

## Trucksville's Anne Vernon provides 'special kind of help' with FSA



Anne Vernon

by Russ Williams  
A day in the life of Trucksville resident Anne Vernon, executive director, Family Service Association of Wyoming Valley, generally begins with her 8 a.m. arrival at her Wilkes-Barre office and ends with a late evening phone conversation with someone in need of her special kind of help.

Mrs. Vernon has been with FSA since 1965, when she took on the duties of a social work assistant. Her duties included casework service and assistance to the professional staff on selected tasks related to specific cases.

FSA has long offered counselling to troubled individuals, couples, families and groups.

Mrs. Vernon's days are full of meetings and administrative decision-making, now that she heads a staff of seven family counsellors and various secretarial and clerical staff members. But she seems to have fond memories of her days as an FSA social work assistant and, later, as a social worker (1969-71).

Asked if she preferred those days to these, she responded, "I try not to think about that. I miss being a therapist very much. But this job keeps me so busy there's not much time to think about it."

She adds, "I really liked being a therapist. It was

one of the things I liked doing best. But, by nature, I'm never content to stay somewhere, when its more challenging somewhere else."

And Mrs. Vernon has met challenges well in her life. She has added new, innovative programs to FSA's offering. She set up a West Side office in 1972, when the flood made a new center necessary. (Continuing in operation long after flood waters receded, it became a central information hub for locating flood victims.)

Aid she became the first woman to run for, and win, an at-large seat on the Dallas Area School Board, running against the party slate.

"I enjoy, and always have enjoyed, competition," she notes. "If I had the time to be bothered about something about this job, it would be that I don't have the time for the hobbies I've always enjoyed," she adds. A fine high school and college basketball player, she later developed a strong game of tennis and golf. She and her husband, Tom, used to be prize-winning dancers and model airplane builders.

"I miss that," she points out, but then reminds you that she now enjoys her C.B. RADIO (her "HANDLE" is Grey Shadow), gardening with Tom, travel and her family. She is the mother of three and the grandmother of eight.

The FSA executive director has always had an interest in young people and their education. That was why she ran for the school board, serving a six-year term and two years as board president.

It is this interest that also partially accounts for her desire to work closely with the schools in FSA's school outreach program.

FSA makes use of area school districts, especially Dallas, Northwest and Pittston, to get counselling services into areas not serviced by any other non-profit agency.

"If you talk to a school child, and he tells you there is a problem at home, you can call the family to let them know that Johnny wants the family to take part in counselling. No family has ever turned us down in such an instance. They are relieved that the problem has been vocalized and that something can be done about it," Mrs. Vernon explains.

The schools also allow Mrs. Vernon and FSA an opportunity to take another important agency program into the rural areas. Family Life Education is designed to prevent family problems from occurring. The program utilizes the dynamic process of group learning to improve the quality of individual and family living.

It improves self-esteem and social functioning by helping group members to understand and anticipate the normal patterns and stresses of family and community living, thus preventing or reducing situational crises.

"We can avoid crisis situations by getting to the families early," Mrs. Vernon points out. A logical place to discover problems is at the schools, where so many are brought together in one place, she points out.

Specific Family Life Education programs offered by FSA to any interested area resident include:

Women in Transition-for women experiencing a separation or seriously considering one.

Parents of Pre-Schoolers-for parents of children aged one through five.

Productions for Living-mini-productions designed to demonstrate problems.

Adolescents-group discussions for teenagers.

Parents of Teens (Parts I & II)

On Becoming Parents-for those planning or considering becoming parents.

Divorced-The Next Step-for adults trying to adjust to divorce.

Pre-Marriage Couples-to explore responsibilities and challenges of being married.

When the woman who heads the agency that offers all those special programs arrives at the office at 8 a.m., she brings a good deal of educational preparation and experience with her.

Mrs. Vernon received her B.S. degree from the School of Social Work of the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh (now Carnegie Mellon University). She did field placement work at the SoHo Community Center

and the Terrace Village Housing Program in the Pittsburgh area.

