pierce sees non-graded private schools like Holy Trinity as an alternative to the normal public school.

Mrs. Judy Fagen, a bright young housewife who recently moved to Webster from California with her husband, heads up the volunteer effort to help the parish school, Pierce, who came into the TAG project as a volunteer able to lend professional skills, calls her "a born administrator."

Her efforts last year to get volunteer parents into working with Holy Trinity school showed Judy Fagen, "what not to do. People wouldn't show up, or when they did show up, there wouldn't be anything for them to do. And records of attendance weren't kept, so we didn't know how effective we were."

That has changed now.

"People want information before volunteering," so mothers have been given a list of things they can do.

Volunteers sign in and sign out; teachers have specific things for them to do; and name tags tell the children who the aides are.

TAG workers help as room mothers, as teachers' aides, in non-teaching school jobs like typing, or at home preparing materials and correcting papers.

The people most directly involved with TAG have strong ideas about it.

Paul Pierce says: "hard core research and personal observation show there's much to gain by having parents in the classroom. And this kind of effort will have to last if alternative education is going to survive."

Sister Anne Michelle, principal, thinks: "Very few of our teachers feel professionally threatened by the presence of the aides. Some don't use them to the fullest because they don't know how, but it is important that the aide show up regularly, especially because we're working on getting the teachers to plan on having their aide there."

She is very pleased with the way aides have already helped the school.

Judy Fagen says: "You have to treat volunteers as first class citizens, not as people doing something no one else will do."

Three mornings last June Pierce held workshops for prospective volunteers. "The point," he says, "was really to catalyze the whole thing."

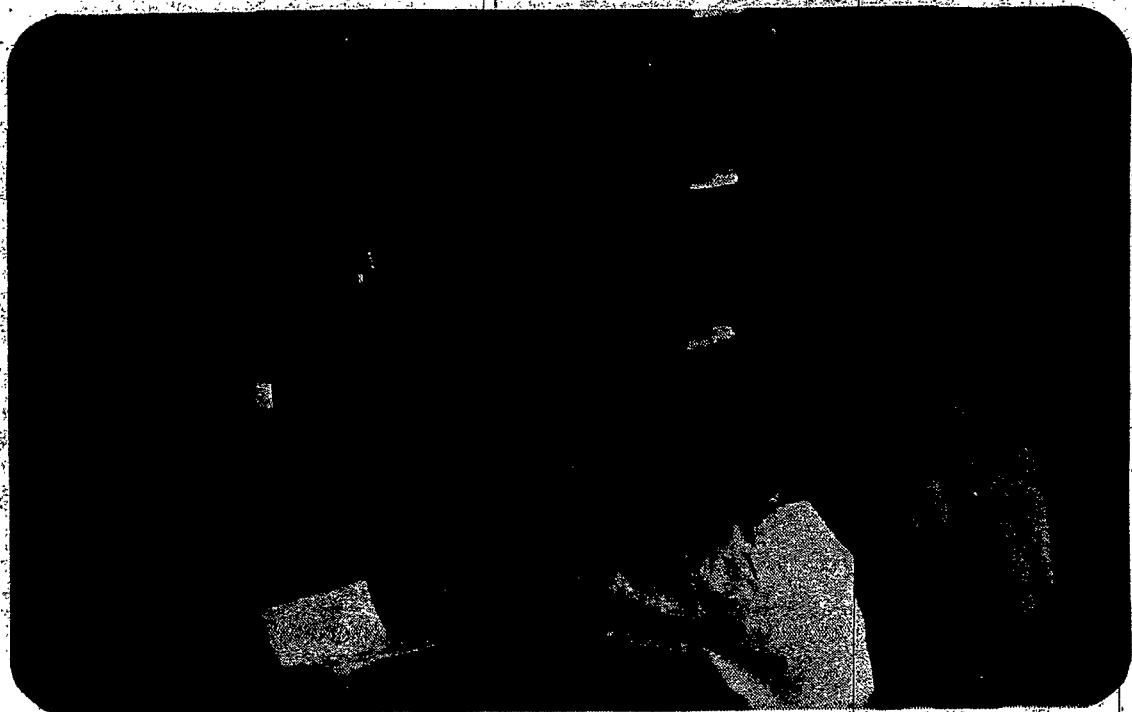
"We asked them" says Pierce, "what can you do for the school?"

