

United Helpers A Society On The Move

BY DEBORAH WIGHT
January 3 was the first year anniversary of the opening of the United Helpers Intermediate Care Facility, providing health care at its Hamilton Street address in Ogdensburg for 14 mentally retarded persons.

Because of the success of the facility, the Society of the United Helpers is currently planning to open another by spring of this year.

The old Rensselaer Falls Elementary School is being considered for purchase and conversion into a like intermediate care facility, said Robert Russell, chief executive of the society.

The New York State Office of Mental Retardation came to the society, asking members of the board to consider another project like the one

opened in 1983. Looking for available and suitable buildings to house such a facility, Russell said the school — among other considerations — is a "not taxable" property, making it an attractive prospect because it will remain that way.

"The new one will be about the same size and house the same number of patients," Russell said. The 15-year-old school is a one-story brick building with four classrooms and kitchen facilities.

Owned by the Canton Central School District, the old school will need extensive renovations, Russell said, to make it suitable as an in-house health care facility.

"Construction will involve providing bedroom space for 14 clients," Russell said, "as well as specialized

areas for treatment of the mentally handicapped."

Referendum Planned
The society has not bought the school yet, he said, but the project has been approved by the Rensselaer Falls Village Board and will go before Canton voters in a referendum the second week in February.

Along with the Canton Central School District voters, the St. Lawrence County Community Services Board, the local Health Systems Agency, the Regional Health Systems Agency in Syracuse, the commissioner of the state Office of Mental Retardation and the society of the United Helpers Board of Directors are among those that have not given their definite approvals yet.

Russell said he expects to know

whether the purchase is accepted by the forementioned persons and agencies by either late March or early April.

The proposal was submitted about four months ago, he said.

"We need unanimous support to go ahead with the project," Russell said. "And I don't anticipate any difficulties. This is about the normal gestation period for a project of this type."

He said estimations of the total cost of acquisition and renovations of the former school are projected to be about \$300,000, maybe a little more.

About half of that expense will be borne by the state, he said, with the remainder borrowed by the United Helpers Intermediate Care Facility

from area banks. "I don't anticipate any major obstacles," Russell said. He said he expects operations to begin at the second intermediate care facility by next fall.

In addition to providing quality health care, Russell said, the new facility will create 22 new jobs.

The society, sponsoring five facilities at the present time, will have six by the end of this year if all goes as planned, Russell said.

He said he anticipates some growth in the future, but not as dramatically as since 1979.

Other Developments
Another development during 1983 for the society was the move to a new management, administration building, located in the renovated convent at the corner of Ford and Hamilton streets.

To date, society facilities employ 450 of "the best workers there are," Russell said, and provide health care to 416 patients, residents.

The society is the largest private provider of health care in St. Lawrence County, and after being surveyed by the state, Russell said the organization has no shortcomings.

"To the best of my knowledge," Russell said, "we have no deficiencies."

The total 1984 budget of the five facilities combined is \$10 million as compared to \$9 million last year.

More than \$4 million of this year's figure is payroll, Russell said, thereby making the society a significant contributor to the economy of St. Lawrence County.

Expenses for fuel alone were \$352,493 during 1983, not including nursing supplies and other operating costs.

During the course of 1983, the socie-

ty's major developments included the opening of the first United Helpers Intermediate-Care Facility and the new United Helpers Management Company in a renovated former convent; conducting a survey to determine desirability of apartment living on the St. Lawrence River for retired persons; and proposing conversion of the old elementary school in Rensselaer Falls into a second intermediate care facility.

There have also been a significant number of renovation projects at several of the society facilities, Russell said.

Computer System
For 1984, the society "contemplating" installation of a new computer system that will provide more services without necessitating hiring more staff persons, he said.

Each nursing home will have their own remote stations, allowing them access to the main computer, which will be located at the Management Company, at any time, Russell said.

Cost of the computer and software is \$88,000, expected to arrive by the mid-January.

"The new computer will print four times faster than what we already have," Russell said. "Speed is where hang-ups usually arise."

The new system will provide more and better services, he said, like storing nurses' notes, doctors orders, medical and pharmacy records.

The new year will see no into the new computer system in United Helpers facilities, but will also see completion of plans for the opening of another health care facility for mentally retarded persons.

"And of course," Russell said, "maintaining our present level of providing quality health care. That's our number one priority."

Parkview Rise A Highlight For OHA

BY DEBORAH WIGHT
Highlight of 1983 for the Ogdensburg Housing Authority (OHA) was the opening and dedication of Parkview Rise, located at the corner of Park and Jay streets, in April.

