

St. Ann's offers seniors day-care services

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — John Hartman's fingers pressed down the keys of the electric synthesizer, which produced tones reminiscent of old hymns or Tin Pan Alley standards.

"This is the first time he's played it in 40 years," noted 87-year-old Michael J. Casey, his creased Irish face widening into a toothy smile as he sat at a kitchen-table at St. Ann's Home Connection.

Hartman, Casey's senior by two years, confirmed his friend's assertion in a voice just above a whisper. "I had an operation on my throat (in 1952)," Hartman said. "I figured I'd played for 40 years — that was enough."

The Fairport resident explained that he once directed a choir at The Church of the Atonement in Buffalo, one of many musical jobs he picked up on the side since he began playing the organ in 1910.

Such nostalgia made up the bulk of conversation among the senior citizens seated in the kitchen as they explained why they had decided to sign up for the Home Connection program.

St. Ann's inaugurated the program about a month ago to provide health and social services to elderly people who need a limited amount of care, noted Mary McCarthy, director.

The model for Home Connection originated in the Soviet Union with a physician who attempted to provide health care to elderly people turned away from nursing homes for lack of space, McCarthy said.

The Soviet model was modified and improved in England and Scotland, and then traveled across the Atlantic to the United States. Senior day-care services took root in the American South in the 1950s, McCarthy said, observing that the notion spread slowly throughout the country, becoming available at about 100 sites by the late 1970s.

But in the early 1980s, the number of senior citizens in this country surpassed the number of teenagers for the first time in history, she pointed out. The population bulge highlighted the need for the senior day-care services, the director said, noting that "as (the elderly) live longer, there tends to be more chronic illness."

Consequently, the number of such programs has mushroomed, and day care for the elderly is now available at more than 1,000 sites throughout the United States.

St. Ann's decided to establish Home Connection three years ago, breaking ground last year for a new wing to the home's facilities. Construction was completed in March.

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John Hartman takes the opportunity to read and relax in the quiet room of the Home Connection wing at St. Ann's Home/The Heritage. Home Connection was established to assist senior citizens who need a limited amount of care.



Helen Chase (left) and Mike Casey enjoy each other's company as participants in the Home Connection program. In addition to recreational activities, the program offers seniors personalized health care, nutritional counseling and meals, and bathing and hygiene assistance. The day-care facility currently draws eight-10 seniors each day.

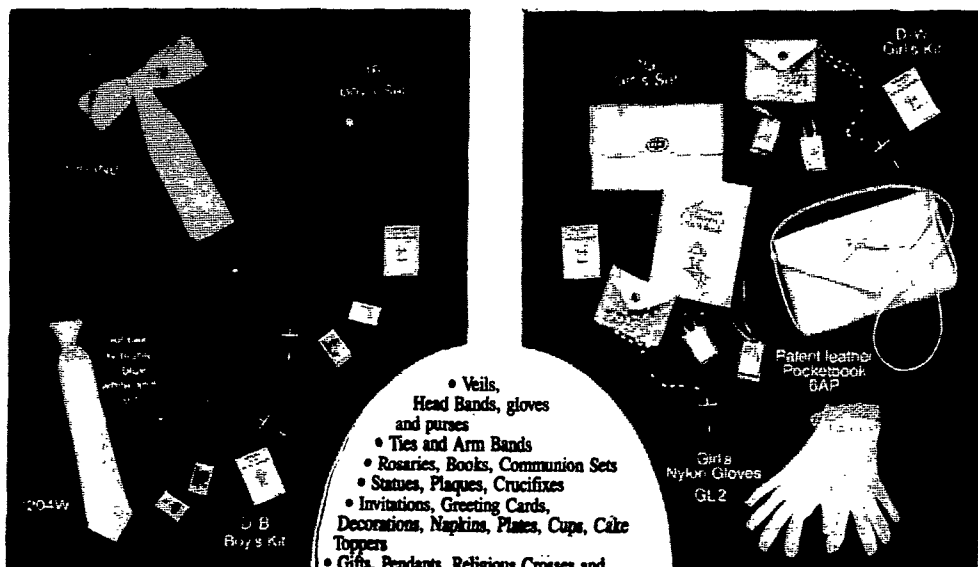


Former church organist John Hartman of Fairport presses the keys of an electric synthesizer. It had been 40 years since he last played.

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