

COURIER-JOURNAL

Southern Tier-Auburn Geneva

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Being Tried in Chemung:

Preventing Family Problems May Be the Cure

By Martin Toombs
Southern Tier Editor

Elmira — An ever-increasing caseload of troubled families has caused the Chemung County Department of Social Services (DSS) to consider ways to help families before their problems reach the stage where intervention is requested.

Although not always recognized as part of the charge for county Social Services Departments, the Chemung County unit assists approximately 4,000 families. Raymond Fortier, DSS commissioner, noted, who have come to the agency's attention because of family problems, including spouse and child abuse and difficulties in family relationships, rather than through requests for public assistance.

When such problems come to DSS attention, they

have been worsening for a considerable time, and are difficult and sometimes expensive to attempt to solve.

The increasing caseload led the DSS workers to express their wish that support for the families was available sooner. Linda Hicks, the director of Social Services, explained. That was the impetus behind the formation of four programs the department is operating designed to aid families before their problems become destructive.

Illustrating the concept is a program that has just begun in the Horseheads school district. While discussing problems with district officials, Mrs. Hicks related, they looked at the records of 10 children for whom the district was paying tuition to attend school outside the district. Such programs are costly, Mrs. Hicks noted. The

records showed that the students' teachers were aware of problems years before it became necessary to place them outside their homes.

From that realization came the proposal to set up a pilot program at Center Street elementary school. Under a contract with Glove House, the local operator of teenage group homes, a worker has been hired to work in the school with students and their families who were nominated to the program by teachers. Only a quarter of those nominated were children known to DSS, Mrs. Hicks noted.

The summer will be spent setting up programs for each family, Mrs. Hicks explained, which will then begin as soon as school starts in September.

And, Fortier added, if the program succeeds, it will "change the entire way we deal with families."

Evaluating the program's success will be difficult, they admitted; part of the evaluation can't occur for five to ten years. But, Mrs. Hicks pointed out, any progress being made will be observed by the teachers, and the Horseheads officials are examining educational methods for pre- and post-testing of those in the program.

Mrs. Hicks and Fortier also praised the Horseheads school personnel for their cooperation.

DSS also sponsors three other preventative programs.

One seeks to aid parents who go to DSS to request that a child, usually a teenager, be removed from their home.

Fortier noted that once a child is removed, it is difficult to resolve the problems and re-unite the family.

Foster care, he said, is always regarded as a last resort.

The program provides counseling and other services the family may need to resolve the conflicts. The program, Mrs. Hicks stated, has received 115 referrals, but has only had to place 17 children outside their homes.

Another similar program involves care for those youngsters who are returning to their parents after living in an institution.

Fortier noted that in such cases, the children have received assistance, but the parents have not. The program aids the entire family, to ease the child's transition back into the home.

The fourth such program, crisis day care, is not yet operating. Mrs. Hicks reported, as the funding has just been received after three

years of work on grant proposals.

Under a concept that has been successful in other places, Fortier noted, crisis day care will be available to parents who feel unable to cope with their children at a particular time. The service's staff, Mrs. Hicks stated, will be specially trained for the work; she is looking for "strong parents" who will be able to assist the children and the parents.

The four preventative programs, funded through state grants, are designed to prevent problems that would be more damaging and more difficult to solve if allowed to worsen.

And they also have a common feature that is not their primary purpose, but an additional benefit. If they are successful, there will be a significant financial savings when compared with the cost of dealing with the problems at a later stage.

Sister Rosaria To Join Office

By Martin Toombs
Southern Tier Editor

Elmira — Sister Rosaria Hughes, RSM, will be joining the staff of the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry (STOSM) to develop programs in its Individual and Family Development Department, Father Neil Miller, office director, has announced.

Sister Rosaria, currently executive director of the Wayne County Community Action Program (CAP), will undertake the establishment of new services envisioned for the office, which may include counseling and other direct service programs to benefit Southern Tier residents. Her first duties will include finding funding for such efforts.

An Elmira native, Sister Rosaria has been directing the varied efforts of Wayne CAP for 10 years. Currently more than 100 persons work in programs the agency spon-

sors. In order to conclude her work in Wayne County, sister will be joining STOSM at the end of October.

