



Don McKee and Charlie Shaffer show Andre Baumann at right the canoe that they are building. Andre is a student from France staying at Friends' Inn.



Counselor Teresa Last teaches girls how to bake cookies.



Houseparents John and Cindy Woodard chat with residents of Kennedy House.

Kennedy House, the group home for boys in the rectory, began informally in 1969 when Father Weider, his brother Joseph, and a young conscientious objector began caring for boys. As the project grew their commitment grew until last year full-time house parents were added to the staff. A teacher Ann Martina and counselor Joseph Weider also live with the four boys presently in the home. The group, according to Father Weider, function as a normal family, "more normally than many." He explained, "We have too many relatives living in houses and not enough families and homes." Sites for two more group homes are being sought in the Southern Tier.

With the hiring of full-time house parents Father Weider found himself "free again" to undertake another project. In the former convent Friends' Inn is evolving. The Inn is conceived as a youth hostel where young people can come for counseling or short term housing. A French student is staying there now. The facility is also used as a retreat house for teens, who come for a three-day "Venture" in Christian community.

Counseling with youth led Father Weider to seek other means in addition to the rap session to help kids. He is now operating an adapted Outward Bound program. The program improves self-image by pitting a youth against seemingly impossible obstacles which he overcomes. Father Weider and a group of boys hiked 40 miles earlier this summer. They are building white water canoes for a future trip.

The philosophy of family and community had led to the formation of extended families in the Sacred Heart parish. These families include adults, young marrieds, and teens, who meet weekly to pray, talk, and plan trips and projects. Father Weider said that one extended family put a new roof and siding on the home of an older woman and that another is helping a family that was burned out recently.

Family is also the key word in the parish's commitment to a young Vietnamese couple being sponsored by Jim and Bonnie Yannie. The parish hopes to bring the husband's three brothers and mother to Perkinsville, where

they will probably stay in Friends' Inn initially.

The community garden behind the church on property donated by a local farmer helps to effect Father Weider's definition of community, "the gathering and mutual supporting of homes." There twenty families tend their plots together.

"No one can live without a family," Father Weider stressed. He seemed to find a family in each group with whom he worked. He cheerfully pulled ingredients for chocolate chip cookies from his cupboard for a group of excited little girls attending a day camp sponsored by the Steuben County Extension Service.

Father Weider does his own cooking and housekeeping and turns his salary and rectory allowance back into the parish ministries. He spread his arms and grinned, "I have no needs." Finances, according to Father, have never been a problem in the parish, whose Sunday morning congregation he described as nongeographic and 25 per cent non-Catholic. "We needed \$9,000 for church repairs once. Within a month we had \$17,000." Contributions are collected in a box in the back of the church. "We feel that if our ministry is alive, people will support it."

"The people here are really beautiful."



Father Weider, left, poses with Vietnamese refugees the Lien Huongs and their sponsors Jim and Bonnie Yannie.



Kevin Tobias



Huber weed garden