

Christmas Can Hurt Mentally Disabled

By John Dash

The period immediately following the holidays can be a severely mentally disabling time, the executive director of DePaul Mental Health Services said last week.

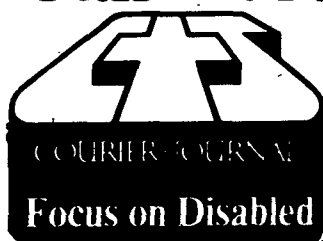
At that time, his agency, an affiliate of diocesan Catholic Charities, will see a sharp increase in persons seeking relief from mental distress, Mark Fuller noted.

He attributed the phenomenon to a general feeling that "the holidays are over. The bleak weather has settled in. The kids are starting their second semester." All of that, he said, can generate such stress that "we see severely mentally disabled persons."

Calling the occurrence "the Christmas blues," Dr. A.W. Sullivan, clinical director of DePaul, said that the phenomenon can occur either before or after the holidays.

For most people who suffer the affliction, Christmas represents a "childhood anniversary," he said. For people who are alone and who recall a former time of family gatherings and gaiety, the holidays can become a depressing time.

That can be especially severe if the holidays are also the anniversary of the death of a parent, he said.



On the other hand, he said, "people who have been depressed, yet who have 'survived' the holidays with a happy face — the survivors — experience the let-down after Christmas."

Climate has a great deal to do with the phenomenon as well, he indicated. The overcast skies, the snow and slush coupled with the fact that between January and Easter there are virtually no holidays to look forward to can contribute to a disruption in the person's mental well-being.

However, he said, "most people are pretty joyous at Christmas," and what may be interpreted as something wrong, namely "the January to February 'blahs,'" are not of clinical importance.

Headquartered at 681 Brown St., DePaul encompasses a broad range of services for the mentally disabled.

The 22-year-old agency operates a clinic at Brown Street, a day treatment program, several residences for chronically mentally ill persons who have been de-

institutionalized, a facility for adolescents who are recovering from mental illness, and, most recently, apartments for semi-independent living for mentally disabled persons.

DePaul began as a mental health clinic for county Catholic school children. Early in the 1970s, with the involvement of the federal government in planning mental health services, Rochester was divided into quarters, and a center was established for each quarter. DePaul, then, moved to the city's northwest to serve that area, from its original location at 50 Chestnut St., the former site of the Chancery.

Since the time of that move, the agency has grown tremendously. In 1973 a staff of 13 served 600. Today 80 serve 1500.

At least for this year, the services that DePaul provides will not be appreciably affected by the Reagan administration's budget cuts, Fuller said.

He said that eventually DePaul will notice the effects, principally because of the cap on Medicaid, but that is still in the future. He said that Medicaid accounts for about 25 percent of DePaul's income.

About half of the agency's money is generated from private fees, including Medicaid and SSI. Contracts with the state and the county generate about 90 percent of the remainder, with United Way money the final 10 percent.

The operating budget for this year, Fuller said, is \$2.1 million. Five years ago DePaul's mental health budget was \$441,502.

Persons in Rochester's northwest quarter suffering emotional distress may receive help, Dr. Sullivan said, simply by calling DePaul, 346-4840, for an appointment.

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Deaths

Cornelius (Neil) O'Brien

A funeral Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Dec. 4 for Cornelius O'Brien at St. Pius X Church by Father John Rosse, chaplain at St. Mary's Hospital; Father Gerald Connor, pastor of St. Pius; Father Donald Murphy, pastor emeritus; and Father Donald Schwab, chaplain of Rochester General Hospital. Mr. O'Brien died Tuesday, Dec. 1, 1981, at St. Mary's Hospital, where, from 1947 to 1975, he had served as plant supervisor.

His daughter, Mrs. Thomas (Marguerite) Noll, indicated last week that it was Mr. O'Brien's wish to be memorialized in the hospital's building fund. "My family and I would like to continue to share our father's love for St. Mary's Hospital through a special memorial fund in his name. We understand that there is a new found life at St. Mary's in their building fund and our dad, having overseen the plans for many new projects there, would have liked nothing better than to be a part of it again," Mrs. Noll wrote.

Others of Mr. O'Brien's survivors are his sons, Michael and Neil; daughters,

Mrs. John (Sheila) McGuckin and Mrs. Kevin (Kathleen) Collins; eight grandchildren; a brother, Patrick; three sisters, Mrs. Patrick (Agnes) Briody, Mrs. Charles (Margaret) Gillick of Ireland, and Mrs. John (Ann) Hurley.

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