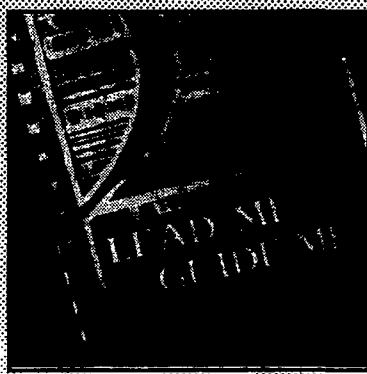


### Clash of the titans

Cardinal Mooney and Mercy, two Private-Parochial League titans, meet this week for the first time since the Lady Cards dethroned the Monarchs last season. See page 9.



### A joyful noise

Black Catholics have a new reason to sing a "new song unto the Lord": a hymnal that blends the rich heritages of black and Catholic musical traditions. See page 16.

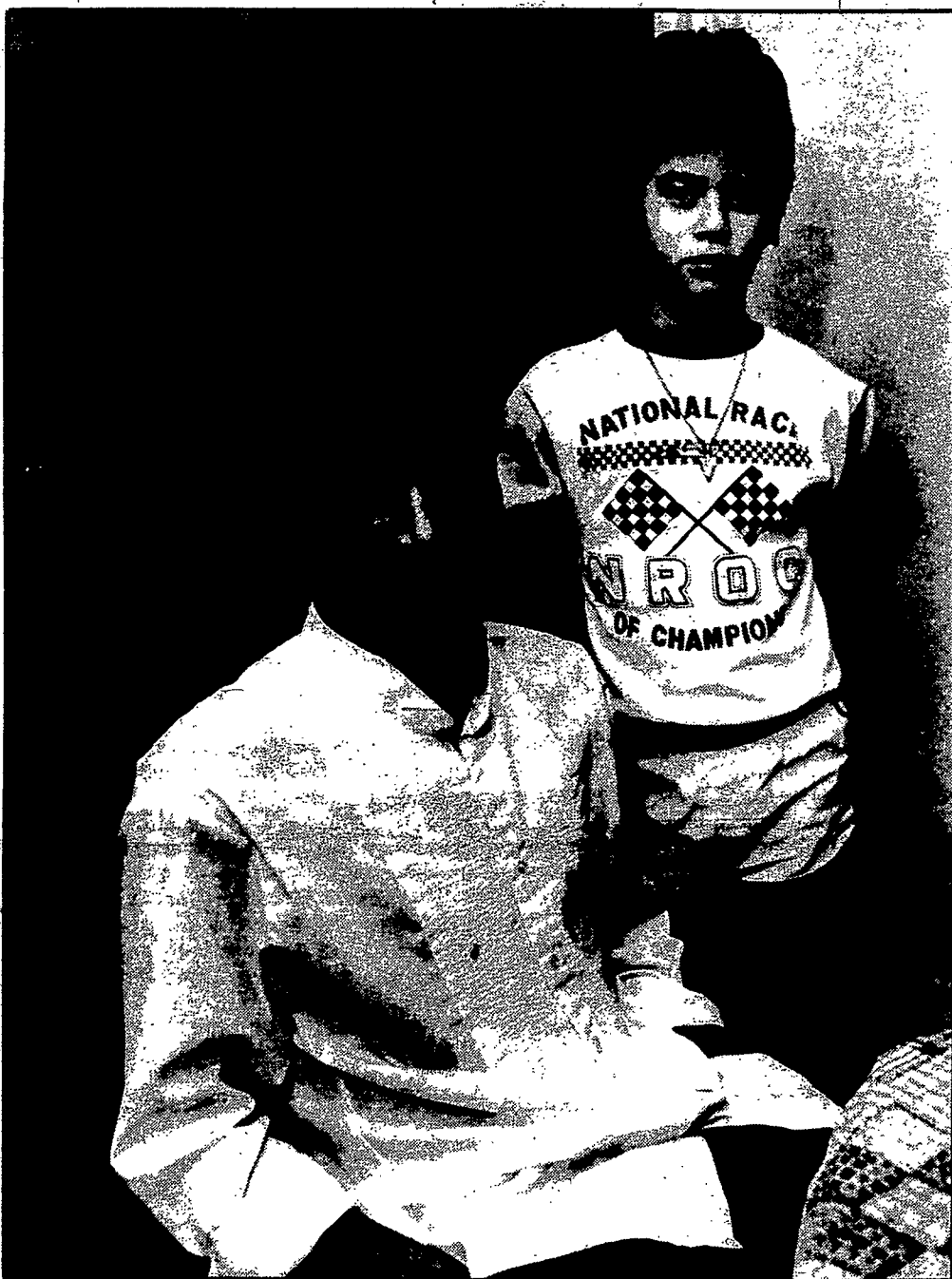
# COURIER-JOURNAL

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Although Binh Kuang Nguyen, 20, (left) and Tuan Van Nguyen, 12, are not related, both youths are being resettled in the United States by Rochester's Catholic Family Center.

## Amerasian 'homecoming'

### New immigration law eases children's arrival in U.S.

By Stephenie Overman

Washington (NC) — Bureaucracy has made the road bumpy for Vietnamese children of American fathers seeking new lives in the United States. But new immigration legislation is helping to smooth the Amerasians' "homecoming."

The Amerasian Homecoming Act, introduced by Rep. Robert J. Mrazek, D-N.Y., and signed by President Reagan in December, creates a special immigration category for children born in Vietnam to U.S. military and civilian personnel between 1962 and 1976. During the next two years, 8,000 and 12,000 Amerasian children could arrive in this country.

