

St. James Parish 'adopts' Andrew's Center

ROCHESTER — Andrew's Center has a new home.

The center, a licensed foster care facility, moved last November to the St. James Convent from St. Andrew's Parish convent, which housed the program for nearly 15 years.

This past weekend, parishioners from St. James officially welcomed Andrew's Center with a blessing ceremony after the 9:30 Mass. Other parishioners visited the center after each of the weekend Masses.

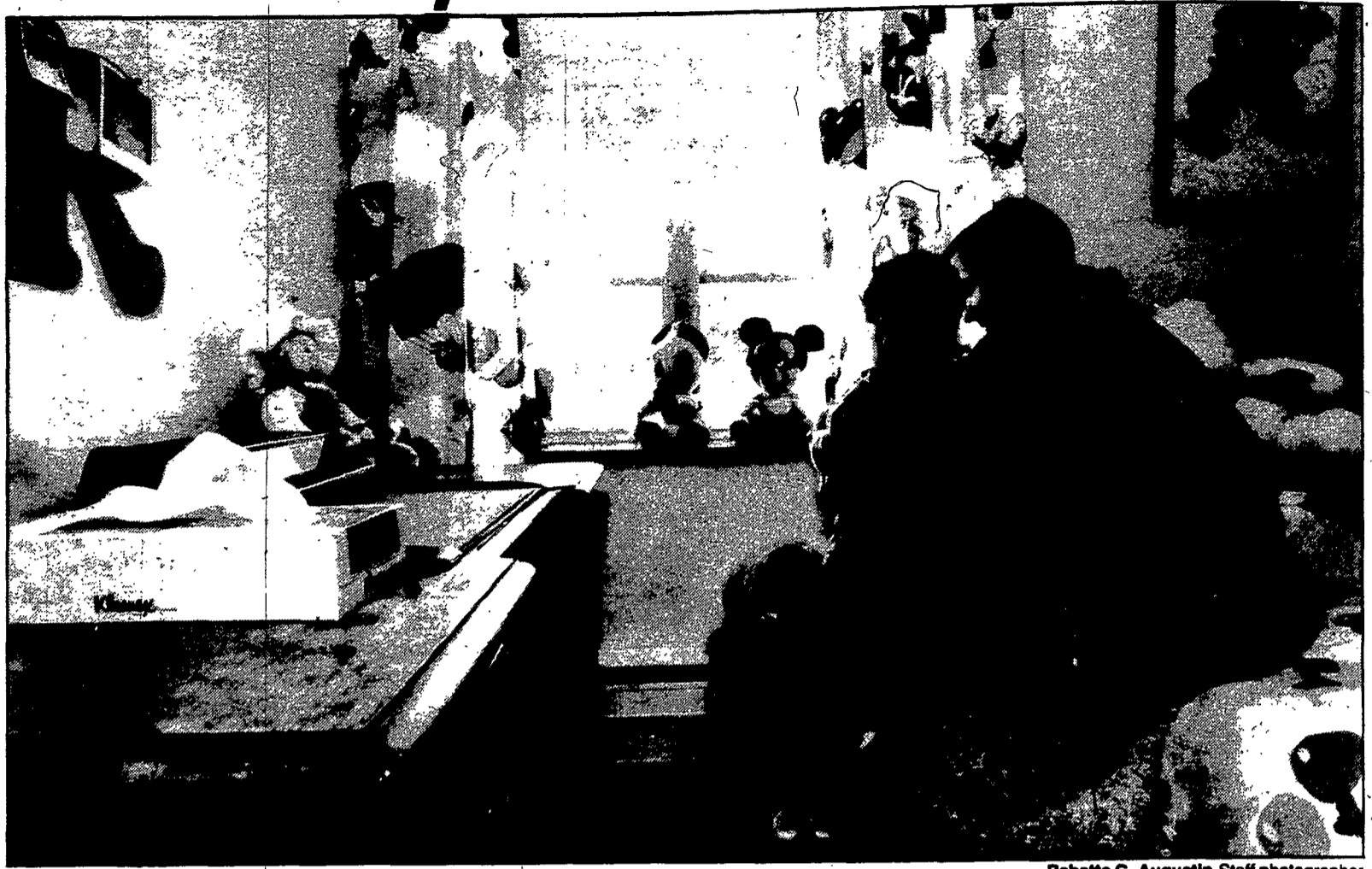
The move ended months of concern about where the center — which currently provides short-term foster care for five children — would be located.

In late 1988, Sisters Kathleen Kolmer, RSM, and Rita Habecher, SSND, — who staff the center — learned that they would soon have to relocate. St. Andrew's Parish, which had rented them space at low cost, needed to increase income from the convent. The cost was more than Andrew's Center could pay.

Consequently, in January, 1989, the sisters, in conjunction with the Sisters of Mercy, sent a letter to Rochester parishes seeking a possible site for the center.

Father James Bradler, pastor of St. James, received one of the letters, but didn't seriously consider it at the time.

In May, however, Father Bradler was contacted again. This time, he arranged a meeting between the sisters and the St.



Babette G. Augustin-Staff photographer

Personal touches characterize each child's room at the relocated Andrew's Center. Despite the center's hectic schedule, Sister Kathleen Kolmer always finds time to spend with each young client.

James Parish Council. The council favored opening the convent to Andrew's Center, as did the sisters then living in the convent.

The last hurdle to the move — gaining a zoning variance from the Irondequoit Town Board — was overcome on Oct. 18, when the board ruled that St. James convent needed no variance to house the center.

During the fall, the Andrew's Center staff, aided by volunteers and supported by donations, began renovation work needed before the children could move in. That work included painting, recarpeting, and installing cabinets made by the staff of St. Michael's Woodshop (see accompanying story).

The center occupies one wing of bedrooms, the common room and the kitchen of the convent. In addition to two full-time

foster parents and as many as six children, the Andrew's Center community includes two sisters who work in other ministries, but also help care for the children.

So far, Sister Kolmer said, St. James parishioners have opened their arms to the center.

"The people here seem warm and receptive," Sister Kolmer said. "People have

said, 'Don't hesitate to ask if you need help.'"

Father Bradler, in turn, sees potential benefits for St. James parishioners who become involved with Andrew's Center and experience the satisfaction of knowing "that we have reached out with love and compassion to these people."

— Lee Strong



Panda adds a homey touch.



A rear-window view shows Sister Rita Habecher consulting with a young driver outside St. James Convent, new home of the Andrew's Center.

Workers use skills to assist move

ROCHESTER — Sister Pat Flynn's presence will be felt in more ways than one at the new home of the Andrew's Center.

On a day-to-day basis, Sister Flynn, who is part of the Andrew's Center community, will see and play with the five children currently living at the foster care facility.

And each time any of the staff or children open a cabinet in the renovated convent at St. James Parish, they will be touching the work of Sister Flynn and her

crew.

Those cabinets were built at St. Michael's Woodshop, a program Sister Flynn has run for the past 23 years. The woodshop offers after-school and summer programs, teaching carpentry skills to 15- to 19-year-old youths.

The youths use tools and lumber that are either donated or purchased through donations and the fund-raising efforts of Sister

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