

# Civic Group Aids the Mentally Ill

By John Dash

Each year an increasing number of Rochesterians make use of the emergency telephone service LifeLine 275-5151; and more than half of those calls are from people in emotional distress.

Doris Henry, office manager of LifeLine 275-5151, speaking for Betty Oppenheimer, program director, said that last year 67,000 people called the

number and about 35,000 of those people were seeking mental relief.

As it happens, the service is part of a complex network of programs and agencies, many of which assist emotionally handicapped people, grouped under the administration of The Health Association of Rochester.

What Catholic Charities is to diocesan social service agencies, The Health

the volunteer and the psychiatric patient in transition from institutional or community care or both, in a one-to-one relationship. The relationship, and supervision by professionals, is designed to help the patient to independent living.

The program last year made between 360 and 380 such matches, Bernice Skirboll said. She is both the founder and present director of the Compeer program here, one which is under review in other municipalities for its approach.

Under the program, volunteers are screened and then trained and finally matched with a person under psychiatric care, be that in a hospital, a group home or in a preventive care program, Ms. Skirboll said.

The service delivered by the volunteer is "viewed by the professionals as an adjunct to therapy," she noted, and includes such mundane matters as help with apartment hunting, social dealing, and hygiene.

The Work and Social Adjustment Program, headed by Paul Wexler, offers a transitional work opportunity for the long-term unemployed individual under psychiatric care.

Last year, with a budget of \$147,000, WSAP served 60 clients in an average month, gave counseling, evaluation and work adjustment services to 143 mental health patients referred through the state Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, community mental health centers, the Rochester Psychiatric Centers and private psychiatrists.

In addition, the program arranged and monitored 61 trial work placements at 22 community locations; and by year's end about half of the program participants had obtained paid employment.

Both Compeer and WSAP were once activities of the Mental Health Chapter and are examples of programs developing to the point of becoming full-fledged members of the association on their own right.

The Mental Health Chapter is a 375-member organization providing advocacy, education and support to preventive measures against mental illness.

Presiding over the programs are Harriette Royer, the recently named program director, and Patricia DePrez,



DIAMOND

Association is to a number of private lay groups seeking to better the lot of their fellow men.

According to Melvyn Diamond, executive director of the association, "The Health Association is a unique organization in the City. It is an umbrella organization for programs ordinarily independent."

The association began 64 years ago as "an old blue-ribbon charity organization" concerned with tuberculosis, Diamond said.

Rather quickly, he said, there emerged a series of health concerns within that society and through which it expanded its role in the community.

Today the association is described as a "mini United Way without the fundraising capacity," dealing with between \$2.5 and \$2.6 million for services performed, Diamond said.

Income breaks down to 35 percent from the United Way, 60 percent from government contracts and payment for services through the New York State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and five percent from investments, he said.

That money is then used for such programs as LifeLine 275-5151, the Mental Health Chapter, the Work and Social Adjustment Program and Compeer, all of which deal specifically with the emotionally handicapped, though such service is not the extent of The Health Association's concerns.

All of the sub-groups are housed in a Victorian mansion in the 900 block of East Avenue.

The Compeer program is described as bringing together

## Volunteer at Villa Chosen for Conference

Francis Abbey, known as "Grandpa Red" to the boys and girls of St. Joseph's Villa, is one of 10 grandparents from across the nation selected to attend the national Foster Grandparent Program conference in Arlington, Va., now in session.

Abbey accompanied Mary June Fox, local director of the Foster Grandparent Program. He was chosen, according to national officials, because of the type of setting in which he works. St. Joseph's Villa is a

residential child care agency providing treatment for emotionally handicapped children between 6 and 18.

Abbey is a resident of Greece and joined the program in 1979 when he was assigned to the Villa. He accompanies children on field trips, cheers their basketball games, comforts youngsters — "providing that special affection only a grandparent can give," according to Sister Phyllis Tierney, director of volunteers.

Fr. Paul J. Cuddy



On the Right Side

## Thumbing Through The Files

To Bishop Kearney, May 9, 1953

On Jan. 7, 1952, I left St. Andrew's Seminary for 17 months recall to the Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio. This June 7, 1953, is the terminating date. Of late I have prayed and weighed about staying on in the "indefinite category," i.e. until the Air Force thinks we are not needed, or until we should withdraw. I have been contented in the Service both with the work and the life. My work has been reasonably fruitful; and I have sufficient rank to secure the works of the Church. So I am requesting permission from you to apply for further duty in the Air Force. However, if you wish otherwise, I shall be equally contented to return to whatever work you wish me to do.

Since last writing to you, the pressure has let up somewhat. The WAF (Women's Air Force) dropped from 1,700 trainees to a present 700, which is a relief. However, the Officer Candidate School, of which I am the Catholic chaplain, is to zoom from a present 400 to a June load of 1,200 young men in training. The jail remains numerically the same, but always unpredictable in human relations.

A month ago a prisoner who is a pretty good Catholic despite the fact that he "stabbed a guy," became all upset by a telegram from his wife. "She wants more money urgently. I gave her \$150 three weeks ago. What's she doing with it all?"

It sounded like a legitimate question, so at his request, I wrote the wife asking her to write friend husband and give an explanation. The next week I see him all at peace with God and Man. "What's the scoop, Joe?" "It's all OK, Father. Everything's all right." "What did she need the money for?" "Well, her father is to be executed this week, and she needed the money to go to the execution. Why didn't she say that in the first place?"

It is partly because of the

jail and partly because of a brilliant Boston College Jesuit who is head chaplain here at Lackland, Father John Long, that I have read recently "My Six Convicts," and some of Damon Runyon.

I ask your blessing, and also say sincerely that I will be satisfied with any decision you may make.

**Comment:** Bishop Kearney was always proud of the Rochester Diocese's contribution to the military chaplaincy, and sent a kind letter of encouragement, and his permission to stay.

To Sister M. Terentia, Carthegena, Oh.

I sure am glad to have your letter. I have been wearing your beautiful stole which you personally made with your 80-year-old hands, and accept the admiration of viewers who ask, "Where did you get it? It's beautiful." I just say, "Oh, a nice 80-year-old nun who prays for me made it with her own hands." I have your request for more tapes and the check along with it. Will you write to me what tapes you have, and I will donate those you do not have. Pardon my delay in answering, but I am a one-man operation and things get jumbled. The one reason I would like to be a bishop is to have a bunch of flunkies to say "Do this" and they do it; "mail this" and they mail it. Are you familiar with Father Basset's tapes? I love them, and am sending you his four talks, "The Golden Years." If you have any elderly crabby nuns in the community, have them listen. You sound like a happy, cheerful golden citizen. We seniors better stick together. I am pushing 73 in September — and love it!

To Bishop Hickey

I have a 2,015-page paperback, Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia, published in 1960, that is a mine of information when I need some odd or end such as a date or name which could take weeks to research. If that fails, I call the Public Library Information Desk, which is efficient and gracious. And for diocesan needs I discover that more and more I call up your secretary, Mrs. Ann Eckert, who equals the other two in her own ecclesiastical sphere. Give her my regards — and thanks.

known across the diocese as the co-host of "Real to Reel." monitoring legislative and economic action dealing with the mentally ill.

"The mentally ill are among the weakest members of our society in their own advocacy," Ms. Royer said, stressing the need for public participation in encouraging programs for the mentally handicapped, and in

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