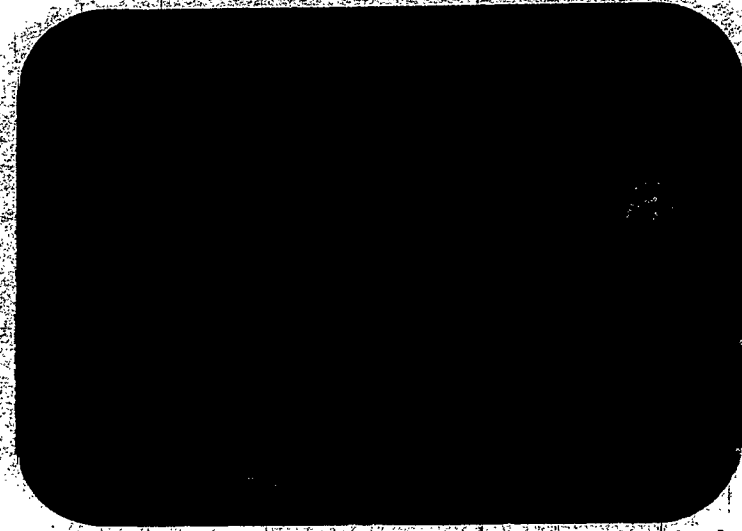




New Haven radiates a warmth of welcome in spite of below-zero temperature. The building, at 33 Milton Street, provides community service projects, fun and prayerful reflection and someone to listen.



Father Richard Tormey, pastor of St. Stephen's, and John Engels, director of Geneva's New Haven, examine a copy of the center's newsletter.

Geneva Youth

Geneva's New Haven is more than a building, a place to gather. It is the symbol of St. Stephen's youth ministry sponsored by the parish community.

"We are not here to keep-kids off the street. We don't need the ping pong or foosball table to function. Emphasis is on people, not activity," said John Engels, director of Youth Ministry.

The center, located in a former two-family house at 33 Milton St. in the heart of downtown Geneva, is rented from the Knights of Columbus for one dollar per year. While the formal hours are Saturday evening, after sports events and special activities, the center's director will usually respond to a knock on the door twelve hours a day. The availability of Engels when youth have a question or just need someone to talk to is an important part of the ministry.

"Can you suggest anyone who doesn't need love to strengthen his relationship with God and one another? This is the goal of Geneva's New Haven," said Engels.

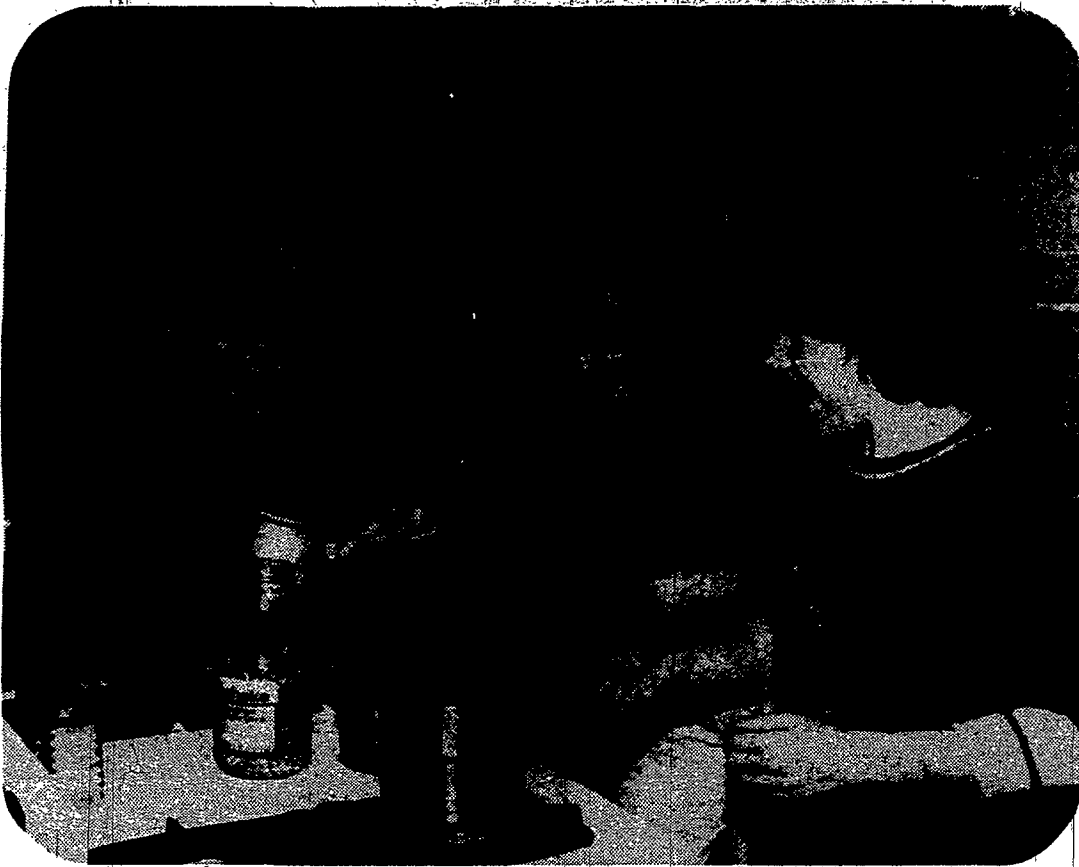
He said the program seeks to provide a balance between social and spiritual programs.