The first group of 65 Amerasians and family members to leave Vietnam under the revised program arrived in Bangkok, Thailand, at the end of December.

Resettlement agencies — including several operated by Church agencies — will not see the group until June, after an orientation in the Philippines, according to Loretta O'Donnell, resettlement coordinator for the Diocese of Richmond, Va.

At that point, some will join their American fathers. But according to one estimate, that will only account for 3 percent of the young people.

Many more — with mothers, stepfathers, siblings, and sometimes even spouses and children — will be resettled by such voluntary agencies as the U.S. Catholic Conference's Migration and Refugee Services.

U.S. government and resettlement officials have acknowledged that the United States has a moral responsibility for these children of American fathers. These officials have expressed concern that in Vietnam the Amerasians' mixed heritage causes discrimination against them and their families.

The Orderly Departure Program, begun in 1979, has allowed Vietnamese, including Amerasians, to legally leave the country

despite the fact that the United States and Vietnam do not have diplomatic relations.

Since the fall of the government of South Vietnam in 1975, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese have fled their country, often illegally, in leaky boats. About 60,000 have been able to leave through the Orderly Departure Program, but about 650,000 applications are still on file.

Rep. Mrazek got involved in the plight of Amerasians when high school students in his district read a story about a street child in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and asked Mrazek to help, according to Stephen Goose, Mrazek's legislative assistant.

"The high school students were moved by the picture and got (the street child) identified," Goose said. The congressman went to Vietnam last spring to bring the boy to the United States.

That case sparked Mrazek's interest in the problems facing Amerasians in general, and he introduced the Amerasian Homecoming Act last August.

Goose said Amerasians are now arriving in the United States as immigrants instead of as refugees. They will be eligible for refugee benefits, however.

Amerasians have long been a part of the massive resettlement program operated by Migration and Refugee Services is one of a dozen voluntary agencies helping Amerasians claim the U.S. citizenship inherited from their fathers.

According to Mark Franken, MRS migration specialist, previous classification of Amerasians as refugees had been one of Vietnam's complaints against the United States.

Now, for a number of reasons, "the operational impediment that created the suspension was removed. Now there is a good understanding" between the United States and Vietnam, and the program is "back on track," Franken said.

## Director decries lack of sponsors for local refugee program

By Lee Strong

From January 4-11, the U.S. Catholic Church celebrated National Migration Week — a week when dioceses across the country focused on the Church's commitment to serving immigrants, refugees, displaced persons and migrant workers.

Jim Delaney's mind was on other matters, however.

In March, a group of 11-12,000 Amerasians — the children of American servicemen and Vietnamese women — and their families will begin to arrive in the United States. Delaney, refugee resettlement program manager for the Catholic Family Center, will be responsible for coordinating resettlement efforts for those who come to Rochester.

In November, he sent a request for sponsors to all diocesan parish human development coordinators. As of January 8, he had received no responses.

"What am I supposed to do when (the United States Catholic Conference — one of the groups coordinating nationally) calls — say no?" Delaney asked.

Delaney is looking for individuals, groups or parishes to serve as sponsors for the incoming refugees. He is also searching for volunteer resettlement aides in case sponsors aren't found and individuals who will work as big brothers or sisters for the Amerasians.

His most pressing need is for sponsors, however, and he believes people don't volunteer be-

cause they don't understand what sponsorship entails.

"Sponsorship conjures up all sorts of images of financial or time commitments," Delaney said. "It's essentially just getting two or three people together and running (the refugees) through services."

These services are outlined on a Resettlement Services Checklist provided by the Catholic Family Center. Sponsors meet the refugees at the airport when they first arrive. From there, the sponsors help the refugees to settle in apartments, get Social Security numbers, register for social services, obtain any needed medical tests or care and enroll in schools or job-training programs.

"Normally, the process takes 60 to 90 days," Delaney said. "It's not a breeze — when you're helping people it's never a breeze — but it's not overwhelming."

Nor is sponsorship a financial burden. USCC provides \$250 per refugee to assist them in settling in this country. Clothing and furniture are frequently provided through donations, and once settled, the refugees are either supported by social services or find jobs and become self-supporting.

The Catholic Family Center provides additional services to help the refugees and the sponsors. Through its resettlement program and the Interfaith Refugee Assistance Project, the center provides translators and job-training services, makes job referrals and contacts,

helps the children register in school, and offers counseling.

These services are particularly important for the Amerasian refugees, Delaney pointed out. In addition to the difficulties most refugees have when arriving in this country, the Amerasians have particular problems and needs.

"In Vietnam, they are treated as outcasts, persons without status because of their mixed-racial background," Delaney explained. "They're called 'bui doi' — children of the dust!"

Many of the Amerasian children were unable to attend school regularly in Vietnam and were forced to live in extreme poverty or as street children because of this prejudice, so they often arrive in the United States educationally disadvantaged and lacking social skills, Delaney noted. When they settle in this country, they often need extra help to adjust to American society.

Delaney estimated that since 1975, approximately 80 Amerasian children and their families have settled in the Rochester area. Through efforts to resettle these refugees, program staff members have developed the process currently being used and learned about the additional problems Amerasians face in this country.

Carol LeBloom faced some of these problems first-hand in 1985 when she worked with a family being sponsored by St. Salome's Parish. The intense initial involvement with the fa-

mily spanned approximately three months, but parishioners discovered that their commitment to the family lasted quite a bit longer, according to LeBloom.

"You found yourself involved whether or not you wanted to because of a sense of commitment," LeBloom noted. Parishioners are still in touch with family members, providing advice and assistance, although the family is largely independent.

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