The six-story, ultra-modern 50-unit facility for senior and handicapped citizens has no vacancies and like other OHA complexes — Riverview Towers, Centennial Terrace and Belmont — has an ongoing waiting lists, according to OHA Executive Director Jack M. Bruyere.

Parkview Rise's opening brings the number of OHA units to 426, Bruyere said.

Modernization, updating of the Bel-

mont Courts family complex was also an ongoing project of the OHA last year, and will continue in 1984 as will the upkeep and renovating of all the facilities.

During Phase II of the authority's rehabilitation program, about \$100,000 was spent at Belmont Courts.

Energy conservation, tenant safety and comfort emphasis was in mind when the OHA spent \$60,000 of the Energy Star award and Centennial Terrace last year, Bruyere said.

More than \$250,000 has been allocated for rehabilitation and modernization of OHA facilities.

Plans for 1984 renovations include expenditures of \$200,000 and \$170,000

at Belmont Courts and Riverview Towers, respectively, Bruyere said.

Director of the authority for six years, Bruyere said the agency provides "one of the least appreciated services in the city."

New Program

A new program called "Enriched Housing" is currently under consideration by the OHA, the object of which is to satisfy the need between a nursing home and elderly tenants' desire to remain in their own home environments, Bruyere said.

"In cooperation with the county Community Development Cooperation," he said, "we are conducting a survey to determine need of such a program in this area."

Enriched Housing is only in experimental stages, Bruyere said, at this point in time.

What it would entail would be providing assistance to elderly tenants in helping, for example, with meals and residential upkeep.

"It's entirely new to housing," Bruyere said, "and it would allow senior citizens the opportunity to remain in their own environments rather than live in a nursing home where the expense is substantially higher."

The survey will reach all tenants presently residing in OHA facilities, he said, and determine whether or not a need is warranted for such a project. Results are expected to be conclusive in a few weeks.

"We might have as many as 30 Enriched Housing units," Bruyere said.

Ted McLellan, the newly elected chairman of the OHA, said everything is going well for the authority and much of what it set out to do, is being done.

Through works of the OHA and state as well as federal subsidies, McLellan said the authority has been able to br-

ing safe, adequate housing to elderly, handicapped and needy persons and families.

"There is always a need for housing," he said. "With our good management manpower, we have our share of persons in there that are on the stick, fighting for us."

He cited the dedication of Bruyere and past chairman, the late Francis B. "Hon" Burns for their contribution to the OHA.

Congress authorized the establishment of local housing authorities in 1937 with the intention of providing and maintaining decent, safe and sanitary housing for persons who could not afford housing in the private market, according to Bruyere.

In 1952 the OHA completed its first project, Belmont Courts, which provides 126 units to families.

Since then, the OHA has opened three senior citizen high-rise buildings that are equipped with elevators and other services designed "particularly with the elderly in mind."

Because state and federal government regulations require higher standards for public as opposed to private housing, there are many advantages to being a resident in an OHA development.

Safety Devices
Included among them are the latest in safety devices such as smoke detectors, intercom and emergency call systems; a continuing modernization program; availability of social and educational programs like health clinics, church services and recreational activities; and constant responsiveness by OHA management to the needs of tenants.

The OHA also supervises 40 units of Section 8 housing, privately-owned apartments or homes which the authority subsidizes rental payments for low income, elderly handicapped or disabled persons or families.



NEW BUILDING — 1983 saw the opening of the Ogdensburg Housing Authority's Parkview Rise facility.

Steele Had A 'Super' Year

Betty M. Steele, a certified professional photographer doing business as Betty Steele Photography, Black Lake Road, Ogdensburg, enjoyed a "super" year.

She is owner of a full service studio, offering both commercial and portrait photography. She has complete facilities for both color and black and white processing, which enables same-day service.

As an owner of a photography studio, Ms. Steele has to be capable of offering a variety of services, and to perform those services well. Her work includes weddings, portraits, family portraits, custom framing, as well as instant passport or ID photos which are ready to leave with the customer.

She also receives many requests to take aerial photographs for personal use as well as industrial use. Often the call comes from out of state; last year she received requests from California, Illinois, and Tennessee.

Ms. Steele's other work includes restoration, both in color and black and white. Following her graduation from an air-brushing course, she acquired air brush equipment and has been working with that process. All copy and restoration work is done in the studio, eliminating the owner's worry about loss of the pictures.

Ms. Steele also enjoys taking environmental scenes of the North Country, which have been distributed to many states other than New York. She first submitted photographs for judging in state and national competition in 1978, and has had photographs win awards every year since.

She is active in both the National Professional Photographers of America, and the Professional Photographers Society of New York State. She is the only woman to become certified in New York State, and holds office as secretary for the Syracuse section of PPSNY.

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