The initial steps in developing the program, which serves high school aged youths were aimed at getting the youths involved. Some 150 youths have joined since the center's opening in September.

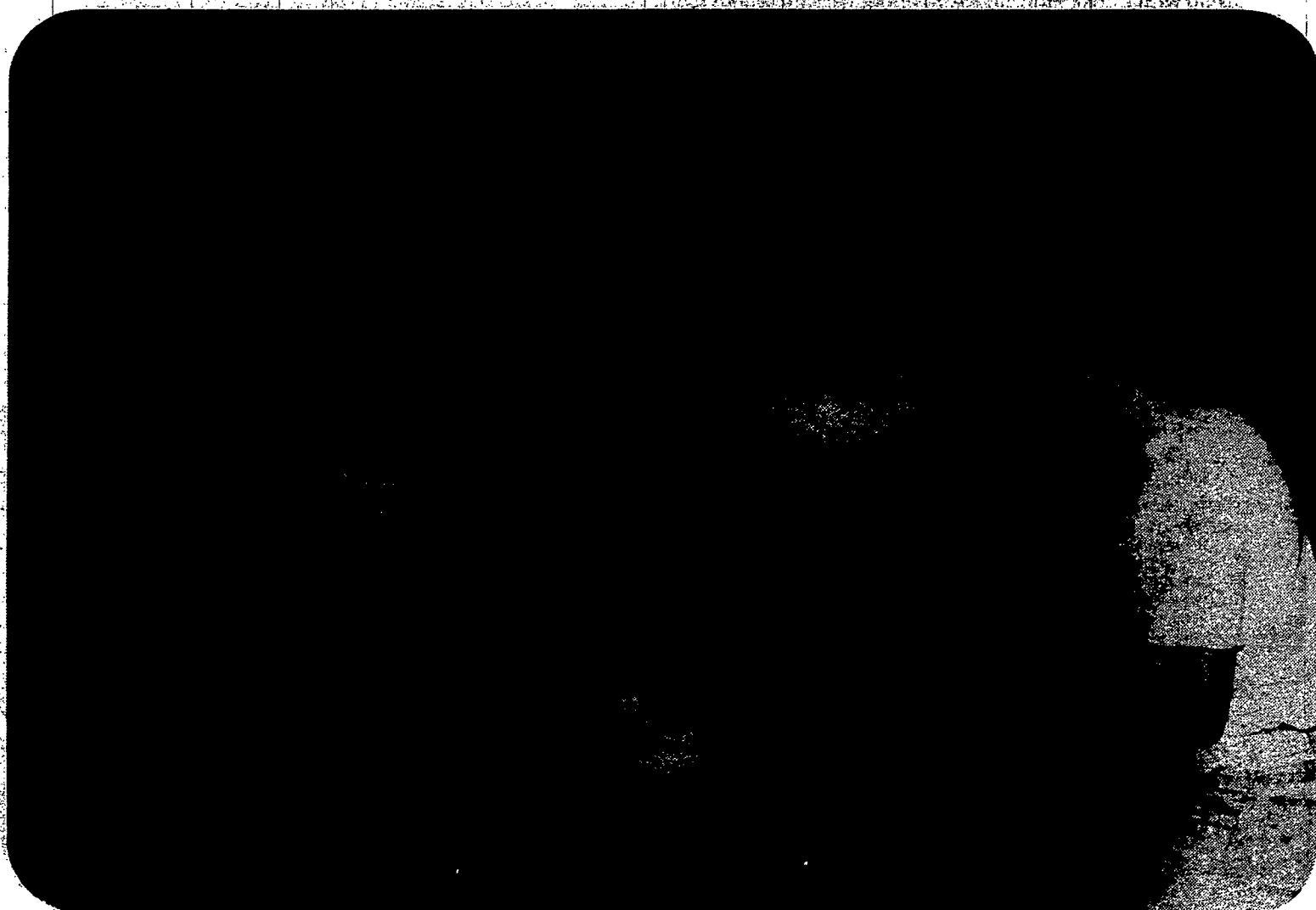
For most the approach is new. The introduction to Christian prayer life is just beginning to catch on and is evolving out of a general tone of reception and consideration.

This approach to youth ministry is well worth consideration by parishes facing teen exodus from formal religious education experiences. The stress is on gathering to build community.

Father Richard Tormey, pastor at St. Stephen's, summed it up when he said, "Geneva's New Haven is to be a stepping



Ann Shields, Mary Pat Hegel, Diane Fountain and unidentified friend finish off a Saturday night with popcorn.



Members Bill Kane, Bill Mathews, Kevin Bradley, Bob Taney, Jr., John Gringera, Sarah Lahr, Joe Bree and others enjoy a fast game of foosball.

Text and Photos
By Mary Ann Ginnerty