Outreach South, launched as "a stab at getting rid of a public nuisance," has grown into a cost-effective preventative program

By Susan Stroyd

- **A Mellon Jr. High School student** *timidly pokes her head in the door of Outreach South. "I didn't really want to come," she begins apologetically, "but my friend said . . ." Her eyes brim with tears. Moments later, feet tucked under in a cast-off but comfy chair, she tells a trained counselor the all-too-familiar story of a family in the throes of divorce and remarriage. She is planning to run away.*
- **An anxious mother** *phones Outreach South. "I can't pinpoint the problem," she tells a counselor, "but something serious is wrong with my 16-year-old son. He's become a different person. He fights with his dad; he's dropped all his friends; his grades are dropping, and I think he's skipping school. My minister thought you could help."*
- **An angry father** *sits silently beside his teenage son, who keeps his eyes downcast on the worn rug. "Any kid who is dumb enough to get drunk and caught with a joint on him probably ought to get sent to reform school," blurts the dad, "but if the police think Outreach can help, I guess you get off easy this time."*

Stories about teenagers with problems often have sordid endings — suicide, drug and alcohol addiction, prostitution, incarceration. Since 1974, many troubled teenagers in Mt. Lebanon and Upper St. Clair have changed the plots of their life stories mid-course and made a fresh start through the individual, group and family counseling services of Outreach South Hills, Inc.

Located upstairs at 91 Central Square in slightly shabby but homey-looking quarters, Outreach South is a not-for-profit community based counselling service for young people ages 12 to 20 and their families. The organization's guiding philosophy is that the natural, everyday context in which an adolescent lives is the best place to solve conflicts, a belief which is also reflected in Pennsylvania's current Juvenile Act.

Each year since 1976, approximately 205 youngsters and their families, bringing the yearly total to about 400, have sought help from Outreach. Had the Outreach professional counseling team not intervened, many of these "problem" teens would very likely have ended up in foster care homes for status offenders like Whale's Tale or juvenile detention centers like Shuman at a cost of between $9,000 and $53,000 per child per year for taxpayers.

"Recidivism rates in the juvenile justice system are high," points out Outreach Board President Carolyn Brown of Upper St. Clair. "Not only is Outreach less costly, it's more effective."

At $590 per child per year, Outreach does look like a bargain, particularly since few of its clients ever reach the juvenile courts. It's also a good buy, says longtime board member Anne Duffy, because "it's lean on administrative and overhead costs; what we're mostly buying is service."

There's little red tape for the youth or the family who needs help. A call to the Outreach hotlines (561-5405), open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 10 a.m., will provide a listening ear or an appointment, but many youngsters simply "drop in."

From the outset, Executive Director Judy Morton Fleming and her five-member counseling staff, assisted by Clinical Consultant William Cagney, Ph.D., look at the child's problem in the context of his total environment.

They visit the home, talk with teachers and counselors, other agencies the child may have been involved with, maybe even toss a football around, if they think it will help. The staff takes great pains to earn the client's trust and prides itself on being able to relate to youngsters in an open, friendly way.

Anne Duffy, who served as municipal administrative assistant under Manager Bob Finley, has been an Outreach advocate since 1974 when the youth turmoil of that era spurred the municipality, led by the Community Relations Board, to structure Outreach. The innovative plan to deal with alienated youth, many of whom had serious drug and alcohol problems, was basically a stab at getting rid of a "public nuisance," she recalls.

It's fine to take a kid to a psychiatrist, but sometimes you don't and sometimes you can't.

"It's all well and good to drag a kid off to a psychiatrist, but sometimes you don't and sometimes you can't. We were hearing from parents that mental health centers were so busy dealing with serious problems that prevention was not their bag, and that it was sometimes pretty difficult to get help."

