

# Being 'Displaced Homemakers' United Women

By Martin Toombs  
Southern Tier Editor

Ithaca — They were a disparate group of elderly women, mothers with children, women organizing and promoting, and some apparently struggling with emotional stress. One talked of trips to Europe, while another has lived her life in the immediate area.

Despite their varied backgrounds, the 35 women meeting in the pavilion in Stewart Park do have one

thing uniting them: they are displaced homemakers.

"Displaced homemaker" may be an unfamiliar term for a more familiar problem. The group exists primarily for those women who have been forced by circumstances out of their roles as homemakers. The widowed, separated, divorced or persons otherwise cut off from financial support draw support from each other as they deal with changes they may have been unable to anticipate, and chart new lives.

The Displaced Homemakers Committee of Tompkins County was organized more than two years ago, and now has 60 active members, and at least 120 more women who benefit from its services. The organization recently received a diocesan grant from the Campaign for Human Development of \$6,636 to hire a half-time coordinator for the coming year.

The picnic in Stewart Park June 30 was the group's annual meeting.

The person responsible for the committee is Sandy Lyons, who, although not a displaced homemaker herself, became involved in such a group in California. Upon her return to Ithaca, she asked some friends who were displaced homemakers if they would join such a group.

A planning committee met in December 1978, and an open meeting in April 1979 started the group. It existed without an office until May 1980, when it got a room in the Women's Community Building which it calls "A Place of Our Own."

The group's activities move in many directions; including emotional support through support groups which meet weekly, and task forces looking at such issues as jobs and legal information. The group also sponsors weekly brown-bag lunches, which include speakers on various topics.

Mrs. Lyons noted that the membership also includes some professionals and others who support the group, and women who were displaced many years ago, and "want to give back to the community" something they wish they had had.

remarking on the members' many stages of adjustment, Mrs. Lyons noted the continuing effort to treat each woman as an important person, and to make sure they know that their views are "valuable and important."

Following the meeting, one woman expressed her gratitude for the group's existence. She commented that her abrupt displacement about a year ago left her in shock. It was the Displaced Homemakers who provided the support she needed to get through the crisis, she said. That support continues as she goes through the stages of re-focusing her life, she said.

She applauded the group's supportiveness and understanding. Between weekly meetings, telephone calls continue the assistance, she said.

Mrs. Lyons noted that legal information is a major part of the group's effort. The women's experiences have led the group to seek some changes in the law, and they have worked with the local League of Women Voters on such issues.

The members' experiences also may have been a factor at the June 30 meeting, as the group approved a resolution



supporting the Equal Rights Amendment.

One project they will be examining as part of the Campaign for Human Development grant, Mrs. Lyons said, is forming a cooperative which would provide job experiences, training and employment for the group's members. Much planning has to take place

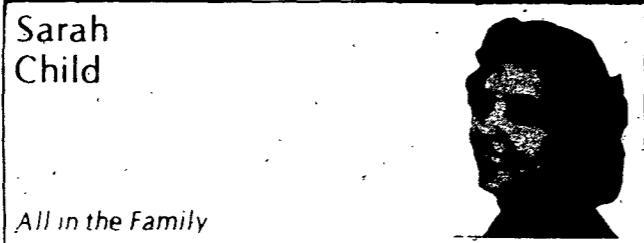
before that can occur, she said.

While Displaced Homemakers groups exist across the country, Mrs. Lyons said that she thinks the Ithaca group is the only one between New York City and Buffalo.



## CWV Scholar

Brian Meteyer of Wyndale Road receives a \$250 scholarship award from Commander Sam Colantoni of the Catholic War Veterans of Monroe County. Brian, a June graduate of St. Philip Neri School, won the annual CWV essay contest. With him are his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Meteyer.



Sarah Child

All in the Family

## Kodak Donates \$75,000 to Youth Club

Eastman Kodak has presented the Boys and Girls Club of Rochester with \$75,000, according to Gilbert G. McCurdy, chairman of the capital fund drive for the club.

"The capital fund will receive \$60,000," McCurdy said, "and \$15,000 has been donated to our operating fund."

The club is renovating its new home at 500 Genesee St. The goal is to raise \$600,000 for this purpose and to open the facility by September.

McCurdy, who is chairman and chief executive officer of McCurdy & Co., said approximately \$148,000 has been contributed to the capital fund drive.

## Evangelizing Story an Eye-Opener

The head of the house who has access to a lot of different religious publications, frequently brings home a pile. The first time he brought the magazine, U.S. Catholic, he had several issues with him and I remember sitting one morning after the school bus had left leafing through them. I ended up reading the first one cover to cover, finding something of interest in every article.

Subsequent issues proved just as attractive and the July issue — which I found on the back porch in Pennsylvania one morning at 7 looking for a place to drink my coffee — has a particularly compelling piece.

It is an interview with Father Vincent Donovan, CSSP, who brought Christianity to the Masai people in East Africa and who is author of the book, "Christianity Rediscovered."

In the interview entitled, "The Naked Gospel: Stamping Out Ready-To-Wear Christianity," Father Donovan tells how he had to search out the "final and fundamental substance" of

the Christian message separating it from its European-American clothes, before the Masai would accept it.

For me the most memorable part of the article was a description of the celebration of the Eucharist by the nomadic Masai. Mass would go on all day long. Grass — their cattle's feed (and thus of paramount importance in their lives) was a sign of peace. At the beginning of the day Father would pick up a blade of grass and it would be passed through the whole village. If any family refused to pass it to their neighbor and the grass was stopped, the whole village would refuse the bread and wine, citing dissension in the community.

The article is an eye-opener for any Western reader, but I would recommend it particularly to those Catholics who chafe at the accessories of our religion, those who periodically hold up some facet which they consider superfluous, screaming, "And what does this have to do with being a good Christian?"

Father Donovan apparently had to ask himself that a lot of times as he worked with the Masai. The answers he came up with are stirring.

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