"They came up with all the ideas I had worked on without my saying a word," says Mrs. Fagen.

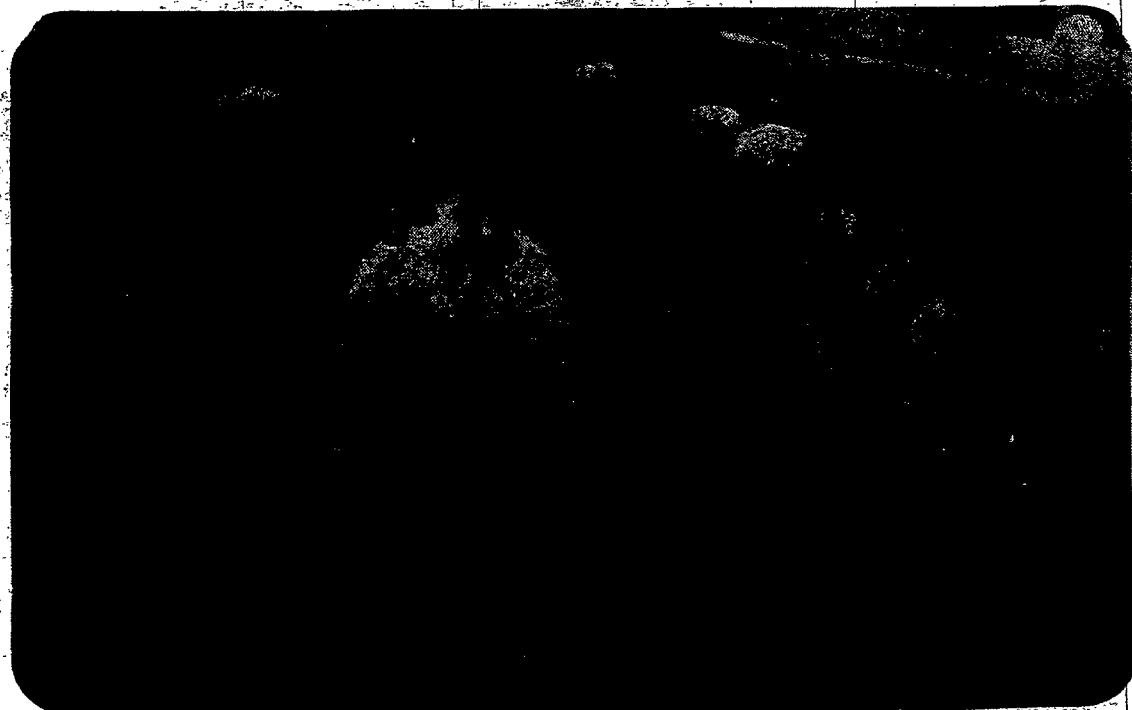
From there on, the volunteers of TAG took off running.



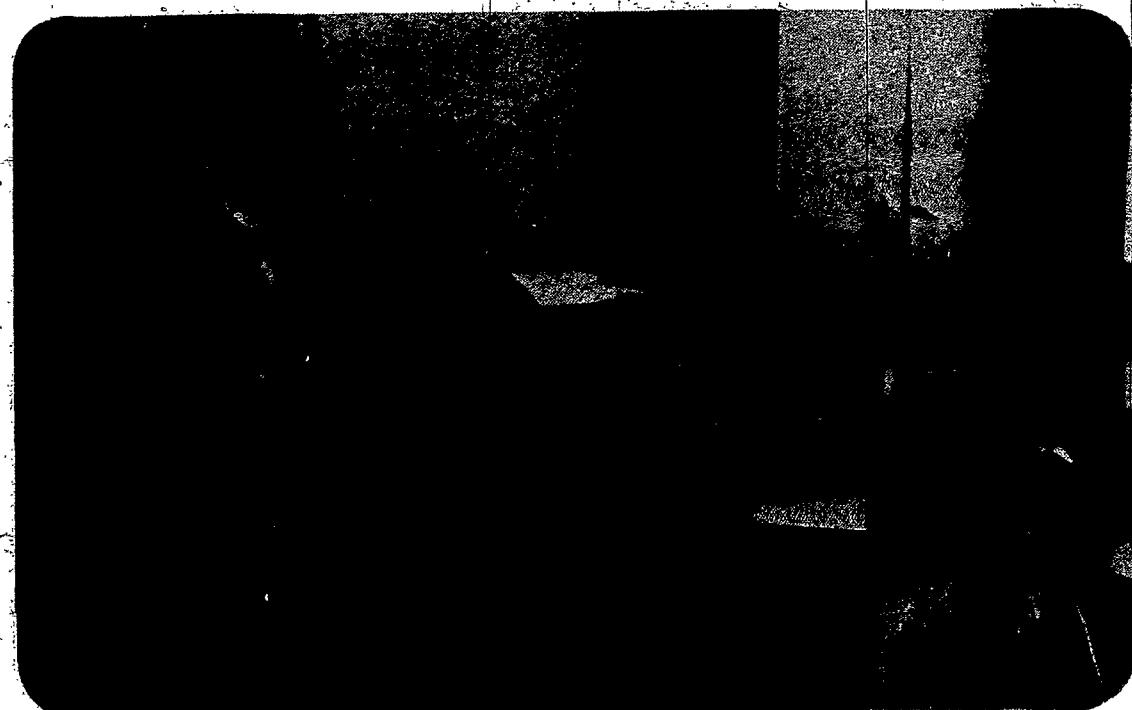
Mrs. Patricia Urban helps Pat Miller and Monica Kester make communion hosts for their religion class.



