

# St. Elizabeth Ann Seton — the Second Year Begins

Last of two-part series  
By Grace T. Carson

Last week's article presented a long look backward over the first full year at the new St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish in Hamlin.

At an early, general parish meeting in June 1982, a "brainstorming" session took

place to find ideas and viewpoints on the needs of the new parish and the larger community of Hamlin. One idea was not new at all, in fact it is as ancient as the teachings of Christ — "I was hungry and you gave me to eat... naked and you covered me..." There was general agreement that some plan for distribution

of food and clothing to those in need must be developed. It also was agreed that the parish must find a way to reach out to youth.

During the summer of 1982, two buildings became available to the parish. The use of a small, two-story, white, frame building was given the parish by one of the parishioners. This building at 1496 Lake Ave. was designated the "Human Development Building." Gradually, by what seems to have been the Lord's direction, the "Interfaith Food and Clothing Center" has been established in this building. Irene Goodwin became coordinator of the effort. In contacting the other two faith congregations in Hamlin, Mrs. Goodwin found enthusiastic interest. Members of the Hamlin United Methodist Church and St. John's Lutheran Church were eager to join in the basic work of Christian charity.

Working with the co-representatives of Hamlin United Methodist, Jan Fuller and Nancy Messer, Mrs. Goodwin learned that the church already had a food shelf operating out of the parsonage. Rev. Charles C. Excell, the pastor, felt that in times of need people often turn to their church and to their pastor. Therefore, the parsonage seemed a reasonable place for the food shelf. However, it had not been the purpose to reach out to the whole community. Rev. Excell and Father William Amann, St. Elizabeth's pastor, led toward a joint effort for a centrally located food shelf.

Mrs. Goodwin also contacted Gary Leverenz, the head of the Social Welfare Ministry at St. John's Lutheran which, among other things, meets the emergency food and clothing needs of the congregation. Leverenz became the liaison between the church and the new center. At a church council meeting, he presented the proposal to Rev. Erwin H. Goltermann, pastor, and the council gave its approval and support.

Thus, the center was born in response to the dictum, "Feed the hungry... clothe

the naked," in harmony with today's spirit of ecumenism.

The center is open from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Tuesdays. It is hoped that by May, it will be open a second evening and one day during the week. Donations of food and clothing may be left at the center during those hours or at any of the churches.

The second need surfacing at the parish meeting in June 1982 was reaching youths. A teen center seemed needed. A large building at 1703 Lake Ave., at the four corners in Hamlin, became available for rent. The structure became the "Education Building" and is used for such activities as Education Committee meetings, babysitting during Masses, pre-school classes and a variety of Hamlin community programs. It is here that the teen center will open May 7.

According to Doug Kurz, director, the center will be open Saturday nights. The schedule may be expanded in the future. At least one adult always will be in attendance. There will be television; a stereo, possible a pool table, a soft drink machine (from which proceeds will supply snacks). No drugs or alcohol will be permitted. The atmosphere will be relaxed and unstructured.

The United Methodist congregation had seen the need for such a center and another joint effort ensued between Rev. Excell and Father Amann. Four representatives of the Methodist church — Jim Ford, John Gill (head of the Youth Group), Clark Mahaney and Dave Smith — have joined in the effort.

Smith met with Mr. and Mrs. Neil Newman, co-leaders of the Youth Group at St. John's Lutheran, and they agreed to participate.

As each of these two buildings opens its doors to new Hamlin programs, it is a reason for gratitude. From a small beginning, a couple of "good ideas" grew into a united Christian effort to ease the suffering and meet the needs of others.



## Benefit Bike-a-Thon

The Town of Greece will host the first Cystic Fibrosis bike-a-thon on Saturday, June 11, on the unopened portion of Route 390 between Latta and English roads. Registration is at noon, with opening ceremonies at 1:15 p.m. Bikers will be recruiting sponsors on a pledge per mile basis. Youngsters can participate in a "mini-event" by riding tricycles in the Greece Arcadia High School parking lot. From left, Don Riley, Greece Town Supervisor and honorary chairman of the bike-a-thon; Eric Van Dusen, bike racer and national record holder; Linda Larmon, program coordinator for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and committee chairman; and Ron Gordon, participant in Hawaii's Ironman competition.



Father Bruce Ritter

Spring is a season of hope, of rebirth, of reawakening from the slumber of the winter. It is also a season when our UNDER 21 Centers are bulging with kids.

It's a great feeling knowing that no homeless, on-the-street and hurting kid is ever turned away. When our official beds are all filled up, we unroll sleeping mats on the floor of our centers and give the overflow kids a couple of clean sheets, a blanket, a plastic bag with soap, toothbrush and toothpaste. The kids sleep, curled up in corners.

I wish you could see how great my kids are. I gotta say, in the interest of trust, candor, and full disclosure, that my kids aren't always the prettiest kids in the world, but they're really great kids—and good kids.

You see, the simple brutal reality is that there are more and more homeless kids on the streets. Literally dozens of homeless young mothers are coming to us with their kids. The mothers are sixteen and seventeen, and their kids are one month—six months—a year old. (Our youngest kid was ten days old—a really cute little kid—a little wrinkled maybe, but I've been assured that he will outgrow it.)

More families are breaking down and apart. You know all the reasons. Unemployment is one of the biggest problems. It's a dagger at the throat of a struggling family. The kids suffer the most from the increased bitterness, the hopelessness, the family conflict. Many just run, and run, and run.

Father Bruce Ritter, JFM Conv., is the founder and President of Covenant House/UNDER 21, which operates crisis centers for homeless and runaway boys and girls

# Simple Brutal Reality

And wind up in our major cities where there is always somebody around to offer sympathy—and money—an offer a kid can't refuse. And so a kid exchanges his body for food and her love for a bed and their souls for...? Who owns their souls? What do they get in exchange for their souls? How much is a fourteen-year-old soul worth on the open market in Times Square? "Twenty dollars, mister. You can have anyone you want for twenty dollars—take this one. You'll like this one. His name is Nandy. He's eleven."

*"How much is a fourteen-year-old soul worth on the open market?"*

I'll never forget that conversation. Until the day I die. I won't. I was propositioned on 42nd Street by seven youngsters. The oldest was fifteen; the youngest, Nandy, was eleven.

Nandy is the reason we have overflow kids. The thought that we could not at least make room on the floor for him and his brothers and sisters is simply an unthinkable thought. He deserves a bed, but the floor is warm and he's safe and tomorrow...

*"You can have anyone you want for \$20—take this one—he's eleven."*

Tomorrow. The next day, regardless of where a kid slept, our clinic and cafeteria, our school and gym and lounges, our job counsellors and social workers are available to all. And because of our really great and highly competent and professional staff—we are able to help a lot of kids make it back. Back from the hell of life on the street.

If it were not for people like you, God's love would mean nothing to my kids. It's only through your love that God's love makes sense to a homeless youngster. Sometimes I would like to pray that He doesn't send so many kids here, but that would be to refuse the grace and beauty of these kids.

So please help us, if you can. Help care for all the Nandys and the other scared homeless kids who depend on us to be here. With your help and your prayers, we will.

I want to help Nandy and his brothers and sisters make it back from the hell of the streets. Enclosed is my contribution of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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