PHOTOS BY WILLIAM METZGER


Carolyn Brown


Judy Fleming


Stan Marshall


Anne Duffy


David Varrelman


Marshall Gordon

"Never-ending Assignment for Parents"

"We have to do our homework," insists violist Isaias Zelkowicz, who, like the Silipignis, finds time to play other than at scheduled events. At home he listens to more music: "Listening to music for me is like a doctor reading medical journals." His wife, Joan, though busy with three children, Aron, eight, Benjamin, six, and Tony, three, is a free-lance violinist and occasionally plays with the Pittsburgh Symphony and the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. Zelkowicz, a native of Costa Rica, who has played with the National Arts Center Orchestra in Ottawa, Ontario, also teaches at Carnegie-Mellon University.

How do teachers like Zelkowicz motivate their students — especially their own musical children? "I don't believe in pushing very hard. It's not productive," Zelkowicz believes. Echoes wife Joan, "It's better if children have a good feeling about their instrument."

Says Al Hirtz, former consultant to the Mt. Lebanon School District's Cultural Arts Program, and one of the area's most respected teachers: "Kids don't always go to an instrument automatically — it's a never-ending assignment for parents." He stresses, "As a person in charge of guiding young musicians, I have to warn them of the risks, hard work, and competitiveness in the professional world."

Stanley Leonard, principal timpanist with the Orchestra, has taught at Carnegie-Mellon. His compositions have been published in the United States and England and played all over the world. He's given master classes — a group lesson given by a professional — at his alma mater, Eastman, and to countless band directors. He and his wife, Margaret, who has taught music, have two sons, Mark, an artist, and Steven, a violinist with the Alabama Symphony. Leonard counsels: "A parent has to be a good observer to see if there is a genuine interest on the part of the child for the instrument. Parents make a mistake if they push too hard. Only a few can become professionals. Consistent practice is essential, too, — even if it's only 15 minutes a day."

"It's important for a child to have a feeling for the arts and for the parents to provide it," says Gerry Unger, symphony percussionist and teacher at Duquesne School of Music. Wife Cathy, a former voice teacher, calls Gerry a "born teacher." The eight-year Pittsburgh Symphony veteran who, "loves working with young people," has been helping his nine-year-old daughter, Lori, with her Suzuki violin effort, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Says Dad, "After two years, she is just now beginning to think she might like it."

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Acting on a recommendation from the Youth Council, comprised of young people and representatives from the YMCA, PTA and other civic groups, the municipality modeled Outreach after a YMCA inner city streetwork program for hard-to-reach youths — kids who did not respond to traditionally-structured institutions. It became one of the first suburban Outreach programs in the country.

The seventies thrust was juvenile delinquency prevention.

The thrust of the program was juvenile delinquency prevention — helping teenagers solve drug, alcohol and other serious problems before the problems forced them into the juvenile justice system, while at the same time supporting police with the increasing burden of tracking down teenage drug abusers.

Police endorsement of the program was a plus, says Duffy: "People were a lot more willing to accept the fact that the police needed help than that we needed a counseling service for what they viewed as a bunch of spoiled brats."

Self-referrals *are up.*

The initial core funds came from the Federal government through the Governor's Justice Commission. Mt. Lebanon and Upper St. Clair, when it joined in 1975, shared the rest of the bill.

In the early years, Outreach counselors worked mainly with teens on a one-on-one basis, "rapping" with them in the high school smoking area or at local youth hangouts, even riding in police cars to be available for crisis intervention.

Because of its non-establishment image and its flexibility, Outreach often met with success where other agencies had failed. Explains Judy Morton Fleming, "We're not the scary shrink; we're not part of the police; we're not part of the school."

Once counseling had gotten underway, it became apparent that a disturbed teenager was a symptom of a sick family system, and, as Outreach moved toward the eighties, its focus broadened to include family counseling aimed at opening communication lines and healing unhealthy patterns of interaction within a family.

The eighties focus includes family counseling.

"Family systems get confusing," says Fleming. "It helps to have someone sit down and help put things in perspective."

Youngsters are still encouraged to come on their own for help, but, at some point in the therapy, Outreach counselors attempt to involve other family members.

