

Unique Program Aids Grieving 'Person To Person'

By MARTIN TOOMBS
Southern Tier Editor

Ithaca—The death of a family member or close friend can leave a person isolated in their grief and without anyone to turn to for support.

Recognizing that need, two women organized a group in Ithaca to provide the emotional support a grieving person needs, and to help with other problems caused by the death of a spouse, parent, child or close friend.

Person to Person, as the program is called, matches a volunteer and a client who have experienced similar situations. The volunteer offers support and counseling, and is able to assist with emotional adjustment as well as the change in a person's life caused by a family member's loss.

The group has evolved independently; the organizers know of no other group offering a similar program.

Less than a year old, Person to Person is currently planning a training session for September that will nearly double its number of volunteers. The current volunteers are "all working," Karen Pomeroy, one of the organizers, noted, and the potential exists for many current clients to become volunteers in the future.

Mrs. Pomeroy explained the reason for the organization by referring to her own experiences. Her husband was a drowning victim, and the suddenness of the death meant that "the shock took a very long time," she said. She noted that she received support from friends and clergy, but they also were grieving for his death, and were not in a position to provide her with support.

The person she received the most support from, she noted, was a woman whose husband had been killed in Viet Nam. She was best able to relate to her problems, Mrs. Pomeroy said, and not being personally involved made it easier for her to provide emotional support.

Last Summer, while working in the Suicide Prevention and Crisis Counseling Service in Ithaca, she began to discuss the formation of a volunteer group to provide that type of support with Pauline Allen, who worked and taught in the Cornell Office of Death Education.

As a result of the discussion, the two women organized a training session, recruited volunteers and mental health professionals to do the training, and sponsored their first training session in September. The group began operation in November.

Persons who have had a person close to them die can contact the organization by calling Suicide Prevention's 24-hour service. The counselor takes the information, and gives it to Mrs. Pomeroy, who then matches the client with a volunteer. She uses type of death, nature of relationship, and the age, sex and family situation of the client as criteria, she noted, attempting to match volunteer and client as closely as possible.

The volunteer and client meet according to their wishes, or simply talk on the telephone. The volunteer concentrates on emotional support, but is also able to assist with other problems that can come up, such as child care, financial counseling and helping parents explain death to their children.

Mrs. Pomeroy said the group of 10 will nearly double with a new training

session next month. The group also has enlisted the membership of four college students, she noted, making aid available to students who have had a parent die. The current group includes one widower, seven widows and two who have lost a child, she said.

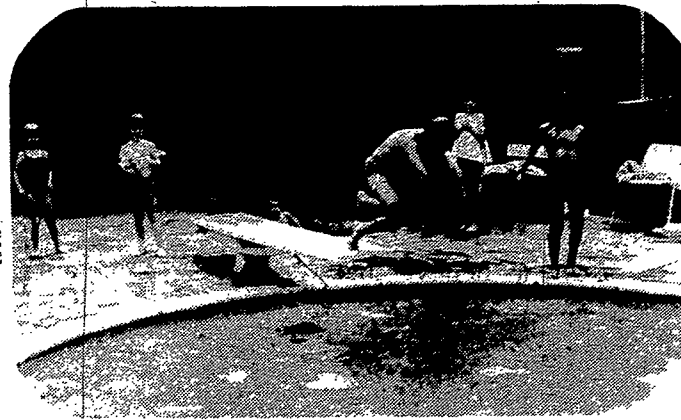
There are two requirements for volunteers. They must have had a person close to them die, and it must have been at least one year since the death. Mrs. Pomeroy explained that they feel that it takes at least a year for a person to "make sure they've dealt with all their feelings," and won't burden the person they are attempting to help. She noted that the original group of volunteers had two members drop out because they found they were not ready to assist someone else.

The volunteers meet once a month to discuss their work with each other and with a mental health professional who attends the meeting. The volunteers also are assigned to a professional they may contact whenever they have a question. Mrs. Pomeroy emphasized that the professional cooperation with the program has been excellent.

Another phase of the program is death education, Mrs. Pomeroy noted. She spoke to many groups during the year, to increase the awareness of the problems encountered by those who have lost a loved one, she pointed out. One of the reasons death is such a problem for the survivors is that "people are afraid to talk about it," she commented.



Elmira children have had a special place to visit this summer. Camp Maplewood, coordinated by Sister Nathaneal, is a week-long day camp program designed for area youngsters. Located on the grounds of Notre Dame High School, Camp Maplewood has averaged over thirty campers per week. Pictured above (from left) are Kim Lewis, Debby Rothberg, Nicol Robinson and Katie Cain all working hard at decoupage. Other campers decided to play hopscotch or swim in the pool.



SOUTHERN TIER
AUBURN-GENEVA



Bloodmobile

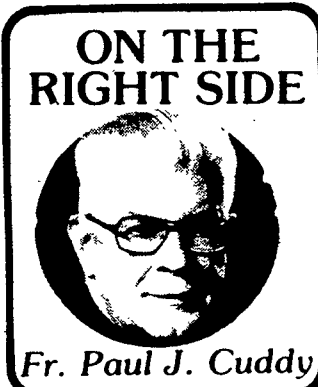
Mrs. Eva Schell, nurse for the Red Cross, checks Mrs. Stasia Sage's blood pressure in preparation for the upcoming Bloodmobile scheduled for August 11 from 1-6:45 p.m. at Blessed Trinity School, Auburn. This year's drive, sponsored by parishes in Auburn and Owasco, will help replenish the blood supply in Johnstown, Pa., depleted by the recent flood.

