



# Southern Tier Auburn-Geneva

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## Hornell Merger Gets Favorable Response

**Hornell** — The merger of St. James Mercy and Bethesda hospitals drew more supporters than protesters to the public hearing March 22.

Sister Rene McNiff, St. James administrator, said that of those who spoke, 42 favored the merger and 12 spoke in opposition. About 400 attended the hearing at the Hornell High School, she said.

The hearing was conducted by the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency Task Force examining the two hospitals' merger proposal.

That group, and three others who are reviewing specific aspects of the merger

plan, will be meeting over the next few weeks, Sister Rene said.

The corporate merger and the major capital renovation project, which is included in the application, will be reviewed June 7 by the Southern Tier Subarea Council, and the following week by the Regional Review Council.

The cost of the renovation plans, the ability of the area to pay for it, and the resulting increase in daily rates at the hospitals was a major topic of the discussion.

Speaking late last week, Sister Rene noted that the plan, which totals \$26 million,

actually includes about \$14 million for construction. The remaining expenses include some money already spent on architectural fees, etc., and a cushion for inflation during the construction period.

The project will increase the room charges by \$20 per day, she said, and the charges for ancillary services an amount which will average \$12 per day. Those increases will not raise the charges to the level already existing at some area hospitals, she noted.

She also noted that the building plan includes projects which the two hospitals have delayed for years while the merger discussions took place. Achieving the same capital improvements in two separate hospitals, without the merger,

would cost \$3.1 million more than the plan the hospitals have submitted.

The other three task forces which are involved in the review of the hospitals' plans are looking at kidney dialysis in the region; at modernization and construction of hospitals in the region; and at the local compliance with the state's "bed need methodology," which calls for a reduction in the number of acute care beds in the three-county region.

Sister Rene noted the March 22 hearing was a very different atmosphere from meetings conducted on the issue a few years ago. The emotional exchanges of that time were not repeated before the review committee, she said.

## New Counseling Service Opens

**Corning** — Counseling Services of the Southern Tier has announced the opening of a new counseling program specifically designed for individuals and families experiencing problems related to drug use and abuse.

The program is being funded by the state Division of Substance Abuse, and is sponsored by the Catholic Family Center, a member agency of the Catholic Charities of the Rochester diocese.

According to Mary Joyce Pruden, program coordinator, Counseling Services will provide assessments, referrals, counseling and education for residents of the Southern Tier, with emphasis in Steuben County.

In addition to the general substance abuse program for individuals and families, a major thrust will be to develop and serve employee assistance programs for business, schools and industry. Diagnostic evaluations will be given to any individual experiencing personal problems, such as emotional, behavioral or social difficulties. Upon completion of evaluation, referrals will be made to the appropriate community agencies. Persons experiencing problems related to substance abuse may enter counseling with the trained staff. The evaluation/referral component, sometimes referred to as the "broad-

brush" approach, is expected to increase the number seeking help.

The approach also is effective in identifying problems at an early stage. Early identification is beneficial for both the employer and the employee, as the problem often can be resolved before becoming a major crisis.

The counseling program is expected to provide the individual with insight and options to better deal with stressful situations. The goal is to help find the best solution for the client or family member.

Counseling Services is located at 162 E. First St., Corning, and is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Evening appointments also are available.

There is a sliding scale for fees, based on ability to pay.

The staff members are Pruden, Gary Short, counselor, and Betty Allen, secretary.

The program also has a Community Advisory Committee which consists of James Bacalles, Bill Burris, Rhoda Cruise, Carolyn Durkin, the Rev. William P. Findlay, Ronald Hofsess, Gail M. Oakes, Dr. Edward H. McAlister, Dr. John Mieczkowski, Betty Lou Salmon and Al Zadany.

## RTL Group Elects, Plans Programs

**Geneva** — Geneva Right to Life has elected Vada Holmes of Stanley chairman, Thomas Truex of Waterloo vice chairman, and Deborah Fox of Waterloo secretary-treasurer.

According to Mrs. Holmes, the goals for the new year will focus on "education, to increase awareness of all the social ramifications of abortion, in the hope that more people will join the fight against abortion."

A speakers bureau is being formed to further the educational effort. Anyone interested in having a speaker should contact Thomas Truex at 220 E. Elisha St., Waterloo, telephone 539-8013.

The group also plans a Mothers Day Flower Sale, County Fair exhibits and picket and lobbying efforts locally, in Albany and in Washington, D.C.

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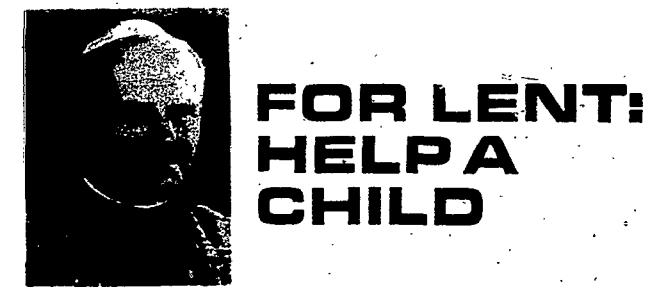
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