

Hillcrest Home--

Typical Home Scene But Different

By JOYCE ZIMMERSCHIED

FAIRBANKS — Christmas lights glowed softly in the large picture window. From the living room drifted sounds of a television and boys talking and playing. A typical scene from an average home — but with a difference. This one is the Hillcrest Home for Boys.

Hillcrest, a non-profit organization run by a corporation of private citizens, deals with delinquent and dependent teen-age boys. Recently, in addition to the house at 1531 Gillam Way, a new living quarters and office space has been added at 1235 19th.

Currently, 12 boys are living in the two houses.

The new house, in addition to four bedrooms, also has a small apartment attached for training in independent living. It provides a transition period for boys who are nearly ready to be out on their own, says program director Monty Slusher.

They learn how to take care of their own place, the responsibilities of paying bills and other aspects of everyday life.

While the house on 19th has individual bedrooms, the one on Gillam Way is arranged more for dormitory-style living. And because the whole program is now set up as an institution, it has to meet higher standards. This in turn provides better results, Slusher said.

Formed in 1965 by a group of concerned citizens, Hillcrest has recently been undergoing changes. Besides the new house, work has been completed on remodeling and bringing facilities up to fire code standards.

Officially re-opened March 1 of this year, Hillcrest is governed by a board of directors. The board hires the director who, in turn, hires other staff members.

While about 500 individuals regularly contribute money, time and supplies to keep Hillcrest going, other sources also exist. The annual United Good Neighbor Campaign and state aid on a per-boy basis also helps.

But it is the corporation members, who join by contributing whatever they can afford in terms of cash or equipment, who probably do the most.

Everything from ping-pong balls to two snowmobiles have been donated so far, and the need for other things remains constant, according to Slusher.

Most boys at Hillcrest are placed either by the Division of Corrections or the Division of Family and Children Services. About 90 per cent are Natives, ranging in age from 14 to 18. Five of those now here are from Point Barrow, two from Kotzebue and one from Healy. Several come from the Fairbanks area.

While no set time is mandatory for a boy to stay — times have covered everything from three days to eight months — Slusher said they are interested in boys who will be there three or more months so they can be a part of the group living process.

The process is a democratic one, with everyone having something to say about what happens and why. This is better, he says, than a purely family situation, which places too much strain on everyone concerned.

Group sessions combine house government, education and a type of therapy. But counseling is kept both individual and informal.

"A boy can take me aside right here, or I can talk to him while we're driving in the car. It can be anywhere," Slusher

said.

"We give the boys a lot of freedom, but they have to bear the burden of what they do when they're free," Slusher explained.

He added, "Rules and laws come from society rather than being something that is being just forced upon them."

Independence is a big strong point at the home. The boys are encouraged to take part in community affairs, find jobs and do whatever else will help them to make it on their own. They can leave any time after their 18th birthday.

Besides Slusher, there is a paid staff of five, a New Careers government worker, a secretary and a full time housekeeper. In addition, a varying number of college students and servicemen from Project Transition act as live-in advisors and assistants.

Slusher, who has been involved in social work at various levels since 1964, was at one time district representative for the Kotzebue public welfare programs.

The job involved considerable travel, especially in the bush areas.

"It was quite helpful. I got to know the cultural background and social scene they came out of," he says.

Because of this, he feels that he can better understand the boys and their problems.

What brings a boy here can be anything from petty theft to drug abuse, with a certain amount coming from broken or disturbed homes. And while the director and the staff do their best to create a good life for them, some problems remain.

One of the worst, and particularly around holidays such as Christmas, is pure homesickness. The village boys especially feel the lack, as they are farthest from their homes. If the bush regions are interested, Slusher said, papers and letters from home would be welcomed.

"Also, if we could get decorative items in the area of Native arts and crafts, even Native foods," it would help, he said.

People in the home would appreciate others making contact and passing on news in either direction, he said.

"Second avenue is more than just a place for these boys to hang out and get into trouble. It's a walking letter," he said, commenting on them running into people that they know from home.

The Hillcrest staff has a number of irons in the fire in regard to future projects. The home owns 160 acres near the Musk Ox Farm which is used for camping, snow machine trails and so forth.

They would like to expand this, as well as offer counseling and recreational outlet for neighborhood young people. A juvenile delinquency preventive program would keep them "out of places like ours and with their family," he said.

Fairbanks residents of all ages and classes get involved in helping too. A Main Junior High School class sponsored a bake sale Thursday to raise money for a wall tapestry. A local woman donated \$900 over the last year. And people contribute other things too.

"During Christmas week, people that want to take boys out or help them in any way would be appreciated. This type of interest will help alleviate some problems," Slusher suggested.

Running a project such as Hillcrest is not a 40-hour week

south as Annette Island.

Besides the SOS, the University also has a program of Native studies, instituted three semesters ago for anyone interested. Each course comes under an established college department.

There is a course in Alaska Natives in Politics, under the political science division, one in Skin Sewing in the home economics, an Alaska Native Heritage class in the history department and an English course in Alaskan Natives Myths and Legends, to name a few.

In addition, the linguistics department offers courses in Inupiat and Yupik Eskimo, Tlingit and Haida Indian and special topics courses in nearly any Native language for which an instructor can be found.

Starting next fall, students may get a bachelor's degree in Eskimo languages.

Currently, the orientation service runs an advisory board that maintains contact with the students. Among other projects, they are making a study suggesting a minor in Native studies, with future possibilities for a major.

"We have existing programs we could coordinate without any trouble. It wouldn't be hard to pull together 12 credits," commented Dr. Soboleff.