ASSEMBLY SCHEDULED

Elmira Heights—The next Chemung-Schuylter Regional Assembly has been scheduled for Sunday, Sept. 25 at 7:30 p.m. in St. Charles Borromeo's Church Hall. Anyone seeking to place an item on the agenda should contact Father Joseph Gaynor, regional coordinator.

ST. PATRICK'S FESTIVAL

Elmira—St. Patrick's Church is sponsoring its annual festival Saturday, Aug. 13, in the school parking lot. Food and games will highlight the activities. All are invited; the festival will run from noon to 11 p.m.



Fr. Paul J. Cuddy

In July, this column gave an account of the Rochester Catholic Vietnamese. After praising their fidelity, the question was posed: "What kind of religious training did these people get in Vietnam that they are so faithful? How many of our American families would persevere in the Faith, in fidelity to Mass and the Sacraments were they so uprooted?" In response, a reader wrote:

"Dear Father Cuddy, Having a long-standing belief and faith in Jesus Christ, but never quite finding the 'right' place to worship, a few years ago I took instructions from a marvelous young priest, and found that the Catholic Church had all I sought after and more...

"This week you have broached the subject of the devotion of our Vietnamese refugees to Our Lord. I felt an incredulous tone in your penned thoughts, as though you found it difficult to believe that people who have had to give up everything and everyone they ever knew would not also give up their faith and worship.

"Maybe your long-

standing contact with people and experience in the Church has shown you that this is how things happen generally. Dear Lord, I hope this is not true.

"So my answer to your question, "What kind of training did these people receive?" is this: it is not training; it is Faith.

"I have always had faith. I now enjoy a wonderful method of worship, and find an outlet for my need to help others through Catholic groups and charities. I do hope that even if I am ever uprooted to the moon, that the Church will be there. I'd receive the Host along with one-eyed green beings who speak Gobbledygook, and Praise the Lord."

"Dear Mrs. M., I give thanks to God for your good letter and for your love of Our Lord and His Church. May I make a few comments about my 'incredulity' that groups of Americans would remain faithful to their Religion if they were uprooted like the Vietnamese.

"My concern and wonderment—'incredulity' is a bit too strong—comes from

my sorrow that the attacks on the Church by Catholic teachers, writers, including priests and Sisters; from Catholic publications and catechetical material these past dozen years have debilitated the faith of many Catholics. Hardships are not the point. Poland probably has greater harassment and persecution of the Church than most places, yet the Polish people are outstanding in their fidelity. They probably are even stronger because of persecution.

"The result of these attacks has been to turn thousands adrift, away from Mass and the Sacraments, away from the teachings of the Church. Studies show a great defection in the 18 to 45 year old bracket. If this is so, what of their children?

"You will understand my thinking better if you would read the paperback, Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism, by Prof. James Hitchcock. Your rectory or church library should have a copy of this well-documented account of wolves in sheeps clothing, who have successfully undermined the Faith of many of our people.

"That the Vietnamese seem unconcerned about, or

oblivious to these attacks, assist at Mass and love Our Blessed Mother is a cause for rejoicing. The question still is: What is the cause of their firmness in the Faith, while so many Americans have become spiritually flabby, indifferent and drifting?

"One of the great things about convinced converts is their zeal to share the Faith. They are the leaven the Church needs.

"I love Cardinal John Henry Newman so much because of his nobility in suffering for the Faith. He was treated shamefully by many of his Catholic peers, especially his fellow convert, Cardinal Manning. Do read his Apologia, a spiritual classic. I love G.K. Chesterton, not only for his incisive insight into the Catholic Faith, but especially for his bouncy, exuberant love of the Faith.

"And although I know you only from this sole letter, I bless God and Our Lady for you who cherishes Christ and the Church, and who are willing to share it with the world for this I praise the Lord."

M. L. ALLEN & SON
Corning, N.Y.
Quality Furniture
62 Bridge St.
Phone 936-8431

A. W. BEILBY & SON
Funeral Home
James Rotsell
Darrell O'Brian
139 Walnut St.
Dial 936-9121
Corning, N.Y.

Gerould's Pharmacies
S. Main St. and
Church & Hoffman
Elmira
Delivery Service
733-6696

ullwan
7-29

TIRE!

I'll send you information be held in each region

especially enle from these to consider whether the you to such a ne to the in-meeting, and

J. Jean Rodman Coordinator of on for Councils Office of pastoral Ministry

isters

Donors

ion Fund

ith Heberle, eral of the ters of Mercy, the Courier- publish the ter conveying ion's thanks to minded peop- ese.

leep gratitude owledge your of \$20,000 for y endeavors in e.

of Mercy are. we are able to ng the poorest or in South use the people ocese have generously to an Mission

missionary n Santiago are all who have in supporting s in the Third r love and ouch the lives le through the nissionaries

e of The Sisters thank you for the cry of the ose who are o themselves.

our Father, enerosity with ssings

efully in Christ, Judith Heberle

ntended for ust be addressed urier-Journal, 67 Rochester, N.Y.

d be no longer pages, typed with names s. The paper ight to edit all