"We don't place blame," says Fleming, "but a lot of people say 'fix my kid,' and we say 'hey, it would be helpful to have your input.' "

Outreach does not intervene uninvited; it is a referral agency with referrals stemming fairly evenly from schools, police and magistrates, community sources (agencies, religious groups, individuals) and the clients themselves. Boy clients outnumber the girls. More boys are referred by the police; more girls are self-referrals.

Self-referrals have increased over the years, possibly, as Anne Duffy suggests,

Continued on next page.

Robert Hatfield

William Dickey

Ernest Wood

Judge Patrick Tamilia

Held together by a lot of people who are willing to work on it

"because the public image of such programs has grown and changed. People are willing to accept help now."

Many adults, however, are surprised to learn that a great number of 1980s teenagers need professional help. Because 1960s hippies and student activists have disappeared behind short haircuts and business suits, they assume that the problems which plagued teenagers in past decades have vanished.

Today's teenagers express their alienation more individually and less violently, says Outreach Vice President Marshall Gordon, associate executive director of Health and Welfare Planning Association, but their problems are just as severe.

"Despite the fact that kids are quiet, there are a lot of problems, a variety of the same old pressures as well as new pressures," he says. "The whole society is changing. Kids can do things they couldn't do before because a lot of parents are working. Kids are coming home to empty houses."

In a recent year, 11 per cent of Outreach referrals were for incorrigibility and runaways, 37 per cent for the use of alcohol and other drugs, and 50 per cent for depression, family problems and other issues.

Police Chief Dave Varrelman's figures speak for themselves. In 1982, the Mt. Lebanon police dealt with 314 juvenile males and 103 juvenile females. Of the total group only 57 were referred to juvenile court. At least 104 of the youngsters were referred to Outreach.

Though Varrelman, an Outreach board member, admits it is difficult to measure the organization's impact on the community, he guesses that, if the program were to fold, youth crime would increase; he calls Outreach "a part in Mt. Lebanon's well-oiled machine."

"Every part of that machine works to give us the product we get," he explains. "If one part of the machine breaks down, will the machine still run? Probably, but not as well."

Several times in recent years, financial problems have threatened to "break" Outreach as federal funds have dwindled to nothing and expenses have increased. Each time, the committed board and staff, backed by the municipality and community groups, have found creative solutions.

"It's somewhat of a phoenix being held together by a lot of people who are willing to work on it," says Varrelman.

In an effort to meet its $120,000 budget, the agency formed a private, non-profit corporation in 1981 and added a number of members of the business and professional community with financial and fund raising expertise to the board of directors. Such well-known Pittsburghers as William Dickey of Cyclops Corporation, Robert Hatfield of ALCOA and Judge Patrick Tamilia from the family division of the Court of Common Pleas, Allegheny County, joined the effort to build a new base of support through corporate and foundation grants and private contributions.

Outreach Board:

Carolyn Brown, President — *former member, Upper St. Clair School Board; member, Juvenile Justice Center Citizen's Coalition . . .* ***Marshall Gordon, Vice President*** — *Associate Executive Director, Health and Welfare Planning Association . . .* ***Ernest Wood, Vice President*** — *Managing Partner, Arthur Young & Company; C.P.A.; Past President, Wesley Institute Board of Directors . . .* ***Anne Duffy, Secretary*** — *member, Mt. Lebanon Community Relations Board; former staff liaison to Joint Commission on Drug Abuse; Mt. Lebanon Youth Council; retired office manager, law firm of Buchanan, Ingersoll, Rodewald, Kyle & Buerger . . .* ***David Varrelman, Treasurer*** — *Police Chief, Mt. Lebanon; member Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency . . .* ***Charles R. Brodbeck, Esq.*** — *Law firm of Berkman, Ruslander, Pohl, Lieber, Engel . . .* ***Margaret Craig*** — *member, Mt. Lebanon School Board; past president, Mt. Lebanon PTA Council . . .* ***William Dickey*** — *Vice President and Treasurer, Cyclops Corporation . . .* ***James DelSole*** — *Mt. Lebanon Municipal Commissioner . . .* ***Robert Hatfield*** — *Executive Vice President, Aluminum Company of America; Director, Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce . . .* ***Dr. James E. Hertzog*** — *Medical Director, Mining Operations, Conoco, Inc. . . .* ***Stanley Marshall*** — *President, Stanley C. Marshall, Inc.; strategic planning consultant; former member, Mt. Lebanon Community Relations Board; chairman, Partnership for Productivity/International . . .* ***Wayne Ross*** — *Vice President, Upper St. Clair school board; Regional Sales Manager, F.W. Dodge, Division, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company; chairman, Upper St. Clair Ad Hoc Committee on Drug and Alcohol Abuse . . .* ***Fred Sargent*** — *President, Sargent Electric Company . . .* ***Gloria Smith*** — *former member (13 years), Upper St. Clair School Board; past president, American Field Service . . .* ***Judge Patrick Tamilia*** — *Judge, 11 years in Family Division, Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County, now with Criminal Division; Professor of Law, Duquesne University, teaching Family Law; member, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges . . .* ***Howard L. Weisz, Jr., (ACSW)*** — *Executive Director, Ward Home for Children; ordained minister, United Methodist Church; Board of Directors, Pennsylvania Council of Voluntary Child Care Agencies; Board of Directors, Allegheny Children and Youth Service Council.*

Outreach funding and planning shows new sophistication

A $10,000 Forbes Fund challenge grant that matched every dollar raised with a 50-cent contribution and a recent $10,000 grant from Westminster Presbyterian Church and a special one-time $5,000 grant from Mt. Lebanon (in addition to the $20,000 allocated in the 1982 municipal budget) will alleviate a problem intensified last July when Upper St. Clair withdrew financial support because its Commission deemed inappropriate the use of public monies for services of a mental health nature.

A number of other community organizations have also contributed in smaller amounts, and their support may become more crucial in the future.

Director Fleming believes Outreach is a proper use for tax dollars. "Communities need to take care of themselves," she says. "If someone objects to using community money for mental health, then call it public safety. Most of the crime around here is done by kids."

Anne Duffy agrees: "Any time you see that a community is suffering because a particular group of people is feeling alienated, you should perceive it as a community problem and try to do something about it."

While continuing to pursue avenues of community support, Outreach has also begun to seek donations from families who are recipients of its service. Payment is suggested on a sliding scale based on income. No one, however, is turned away because of inability to pay.

In addition, the Board is considering expansion to neighboring communities as a means of broadening the financial base, possibly through foundation grants which would permit it to offer Outreach as a prototype to interested communities.

"We plan on being around for a long time," says Board Member Stanley Marshall, a strategic planning consultant who recently conducted a marathon seminar, using the latest planning techniques, for the Board. "We're moving into a program of longer-term planning to make sure that our resources are well used and that all the communities get the most bang for their buck."

The Outreach staff, most of whom are studying at the doctoral level, is also looking towards the future. Staff members recently completed an intensive training program which schooled them in Aftercare counseling for teenagers who have completed St. Francis Hospital's 28-day Adolescent Chemical Dependency Program. A new concept in the last year, Aftercare provides critical leadership and peer support to teens who want to "stay clean" when they return to the community.*

Two members of the Mt. Lebanon High School counseling staff have also completed Aftercare training.

Its counselors also provide consultation and education for synagogues and churches, women's clubs and other civic groups, and its representatives serve as active members of Mt. Lebanon Drug Intervention Network.

They meet regularly with counselors from Mt. Lebanon High School. "We are interested in finding from Outreach what kinds of things can be done in the schools to provide support for the student who is having trouble," says Asst. Principal Joe Price. "Personally, I think they are doing a very good job."

The financial situation will be a recurring problem, in view of the fragility of such social programs. But the commitment of the Outreach South core of supporters is unwavering, and they're calling on Mt. Lebanon and Upper St. Clair residents to help.

