

Supplementary Security Income

Federal Aid to Help Aged

By PAT PETRASKE

Beginning Jan. 1, 1974, a Supplementary Security Income (SSI) program of cash assistance will guarantee a basic income for those who are eligible and may increase the regular monthly income to those 65 and over, blind or disabled.

The new federal program administered by the Department of Social Security replaces the old age assistance program which is currently run by the county. Changes in the assistance program enables approximately 7,000 additional people in Monroe County alone to become eligible for supplementary income although they are presently ineligible for old age assistance.

Sister Judith Reger, who together with Sister Francis Sweeney have been spearheading a campaign to communicate the facts on the program from the Office of Human Development, stressed that SSI is not the same as Social Security. "If a person receives social security, he may still be eligible for SSI," she said.

If a person is now receiving aid to the aged, blind or disabled from the Department of Social Services, he will automatically be transferred to the new Federal SSI program. After Jan. 1 he will receive his monthly check from

the Social Security Administration.

People who believe they can now qualify for the supplementary income must now apply for it at the nearest Social Security office. If a person is accepted for SSI he will automatically receive medicaid and need not apply for it.

One important change in the assistance program has been an increase in the monthly income a person can have and still qualify for additional aid. "Before if you had any savings at all you could not receive public assistance," Sister Judith observed.

A person can still qualify if he owns a car valued at \$1,200 or less, a house valued at \$25,000 or less or a bank account, stocks, etc. valued at \$1,500 or less.

The most a person can receive from SSI:

- \* if you are an individual living alone, \$206.85 a month;
\* if you are an individual living in someone else's household, \$110.85 a month;
\* if you are a couple living alone, \$294.93 a month;
\* if you are a couple living in someone else's household, \$180.93 a month.

Another change has been in the style of operation. "Before the monthly grants were budgeted according to need and divided for fuel, food and living expenses. Now a person receives a flat grant," Sister Judith said. She added that under SSI, a person is no longer eligible for food stamps since the cost value of the food stamps has been included in the SSI payment.

Sister Judith believes a basic reason for the Supplementary Security income program is that social security itself does not provide an adequate income. "Older people comprise the largest group of people on the poverty level," Sister Judith noted.

It also takes out of the welfare category the blind, disabled and those over 65. Many people find welfare degrading and will not apply for it," she said.

In order to communicate information on SSI, the Genesee Conference of Senior Citizens Directors and the Monroe County Council of Aging have proposed the establishment of a Supplementary Security Income Alert which would provide an out reach program of individualized help and a hot line phone. Funding for the Alert which is being solicited from the United Community Way and the Monroe County Legislature will be used to hire four part time workers to man the Alert.

Additional information on SSI can be obtained by contacting the Social Security Office, 100 State St., Federal Building, 263-6200. The information and referral service number is 232-5100.

A Different View Of Drug Problem

By JOY CHALONE

Ithaca — "I was an addict for eight years. All of us here are ex-users." A recent talk with Richard J. Feldman, program director for the Ithaca area's Alpha House and its subsidiary, Reach Out Center gives a different view to the drug problem.

"God helps those who help themselves," he quoted to me, indicating the key thought for the drug abusers' rehabilitation.

There are two facets to the program. The Reach Out Center is located at 109 W. State St. Here drug abusers can come voluntarily on a daily non-resident basis. "For example, a 16-year-old might be dabbling in drugs," Feldman says. "He goes up to his room after school, puts on some music and takes some LSD, or goof balls. His parents know he does it but choose to ignore it and chalk it up to a phase he's going through."

The center offers him someone to talk to, someone who has done the same thing. The center enables him to come after school or half days for work therapy, group and individual counseling. It is open 9 to 5 daily.

The other alternative, for the abuser who is more troubled, has difficulty making it in society, is Alpha House. This is the residence for some 12 ex-abusers. Located at 602 Elmira Rd., it is coed and non-sectarian, with 24-hour staff coverage.

Feldman relates, "There are no bars, no locks. The residents are there because they know they need to be. They're just emotionally immature people." Residents range in age from 16 to 30.

"Alpha House is a family," Feldman says, "ruled by responsibility and concern, united by a common goal." There are five staff members, all ex-users. Besides Feldman, there is his wife, Sandra, who is director of the Reach Out Center, Wayne Reeves, facility manager, Rick Guardiola, assistant director of the residential program and Robert Hayden, the court liaison. Alpha House literature can be found in the jails, where inmates can read it, and sometimes contacts and arrangements are made whereby Alpha House is used in lieu of imprisonment.

Feldman is originator of Alpha House and other centers in Monroe, Cortland, Cayuga, Onondaga, Seneca, Steuben, Broome, Tioga, Chemung, and Tompkins counties. They are all funded under DACC, Drug Addiction Control Commission, a state wide program.

"Drug users are basically dishonest people," Feldman relates. "We're not really fighting drug abuse, we're fighting its symptoms — stupidity (emotional), fear, irresponsibility, hatred and prejudice. Society builds up the idea of the drug abuser. But many are not real drug addicts. They aren't the guy on the street corner with the rain coat and the dark glasses," Feldman says. "Sometimes a kid might have a little heroin habit. Well, it can be no worse than having the flu. He's a candidate for the program, if he wants it. That's the key. If someone has a barbiturate habit, however, we don't touch 'em," Feldman says.

There are four phases an Alpha House client goes through. In phase one, he comes to the residence, lives there and learns to deal with every-day situations. He starts to grow up. He earns the right to do odd jobs.

Phase two is the reentry program. The ex-user begins to work in the Reach Out Center. He talks with other abusers, and takes part in group discussions. These groups are made up of people from the community — housewives, doctors, salespeople, abusers and a staff member. He learns to relate with them. He still lives at Alpha House.

In phase three he goes back to school, college, takes vocational training or gets a job. But he still lives at the residence.

In phase four he lives out on his own and comes back once a week for peer group encounter. This can take up to three years or be as short as 14 months.

Saturday nights are community nights at Alpha House. From 8:30 on, the public is invited to come and see the facility and talk with its residents. Families, groups, couples or single people are all welcome at the house, and residents are eager and trying

Family Rosary Said in Buffalo

A fourth radio station has been added to the list of stations which broadcast the Family Rosary for Peace.

Beginning Monday, Dec. 3, during the first week of Advent, WNIA, Buffalo, will join WSAY, Rochester, WRLX, Auburn, and WCLM-FM, Corning, in providing listeners with a nightly rosary.

WNIA, which has carried the Angelus Prayer for some time, will broadcast the rosary five nights a week, 7-7:30 p.m. According to Msgr. Joseph Cirrincione, who conducts both the Family Rosary and the Angelus, Gordon Brown, owner of both WSAY and WNIA was so

impressed with the success of the Angelus in Buffalo that he thought the rosary would also get a good response.

The Family Rosary for Peace has been broadcast over WSAY since 1950.

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