The board also gives suggest-

Undertones . . .

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A student advisor said Walunga had caused problems for quite awhile, Miss Foster noted, but that no one had done anything about it.

One girl interviewed by Miss Foster said that since the murder, several male students she knows were looking for excuses to "bust a Native in the mouth." The statement demonstrated some of the feelings that have surfaced following the murder, particularly in Moore Hall, where it happened. Moore has about 50 per cent native students.

Tenseness continues on the campus, according to Miss Foster. And she concludes that some people are saying it never should have happened and that it might have been prevented on numerous occasions.

Pipeline . . .

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firm assumed that the pipeline road will not be open to the public during the construction period.

If the road is opened, economic development of the area could be significantly accelerated and there could be substantial shifts in the size and locations of the population and employment increases, the firm predicted.

"Deadhorse and Prudhoe Bay may well become boom towns as the northern terminus of the transportation network, and some of the growth projected for Barrow may move there if such a community develops," the report said.

Medical service, police and fire protection and the court system will also be strained beyond existing manpower and facilities during construction, the firm found.

for anybody. And anything that can happen probably will. But for the boys who need help, it is one of the best things going in this area.

Dropout Rate Drops to 9.7 Per Cent

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ions to the whole orientation program.

"It becomes their concern, and I think that's the way it should be," he said.

The University of Alaska is not the only one interested in Native studies, as Dr. Soboleff's correspondence proves. Colleges and universities as widely scattered as Wisconsin, California and Canada write about programs they are developing along the same lines.

All of this "kind of brings a

sense of pride, a sense of belonging," says Dr. Soboleff. "The interest in these courses has been extremely high."

In some cases, they have had to be divided into two sections when they grew to large.

And that's what the Native studies department and the orientation service are all about. Helping students adjust to new surroundings, teaching them about their culture and heritage — and an intangible but very real thing known as pride.

Land Use Planning . . .

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entitled to between 13.7 and 14 million of the 40 million acres designated by the Settlement Act, Sackett said that 1/3 of this land must be selected within the next two years. The remaining 2/3 may be chosen after this time.

Enrollment must be completed by March 30, 1973, with land to be selected to a year after that. Discussions are presently about 1/3 completed on history and inheritance philosophy of the villages, concepts of land titles and areas, expected timetables and the finances involved.

Technical training of village leaders, Sackett said, will allow them to take charge of events. seminars on map reading, titles, legal land descriptions and so forth will help them to select land wisely and efficiently.

Five problems outlined by Sackett include selection acreage changeability of inland waters, interim control of lands withdrawn for Native selection, subsistence use outside of selected lands, the need for a good resource library, and rejection of native allotments. He recommended that much work on these problems can be done administratively and that village corporations should start immediate work on them.

On the inland waters, Sackett said that they belong to the state and that three parties were needed to agree on titles, with commission members acting as a stimulus to movement. He said that he hoped to submit a proposal to the group soon.

Access to Native lands for hunting and fishing by non-Natives was another bone of contention.

"One basis of the Claims Settlement is to protect Native subsistence. The entire concept of

the Claims Act is being forgotten," Sackett said.

He pointed to massive trespass by non-Natives on Native lands as proof of this statement, citing the duck hunting at Minto as a prime example.

The resources library is an urgent necessity, he said, because people need to know what is on their land before selections are made so that they may be wise ones.

To his statement, "I fear it will be developed only after the need has passed," Horton replied by saying that he was just as aware of the need as is Sackett and that the library would be established as soon as a building in Juneau could be emptied.

Another major point was the fact that Natives applied through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, who did not inform them that the land they picked had already been bought by other parties. Since the deadline for refiling was December 18th of this year, they were left with no recourse to refile elsewhere. He suggested that something must be done about this situation, perhaps an amendment to the constitution.

Sackett said that he wanted to take a township soon to use as a test case. The advantages to such a move would be to assist a group of people who are unsure not only of what a corporation actually is but also how modern business methods work.

"Certain property owners as individuals have certain rights. We must educate the villagers and outsiders," Sackett said.

Josephson suggested that Sackett draw up a proposal on his suggestions and submit it to the commission.

NEXT WEEK: Victor Fisher and others make statements.

Native Housing Shaky . .

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homes to be built there.

"From the beginning, everyone involved knew the cost of housing in rural Alaska would be high but any anxieties were allayed by a memo from HUD that financial feasibility requirements would be waived for the Alaska Native Housing Program.

Several months ago the Alaska Federation of Natives Housing Authority completed its plans for 14 villages and submitted bid packages to HUD for approval on Nov. 6. Now HUD says the plan won't work.

The catch came with operating expenses.

Operating expenses for AFNHA's 14 village projects would exceed an average of \$200 a month per unit, with costs for other projects in rural Alaska about the same.

HUD requires that payments made by the home owner plus the subsidy from HUD be at least 15 per cent greater than estimated operating costs over the next five years.

Recently HUD limited the maximum subsidy for operating expenses to \$15 per month per housing unit. The Brooke Amendment to the housing act meanwhile limits rent payments to 25 per cent of the home purchaser's income.

What with the average low income of the home purchaser's HUD estimates monthly deficits of operating expenses of about \$150.

"So for the AFNHA housing project planned for 1973 . . . 353 units . . . an additional subsidy to the maximum HUD subsidy of well over \$600,000 is needed for the first year of operation," Hensley said. "As a practical matter, the 510 units planned for construction in 1973 by the Arctic Slope Regional Corp., NANA Regional Corp., and Sealaska must be considered at the same time; so close to \$2 million additional subsidy is needed for the first year," he said.