



Months of work by members of the Third Order of St. Francis and volunteers went into renovating and redecorating this store-front building into the new Francis House.

New Neighborhood Center, 'Francis House', Opens Sunday

By Karen S. Nolan

A NEW program of classes, assistance and services to residents of Seattle's central area will begin this Sunday when the St. George Fraternity of the Third Order of St. Francis opens its Francis House at 1719 E. Yesler Way. An open house will be held from 1 to 5 pm Sunday, May 21 and the public is invited.

A long-time dream of Father Antoine Wishon OFM, assistant pastor of St. George's Parish, who is spiritual director of the Third Order here, Francis House is part of a current internal renewal process within the Order to make itself and its activities more relevant to the modern world.

"We hope to become a neighborhood assistance center where people in need can come for more than just conversation and coffee," explained Mrs. Nancy Coupez, head of the project. A large part of the program will be referring those with special problems to the appropriate social agency or person to counsel or assist with the particular situation. In this regard the Third Order is being assisted by the Focus organization, a Methodist group which operates a similar house in another area of the city.

The starting program of Francis House will include facilities such as a typewriter and a sewing machine available to anyone wishing to use them. Letters will be written for those needing assistance and coffee will be served free. Order members have collected a limited supply of good used clothing which will be available at the center on Tuesdays. A lending library will be open on Mondays from 1 to 3 pm, from which anyone may borrow books. Saturday sewing classes will begin soon and a class for adults in reading and writing is being considered.

The goals motivating Francis House follow the ideals of St. Francis, love and poverty. "In order to fulfill these ideals," said Mrs. Coupez, "we felt this (the central area) was the location where we should be and where we would be most needed. We are starting with this idea of a neighborhood center which will be there for anyone needing our services or needing referral to another agency. With experience, we will come to know the particular needs of this area and can plan our future programs and classes to fit these needs."

FRANCIS HOUSE will be open Mondays and Tuesdays from 1 to 3 pm; on Wednesdays from 9 to 11 am and 7:30 to 9:30 pm; on Thursdays from 6:30 to

9:30 pm; on Fridays from 10 am to 2 pm, and on Saturdays from 10 am to 3 pm. Two or three Third Order members will be at the house at these times and male members always will be on hand on Wednesday nights and Saturday afternoons.

The store front building which is Francis House "was a mess," in the words of Mrs. Coupez, when it was first rented in the spring of 1966. Between then and last fall, Third Order members and volunteer workers renovated and redecorated the building's interior, partitioning it into two rooms, completely repainting it, installing a heater, building benches and shelves for the books, and putting in carpeting. A small sign outside now announces the presence of Francis House to passersby.

One phase of Francis House's program, classes for four-year-olds, began last December. Five boys and three girls, both Negro and white children, currently attend Saturday morning classes taught by Miss Dee Owens, a teacher in the Federal Way school system. She is a trained Head Start teacher and has wide experience with underprivileged children. The

curriculum includes games, stories, art projects and field trips which have taken the children to the Carnation Farm, Point Defiance, the Seattle Center and the zoo. Miss Owens attempts to reach the families as well as the children, helping the parents and having them attend some of the classes.

Members of the Third Order will attend a 12-hour training session for volunteers sponsored by Focus, on June 3. Volunteers to staff Francis House are currently being recruited and anyone interested in the work, in attending the training session, joining any of the Francis House classes or in donating clothes or other supplies should contact the center at EA 5-7585.

THIS Sunday's open house is planned to let the people of the neighborhood, and all interested in this work, get acquainted with Francis House, to let them know we are there and what we are there for," according to Mrs. Helen Byrd, director of the house's activities. In renewing itself by going out to God's people, the Third Order hopes to bring help and consolation to His poor.



Francis House staff members (left to right) Mrs. Helen Byrd, director of activities, Mrs. Marie Winch and Mrs. Nancy Coupez, head of the project, organize children's and adults' clothing which the center will make available each Tuesday afternoon.