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COURIER-JOURNAL

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Southern Tier Group Studying Hospice Care

By Martin Toombs
Southern Tier Editor

Elmira — Activity under way on three fronts in Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben counties should mean that some type of hospice care will soon be available to area residents.

Hospices are well known in England, but are new to the United States. They are organizations that serve terminal patients and their families, attempting to make the death as painless as possible to patient and family.

One important aspect of hospice care is that, as treatment for the disease is no longer beneficial, the symptoms are treated to make the patient comfortable as possible.

The first hospice in the United States was founded in New Haven, Conn., in 1971. Few others exist; one did begin operation in Buffalo in 1975.

Rev. Robert Lester, convenor of the committee discussing hospice care for the Southern Tier, noted that New York State began work on guidelines for hospices three months ago. Many issues have yet to be decided, he reported, but

recognition of hospices by the state will make it possible for the care to be more widely available.

The three-county group, which has filed incorporation papers as Southern Tier Hospice, Inc., includes three groups which are each working on different models of care.

Rev. Lester, pastor of Park Congregational Church in Elmira, noted that the Elmira inter-church cluster first began discussing provision of home care for the terminally ill, and are continuing that work.

Sister Marie Michael, St. Joseph's Hospital assistant administrator, is working on a project at St. Joseph's that is training personnel for hospice care. The plan, as sister explained it, calls for hospice-type care for patients in the hospital's regular medical-surgical units.

The third model is being investigated by a group based in Watkins Glen, headed by Rev. Clark N. McKinney. Rev. McKinney, a Presbyterian minister, is working to find funding and get approval for a free-standing, 24-bed hospice in a mansion in Watkins Glen, Lester said.

The three groups have been working independently, Lester noted, and joined forces to increase their chances of getting state designation as a development project. Lester commented that he thought the free-standing facility would be the last model to be started, because of its many uncertainties.

The group is seeking private grants to hire a director to examine the issues involved and work on setting up the service, Lester said. Meanwhile, the incorporation papers have been filed, as has an application for designation as a demonstration project. The Watkins Glen group also has applications on file to develop the free-standing unit.

A meeting of representatives from the three counties is scheduled June 25 in the Corning Public Library, Lester stated, and he expects that a Board of Directors will be named at that time.

The day before she left to attend a conference in Tucson, Ariz., on the organizational issues involved in hospices, Sister Marie Michael reported that the hospital has about 20 persons participating in a

six-week course on hospice care, which is scheduled to end July 11.

The current educational effort is designed to raise "the knowledge level of everyone in the hospital" about hospice care, she said.

Dr. Looknarine Persuad will be the medical advisor to the hospice team, sister said, which will be picked after the course is completed.

A first, the team will minister to the terminally ill according to the hospice style wherever they happen to be in the hospital, she said.

She also noted that the home-care component will be arranged through existing public health services.

The curriculum being used, she noted, has been offered to Southern Tier Health Management Corporation, which provides training for the seven hospitals in the three counties involved. The corporation is surveying the

other hospitals to check interest.

Lester noted that his interest in hospices is caused in part by his experiences visiting terminally ill patients in acute care hospitals.

The primary work of hospitals is to prevent death, and it often is difficult for hospital staff to accept the impending death of a patient. Such denial of the inevitable makes it difficult for the patient to come to terms with their situation. And hospital regulations, such as those preventing visits from children, may make a dying person's last days more lonely than they need be.

The statement of purpose written by Southern Tier Hospice notes that the agency seeks to "serve patients whose life expectancy is measured in months or weeks, and their families."

"Home care will be given the first priority," it notes; "we hope that inpatient care could be provided by local

hospitals of the patient's choosing, close to home."

"Southern Tier Hospice, Inc., believes that the patient and his or her family is the unit of care, and that care must extend beyond the death of the patient, through the bereavement period for the family."

Concerning the cost of hospice care, Lester noted that a Rochester group studying the issue found that hospice care could be provided for \$86 a day, considerably less than hospital care.

Many important issues concerning the establishment of hospices have yet to be resolved. A key, Lester confirmed, is the establishment of a reimbursement rate by the state for hospice care. If when a rate is established, it is too low, it would hinder hospice services. Other questions, such as what type of service the state will approve, what the operating agencies will look like, and the provision of payment by health insurance companies also need to be answered.

Schuyler Parishes Sponsor 'Home Missionary' Project

By Martin Toombs
Southern Tier Editor

Watkins Glen — A 13-week project reaching out to the 10,000 unchurched persons in Schuyler County has been launched by St. Mary's of the Lake and St. Benedict's, Odessa.

The project is being led by nine local businessmen who met for several weeks in preparation for the "home missionary" project which began Sunday, June 17.

A key element will be the radio broadcast of the 10 a.m. folk Mass each Sunday from St. Mary's over radio station WXXY-FM. The broadcast of a local Mass is the first for the area.

And to announce the broadcast, a letter was sent to every household in the county, announcing the broadcast, and inviting further participation in parish activities.

Before the campaign began, a letter was sent to the county's Protestant clergy explaining the project's aim of reaching those not now participating in religious activities.

The committee, while remaining anonymous, meets at 7 a.m. one day each week to work with the parish priests, Father Andrew Kalafsky,

pastor, and Father David Mura, associate.

Father Mura noted it has been estimated that more than 60 percent of the county's residents, 20 percent more than the national average, are "unchurched," meaning they participate in no church activities. Among them, he said, are 2,000 non-practicing Catholics.