"If every family in the community would just contribute $10 . . .," Chief Varrelman says wistfully.

"Individuals in the community who are making contributions should consider Outreach," suggests Board Member Margaret Craig, the representative from the Mt. Lebanon School Board. "Even though you might not have a youngster who needs it, Outreach is going to contribute to it being the kind of community you want to live in."

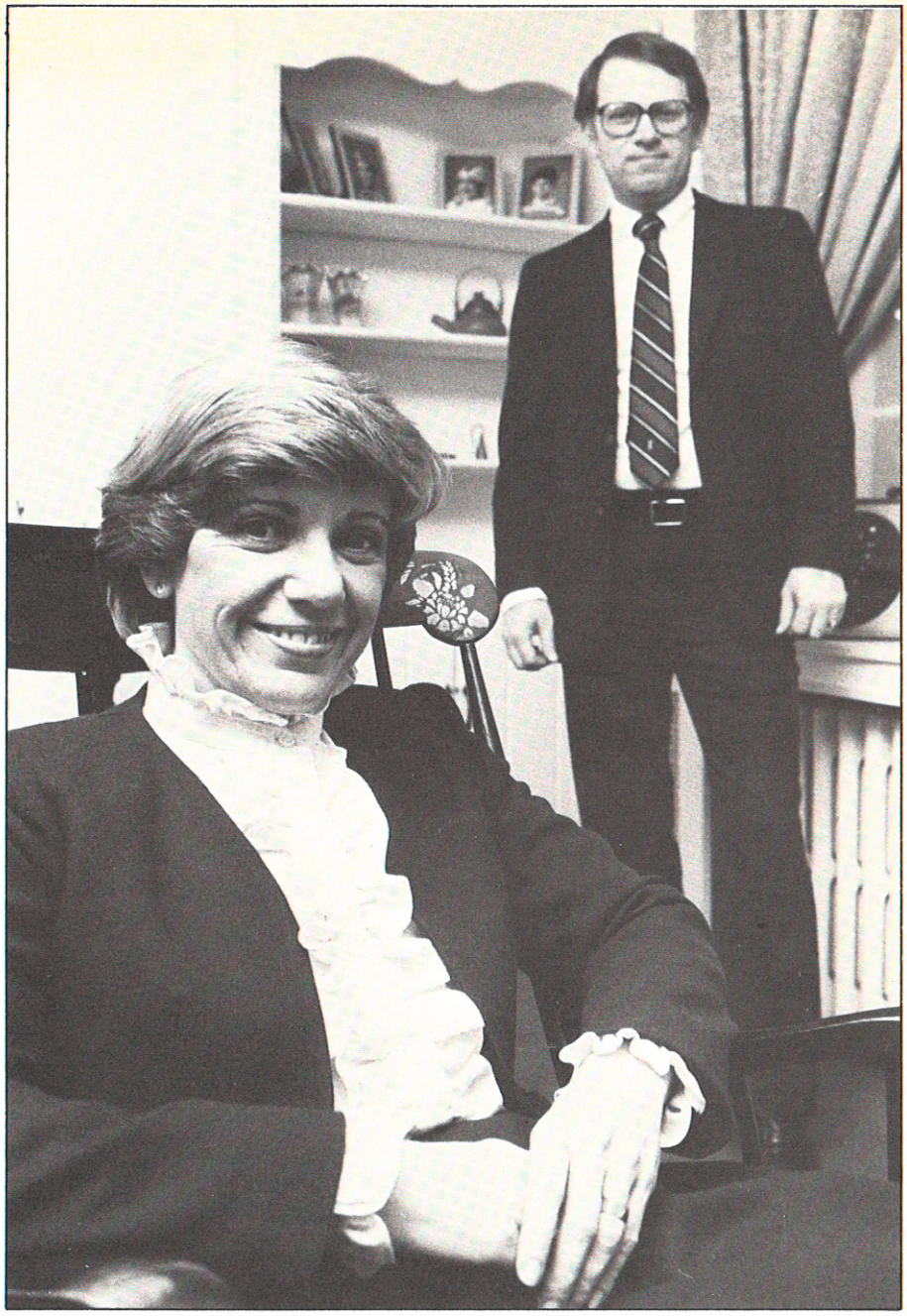
*If you are a contributor to United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, you may now designate all or part of your contribution for Outreach South Hills, Inc. Just ask for the special Donor Option Form.