The office will begin operation under the new structure July 1. In addition to Father Miller, the Community Development Department will be staffed by Giovina Caroscio. Working with Sister Rosaria will be Sister Judith Reger, SSI, who began providing counseling and other services in March.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will help initiate the new office at a prayer service and reception Sunday, June 29. The prayer service will begin at 3 p.m. in St. Peter and Paul Church. The reception will follow, until 5 p.m., in the STOSM offices in St. Peter and Paul School.

Father Miller and his staff have extended an open invitation to Southern Tier residents to attend the prayer service and reception.

St. Casimir's Festival Sunday

Elmira — Thousands of visitors are expected to fill the grounds of St. Casimir's Parish at Roe and Davis streets this Sunday, June 29, for the parish's annual summer festival.

Events will begin at 1 p.m., rain or shine, and will include musical performances and the usual wide selection of ethnic and American foods. Polish dishes and a chicken barbecue will be among the featured offerings.

Sunshower, a polka band from Binghamton, will perform.

Officers for the festival committee include Victoria Janeski, Francis Kamas, Mary Ann Piecuch, Henry Gublo, Edward Kamas and Leonard Kosloski.



Stamp Collectors

Some of the students joining a Stamp Club at Immaculate Conception School in Ithaca examine starter books distributed by Richard Dalton of the Elmira Post Office, who spoke at the club's first meeting earlier this month. Father Bernard Carges, Immaculate Conception pastor and a long time stamp collector, will be advising the club, which had 44 prospective members at the meeting.

CCGEB Applies for Grant

Elmira — Fluorescent lights and some insulation work at St. Mary's School could be the result of an application the Chemung County General Education Board (CCGEB) recently filed with a federally-funded program to assist private schools to reduce their heating and lighting requirements.

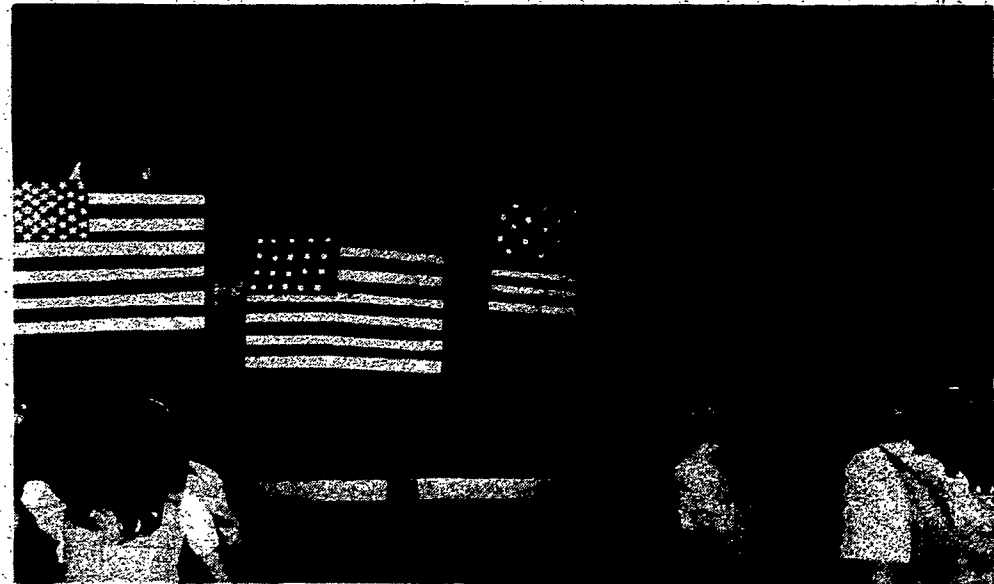
Gail Callahan, school system business manager, explained at the CCGEB meeting at St. Mary's June 12 that if approved the \$10,000 project would be at least half-funded by the program, and possibly more, making the maximum cost to the system \$5,000. No formal decision is

necessary until after they receive final word on the grant, she said, which is expected by Sept. 15.

The project would replace the incandescent lights in the classrooms of the older section of St. Mary's School, and

insulate steam pipes.

The board also heard plans for a July promotional campaign for the system's new pre-school programs, which begin in September.



Flag Day

Students hold examples of the changes which have occurred in the United States flag during its history at a Flag Day ceremony at St. Mary Our Mother School, Horseheads, on June 13. The observance, which included patriotic songs and a skit about the first flag, was directed by Mrs. Georgine Rohrer, fourth grade teacher.

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