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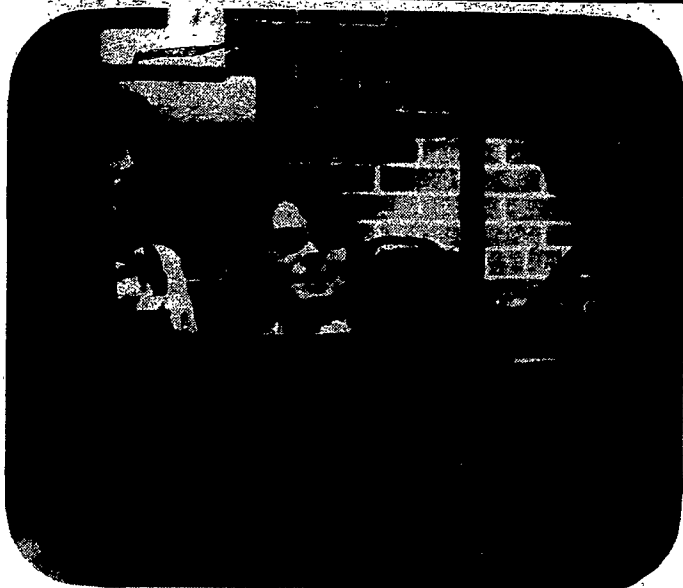
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Photos by Terrance J. Brennan

Above Sister Kathleen Kolmer (left) and Sister Mary Frances Wegman watch as one of their younger charges practices his driving skills. At right Sister Kathleen reads a children's story inside the Andrew's Center.



Area Sisters Provide Special Child Care

By Michael Groden

Although there are many different ministries in this diocese, all important and productive, few, if any could be called unique. Except if you travel to Barberry Terrace in Rochester to the old St. Andrew's Convent and walk up three very long flights of stairs.

Upon entering the third floor one begins to see just how unusual this ministry is. Playpens and toys seem to be everywhere, and one hears something not usually associated with convents, the laughter (or yelling) of young children. You've just entered the Andrew's Center, a licensed foster home of the Monroe County Department of Social Services.

The foster parents are not your average "mom" and "dad" either. Sister Mary Frances Wegman, RSM, and Sister Kathleen Kolmer, RSM, work full time caring for the children and seem to enjoy their work.

Founded in January, 1974 by Sister Gaye Lynn Moorhead, RSM, the Andrew's Center serves as an alternative Foster home for youngsters who for a variety of reasons, have found it difficult to adjust to the more traditional foster home setting with a foster mother and father or children who have proven to be hard to place.

The center has provided a home atmosphere for children with emotional problems or who are mentally retarded or family groups with two or more members trying to stay together.

Another advantage is that this "non-traditional" foster home provides a non-

threatening alternative for natural parents who may be hesitant in giving up their children to a foster mother and father, Sister Mary Frances said.

The foster home program in Monroe County is designed to "service children who need temporary placement outside of the home," according to Mary Lou Miller, home finding supervisor for Social Services. The reasons for the children leaving home are varied and include neglect, illness of parent or parents, or bad family situations.

The children are referred to Social Services by doctors, schools, the courts and sometimes their own parents.

Miller said that when a child comes to the agency his or her situation is evaluated and appropriate action is taken. "We try to keep the child at home and work with the parents and children there. If that isn't possible plans are made to provide a foster home," she said.

Sister Mary Frances said that the average stay for a foster child is usually one year, although one child has been at the center for nearly five years. She and Sister Kathleen usually care for six children ranging from infancy to 12 years of age.

The county pays \$4.80 per day for children below age five and \$6.70 for older children. It also provides expenses for clothing, medical and dental costs. Sister Kathleen said the money helps but the center relies on other sources, including the Sisters of Mercy congregation and outside donations. This extra money pays for "extras"

she said, such as Christmas or birthday presents, vacations and a van to transport the children.

The sisters began their co-directorship two years ago when Sister Gaye left to attend law school. They both became interested in the center through Sister Gaye. They are both qualified teachers and share an interest in children. Sister Mary Frances added that she had practical experience. "I'm one of eleven children," she said.

When both sisters have to be away from the center they get free babysitting service from the other eight sisters who live in the convent. The center takes up the entire third floor and of the first floor.

Both Mary Lou Miller and Sister Mary Frances said that as far as they knew the Andrew's Center was the only foster home of its kind in the country, a very different ministry to be sure.

NFP Gets \$4,000 Grant From Diocese

Natural Family Planning of Rochester has received a grant of \$4,000 from the diocese through its Office of Family Life and Catholic Charities.

NFP is not funded by the diocese although it does receive an annual grant which goes toward the director's salary. NFP is a method of family planning approved by the Church although it is not connected with the calendar method of birth control, commonly known as the rhythm method.

60th Wedding

Mr. and Mrs. William A. Groh will celebrate the 60th anniversary of their wedding on Sunday, Aug. 19 at St. James Church. The couple was wed at Holy Redeemer Church on that date in 1919.

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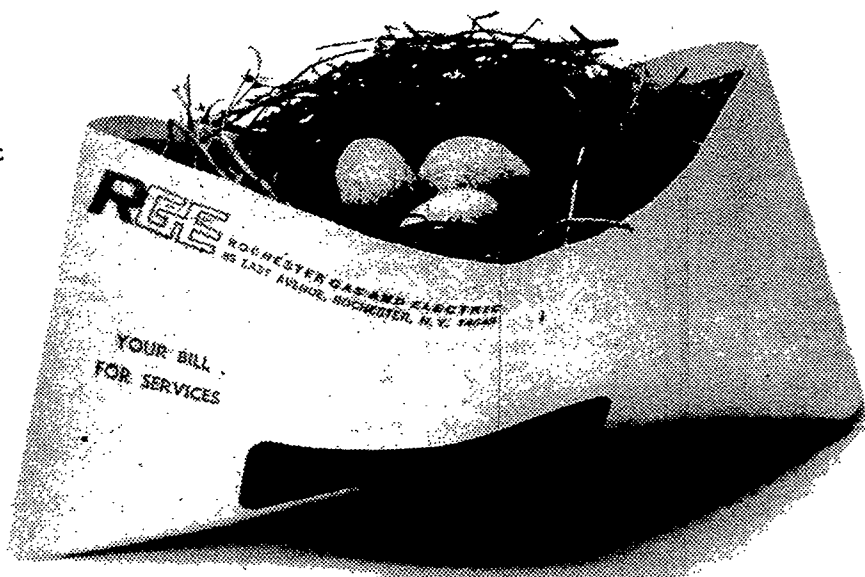
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Shedding light on some subjects that need it.



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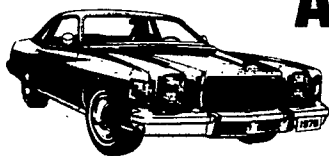
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