

Shelters

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In addition, medical volunteers will provide services at the shelter two nights a week, workers from the county Department of Social Services will meet with shelter clients two nights a week, and representatives from the Social Security Administration will provide assistance two times a week.

Last year, volunteers and staff at the shelter also helped 26 men find apartments and jobs. Some of those men still come back to the shelter to volunteer and socialize, Rosier said.

One change this year is that St. Bridget's shelter will be doing its own cooking for its supper program. Last year, food was prepared by volunteers at Blessed Sacrament and sent to St. Bridget's. But, Rosier noted, the numbers of people coming for meals kept increasing, and began putting a strain on the staff at Blessed Sacrament. Last year, more than 1,800 people came to St. Bridget's for food or shelter, she pointed out.

In addition, the shelter will open the 1989/90 season with a year with a Mass and a commissioning service on Saturday, Nov. 11, at 5 p.m. Volunteers and staff from the other parish shelters have been invited to participate.

The variety of services provided by St. Bridget's shelter is typical of the services offered at Blessed Sacrament, and at Corpus Christi's Dimitri House (which will remain open even after Francis Center opens). These services have developed and expanded over the years as shelter workers recognized that the homeless need more than a warm place to sleep at night.

"There's a variety of needs that the homeless have that must be addressed to keep them from becoming homeless again," said Fairchild, who, in addition to heading the advisory committee on the homeless is the director of Sojourner House, a program providing temporary shelter for women and children.

Fairchild said those additional needs include drug and alcohol counseling, job training, education, health care and the services of social workers.

Since last December, when it was officially formed, the advisory committee has been considering the task force report's 20 recommendations on addressing these needs, Fairchild said. Thirteen of the recommendations have either been implemented or — including the opening of a facility like the Francis Center — are now in process.

Among other the recommendations already implemented are: expansion of a system to help individuals released from jail or prison find housing; providing legal and financial assistance to low-income families and individuals faced with eviction; a Veterans' Administration program to provide outreach services for homeless, chronically mentally ill veterans (1,500 veterans have already been screened); and a housing demonstration program run by the county Department of Social Services, which, since it began operation in January of this year, has provided a variety of services to 81 individuals.

Fairchild said that the advisory committee — which is scheduled to cease operations in June, 1990 — may evolve into a permanent body to help oversee ongoing efforts to address the needs of the homeless.

One segment of the homeless population whose needs are not being adequately met

at this time is women, especially those with children. Of the three parish shelters, only Blessed Sacrament provides bed space for women, and it has only four women's beds available.

Among shelter providers taking up the slack are Sojourner House, which can accommodate 14 women and six children; Bethany House, which can take in six women and a variable number of children; and Women's Place, which opened this past spring in the former convent of St. Augustine's Parish.

Since its opening, Women's Place, which can provide shelter at any one time for 12 women and five preschool age children, has taken in 130 women and 50 children. That figure far exceeded the expectations of any of the shelter's staff members, noted Sister Eileen Conheady, SSJ, director of the center.

Sister Conheady speculated that the large numbers are a reflection of the growing drug problem in the community. "We think it has something to do with substance

abuse, which escalates into domestic violence," she said.

In addition to the number of women forced onto the streets by violence at home, many other women have lost their homes as a result of their own drug problems, she added. Some of the women who come to Women's Place are between treatment programs, or have recently been released from programs.

For now, the shelter programs must simply contend with the problems as they surface. Although their efforts began as temporary, emergency responses to the needs of Rochester's homeless, shelter workers will continue offering services while waiting for Francis Center to open and for the other services called for in the task force report to begin operation.

"We've done it for eight years now — what's another year?" observed Dick Sadowski, who directs Blessed Sacrament's shelter. "We have a commitment to the ministry, and we'll keep doing it as long as there's a need."

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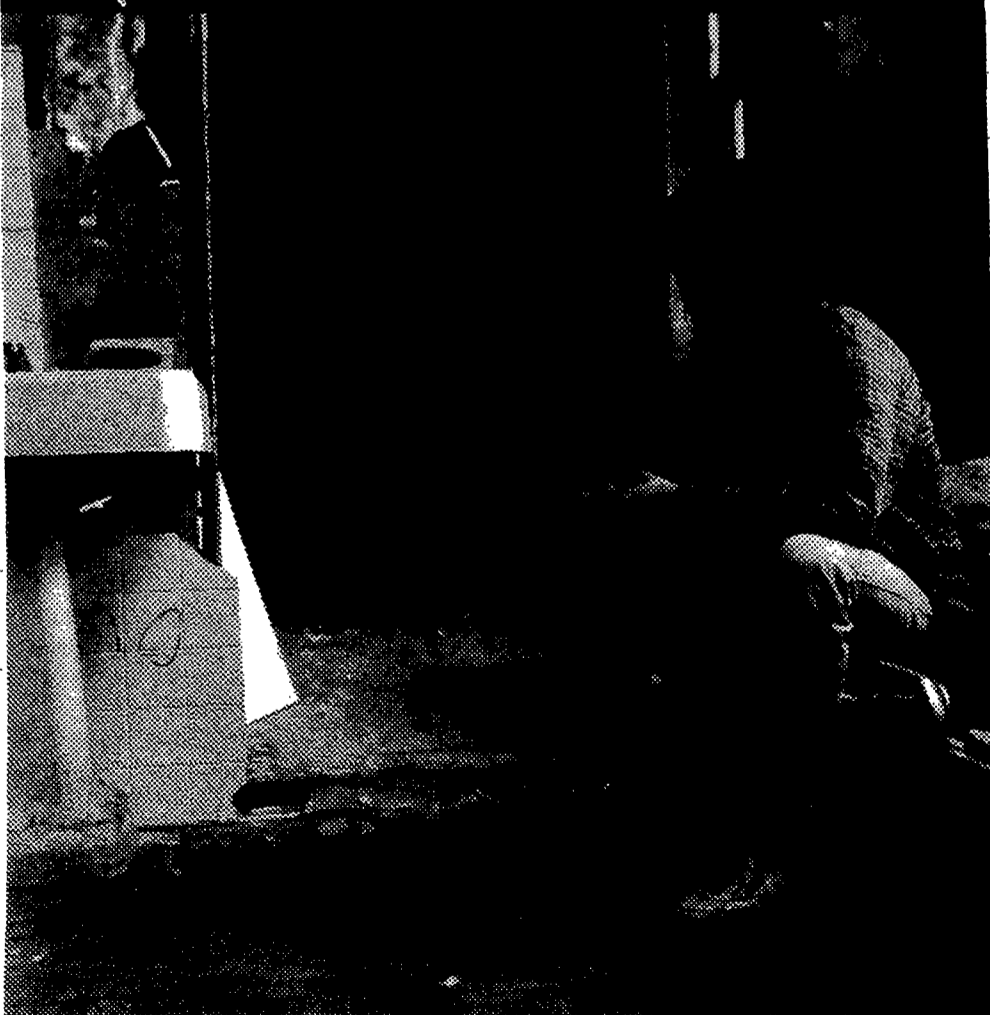
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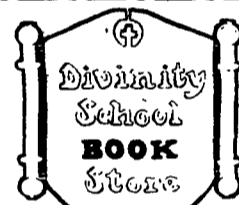
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