Supporters:

Alcoa Foundation; Allegheny International Foundation; American Legion, Mt. Lebanon Post 156; Bethel-St. Clair Rotary; Child Health Association of Sewickley (Three Rivers Cookbook); Christ United Methodist Church; Consolidation Coal Company; Cyclops Corporation; Faith Lutheran Church; Forbes Fund; Heinz Co. Foundation; League of Women Voters of Mt. Lebanon; Lions Club of Upper St. Clair; McGraw-Hill Foundation; National Council of Jewish Women; Newcomer's Club of Mt. Lebanon; Pittsburgh National Bank; Rotary Club of Dormont-Mt. Lebanon; Sargent Electric Company; Signal Finance Corporation; Southminster Presbyterian Church; St. Louise de Marillac Church; St. Paul's Episcopal Church; Stanley C. Marshall, Inc.; Teens in Action; Temple Emmanuel; Thrift Drug Company; Upper St. Clair Athletic Association; Upper St. Clair Band Parents Association; Upper St. Clair Council of Republican Women; Upper St. Clair Football Boosters; Upper St. Clair Junior Women's Club; Upper St. Clair League for the Arts; USAir; Welcome Wagon of South Hills; Westinghouse Electric Corporation; Westminster Presbyterian Church; Women's Club of Upper St. Clair; Women's Club of Mt. Lebanon; Women's American ORT; World's Largest Garage Sale.

They no longer say, "She's a *what?*"

PHOTO BY WILLIAM METZGER



Says The Reverend Gail King about Mt. Lebanon, "There's a lot of stability here for my children. I've never been able to thank enough the women who were home and there for my kids — women I paid and women I didn't pay." King and husband George, director of clinical engineering at Allegheny General, have four children.

By Baylee Gordon

"Well, she just doesn't *look* like a minister."

That's what they used to say about trim, chic Gail Buchwalter King who in years of preaching from the pulpit and elsewhere has managed to get past the traditional image of the sober, male cleric and be seen as herself.

Which is only fitting since the Rev. King's life, both professional and personal, is aimed at battling stereotypes that can potentially divide people and interfere with their being seen as individuals.

As co-pastor of the Community of Reconciliation of Pittsburgh, King is one of the most "individual" individuals around. Since 1972, she has served the purposely interracial, intercultural congregation that is the worshipping unit the University and City Ministries in Oakland. An outgrowth of the urban racial strife of 1968, the congregation — based on reconciling religious denominations, races and the sexes — models its philosophy through its pastors: one black and one white minister, a female and a male.

The Community has been a trailblazer in local religious life. King, who loves the "intensity and passion and richness" that her diverse congregants "bring to worship," calls her church "an experiment that has survived.

Trailblazing and survival are subjects King knows something about. A longtime Mt. Lebanon resident, she first came to Bower Hill Community Church in 1966 as the Rev. William Barker's associate and patiently waited until tradition-minded congregants began to accept and respect their "mini-skirted minister."

"I was young and kind of a novelty. I didn't fit the image. But once they got used to me and understood what I was able to do, it was fine," says King, who speculates that men seemed more comfortable than women" with their skirted spiritual leader. She tells of being "kicked out of" a hospital during a pastoral visit "when a woman patient I had come to comfort began screaming angrily that I wasn't a minister."

But she was. Ordained after graduating from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, King had served not only Bower Hill's congregation but also the Mt. Pisgah Presbyterian Church in Greentree before moving into the urban ministry where now her duties range from the usual sermonizing and counseling to rearranging the pews for a special program.