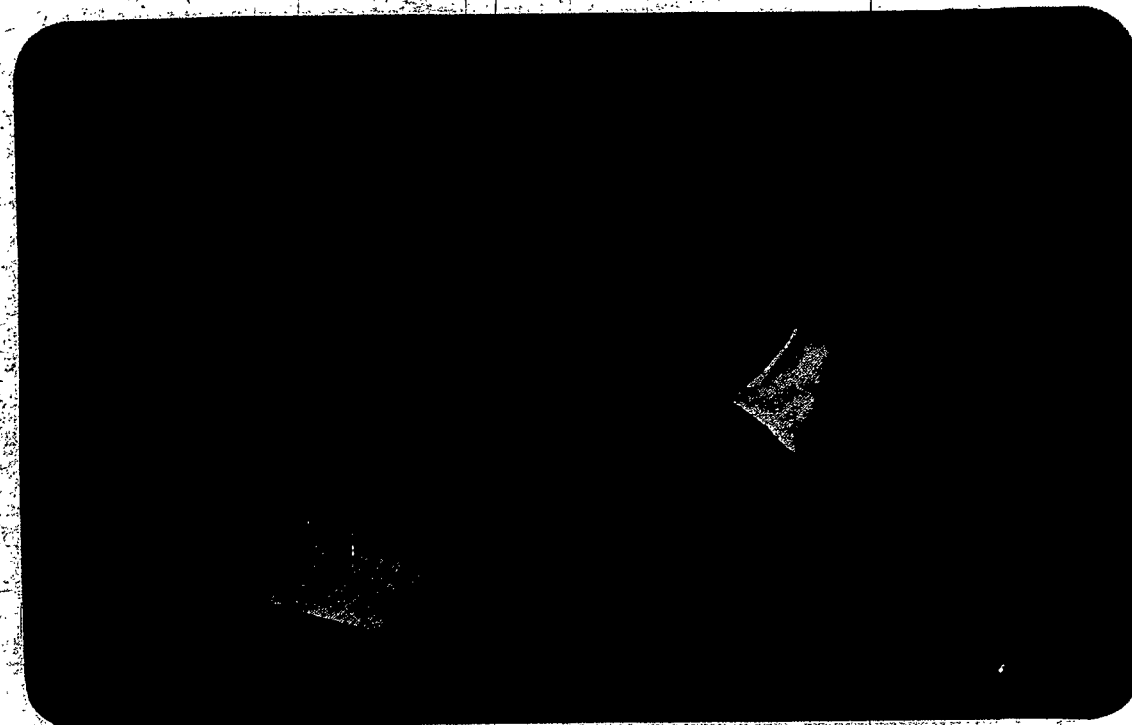
TAG worker Mary Wilson teaches reading skills.



The non-graded system has Karen Feldbauer, Teresa Kellett, and Laurie Roeger listening to Indian songs on their own initiative.



Ann Rohnke gives test in learning resource center.



Lynda Gehring does typing for the school.