



'Lord, G The SERE

**TEXT BY PAT PETRASKE
PHOTOS BY BRUCE GENUT**

Joey looked relaxed and self-confident after his morning's work on the farm. In a show of gratitude, he kissed the "old man" goodbye.

Joey is a former alcoholic. The "old man" is Ivan Coe, executive director of Serenity Farms, whose rehabilitative program and home-like atmosphere has given a new approach to life to more than 2,000 alcoholics like Joey.

He introduces himself as "Ivan the terrible" and his background is summed up in a simple sentence — "I was a drunk."

Now, after 17 years of sobriety, Coe has expanded the philosophy he has learned through personal encounters with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) into a full scale program of counseling, educational services and understanding.

"A man does what he thinks about," Coe says. He thought about creating an isolated retreat so that alcoholics, looking for help, could not justify their behavior on the basis of their environment.

The project had a modest beginning as a janitorial business in Rochester that hired only alcoholics. But Ivan felt a more in-depth approach would require the availability of short and long term residency. In the midst of Steuben County's highland thicket was his answer, Serenity Farms.

It now houses an assortment of animals with names like Aristotle, Socrates, Rasputin and Plato. Ivan's wife, assistant resident manager, has been dubbed St. Francis. The residents and staff interact in an informal family structure with a sharing of the chores necessary to maintain the rambling Victorian farmhouse and the surrounding 218 acres.

"We don't worry too much about a method because the basic question is 'How much concern do I have for you?'" Ivan said. This continuing concern is shown by the celebration of sobriety birthdays, with all the fixings of a party, for residents and former residents. When a year without drinking has gone by, "we urge them to take pride," Ivan said.

Hand-to-mouth describes Serenity Farms' financial situation. While it is certified by the State Board of Social Welfare and the state Department of Mental Hygiene, Serenity Farms receives no state or federal funding. Donations are received from individuals, area churches and organizations such as the Greater Steuben United Fund and the diocesan Office of Human Development.

The third annual Fall festival for fund



Deep in thought, Bob completes his chores and listens quietly.