Organized under the theme "We Care We Share" the campaign will include advertising in local publications and on radio.

The radio Mass also will be a ministry to the county's shut-ins. Future possibilities include extraordinary ministers taking the Eucharist to the shut-ins in conjunction with the weekly broadcast.

Father Mura explained that he asked the businessmen to be on the committee for their abilities and knowledge of the county and how to reach county residents. He said they brought sound ideas to the campaign, and it was on their initiative that it was decided to begin a 13-week effort, with possible extensions over the next year, rather than staging a short-term drive.

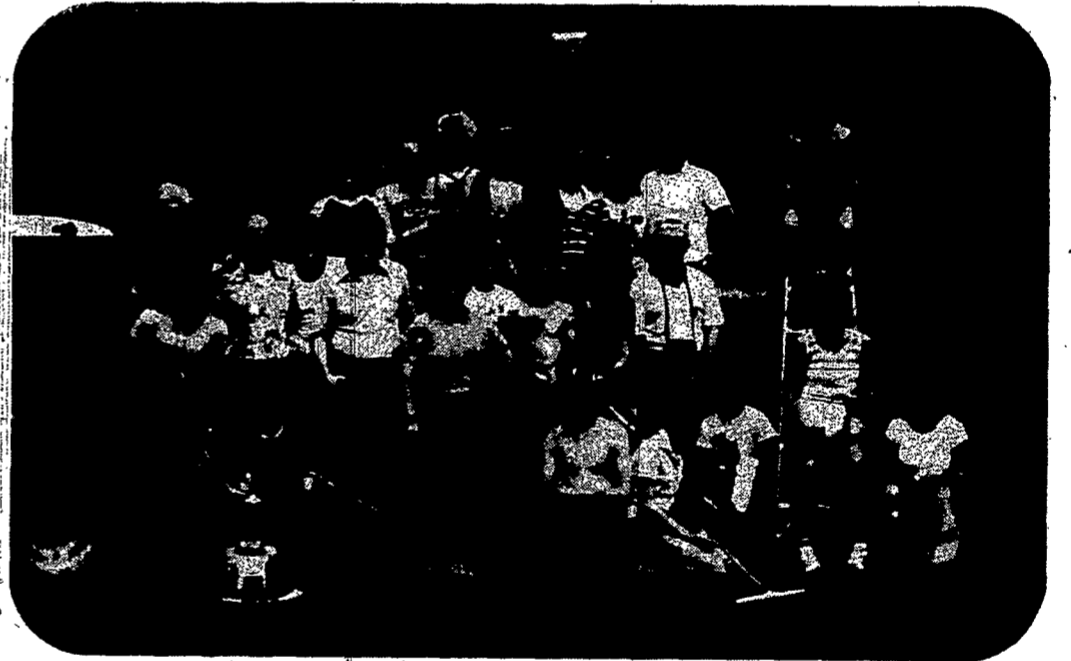
Schuyler County offers particular problems for those seeking to publicize programs. The county has no daily newspaper, and many of its residents work and shop outside the county.

The intention is to "do it a friends to friends," Father Mura said. The publicity designed to show that "we're happy with our faith and religion," he stated, hoping that others will become interested.

The concept is based in part on a conclusion reached in a Gallup Poll on the unchurched. As reported by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Evangelization, the poll found that 32 percent of the unchurched "say they would return immediately if they could find a pastor or rabbi and a church or synagogue community, with whom they can openly discuss religious doubts and personal spiritual needs. Another 13 percent would return immediately if they were simply invited to a church or synagogue by a member of that community and they liked the people they met."

Discussing the approach they are taking, the committee members expressed their hope that the broadcast of the spirit-filled folk Mass from St. Mary's will provide the impetus for persons to become involved in their faith again or to take a closer look at Catholicism.

As to the program's success they will be depending on telephone calls, letters and other responses to both the advertising and the broadcast Mass.



Spring Cleaning

The St. Margaret Mary, Apalachin, Youth Group spent their annual work day at the parish June 2 raking, mowing, cleaning out ditches, and washing windows. Pictured are the workers and their advisors, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Desorcie, Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Ev Kimball and Father Elmer Schmidt, pastor.

Art Auction Set June 24

Elmira — An Art Auction/Wine and Cheese Party benefiting St. Joseph's Hospital will be conducted Sunday, June 24, at the Downtown Holiday Inn.

The event is sponsored by the hospital's Development Council, in concert with the auxiliary.

The Wine and Cheese Party, and preview of the works to be auctioned, will begin at 7:30 p.m. The auction will begin at 8:30 p.m. The Howard Mann Art Center, Lambertville, N. J., will conduct the auction.

Mrs. Jeanne G. Meacham is chairing the event, with the assistance of Vincent Valicenti and Mrs. Belle Goodman.

Festival June 24 At St. Casimir's

Elmira — St. Casimir's Parish's ninth annual Summer Festival will be Sunday, June 24, beginning at 1 p.m., on the parish grounds.

Again this year, there will be a chicken barbecue, beginning at 1 p.m., which will be \$3 for adults, and \$1.50 for children. Take-outs will be available. Italian and American specialties also will be featured.

Kenny Bannon and his Polka Jaks from Scranton will provide music. Also performing will be the Twin Tier Polka Tiers, which is sponsored by the White Eagles Club, PNA 1094.

Father Henry Adamski, pastor, is honorary chairman. Organizational chairmen

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