Work experience included summer placement as a Red Cross volunteer at England General Hospital, Atlantic City, in 1945. The hospital specialized in war amputee cases, and Mrs. Vernon assisted the wounded in their return to civilian life.

Prior to coming to Family Service she has worked as a Girl Scout camp assistant program director, as a volunteer co-recreational director at a Bradford, Pa., community center, and as a part-time, hospital intake worker.

After two years with Family Service, she became a master's program student at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, with a field placement at Family Service Association of Wyoming Valley. It meant that each week she spent two days and one night in Philadelphia and three days of the work week at Family Service and with her family.

"I commuted..leaving for Philly at 5 a.m., staying overnight and returning the next afternoon. I remember getting to class and learning that the snow had kept some of the Philadelphia students home..but I had made it there from Trucksville. My kids were in high school. I guess I was crazy," she explains.

When she received her master's, in 1969, she was made a social worker. From 1971 through 1974, she served FSA as its director of professional

services, responsible for the development, promotion and implementation of new and needed programs, and for providing leadership in staff development and supervision.

It was during this time she set up the FSA flood office. FSA began administering the Help Line program in this period, as well. Help Line is still a very important program, offering telephone referral, advocacy and crisis intervention on a 24-hour, 365-day-per-year basis.

In addition to the services and programs already mentioned, the 80-year-old United Way member agency offers a training-consultation service, whereby FSA workers share their expertise with social workers and caseworkers of other area agencies and institutions.

A client advocacy program helps clients in their dealings with community institutions, resolving difficulties.

The agency will assist anyone, with any family-oriented problem.

When Mrs. Vernon arrives for work in the morning there is sometimes someone waiting at the door with a problem. Often the phone begins to ring, even "though she's there half an hour before the office opens (8:30). "Usually its a person upset about what happened the night before or wanting an appointment because of a crisis," she remarks.

After a busy day of phone calls, meetings and administrative decisions, she

heads for Trucksville at about 5 p.m., usually taking some proposals or other work home with her (although she admits to being "not proud" of the fact that she does not attempt to forget about work at the end of a long work day).

The calls she gets at home in the evening and those that the office gets during the day, requesting that she take a specific case are almost always referred to one of the caseworkers. "When I was a therapist, I read constantly and kept up with the new procedures. Now I don't have time. And the other workers are training all of the time...often on their own time and with their own money. They are extremely dedicated about keeping up," she explains.

Right now, Mrs. Vernon is a very dedicated administrator. "But I really haven't decided yet what I want to 'go into'," she'll tell you.

### Mt. Carmel schedules dual sale

The Blessed Virgin Mary Sodality of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, Lake Silkworth will conduct a rummage and bake sale. The dual sale will be held Saturday, Aug. 13 on the church grounds in the pavilion from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Chairperson is Mary Margaret Stefanowicz. Her committee includes Marie Carol Roman, Molly Lamoreaux, Teresa Farber, Valerie Stefanowicz and Margaret Bernet. Mary Margaret Stefanowicz is president of the Sodality. The Rev. Thomas D. Skotek is pastor of the parrish.

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### UM women plan Amish bus trip

The Lehman United Methodist Women are sponsoring a bus trip to the Amish country, Thursday, Aug. 25. Cost is \$21 per person. Reservations must be made with Mrs. Charles Nuss by Aug. 12 and include a \$10 deposit.

William D. James, alternate lay member of the annual conference for the Charge, will preach Sunday, Aug. 7 at Lehman and Jackson. Raymond Davenport, summer resident of Harveys Lake, will preach at Idetown.



IRISH DAY--It was truly a bit of Ireland at Hanson's Park last week with visiting teachers from Ireland as guests and entertainers as well. Shown above, kneeling, left to right, are Michael Brennan, John Stack, Leo McElroy, Ivan O'Callaghan, Pat Falanagan, Hugh Mulrooney, Donnchadh O'husaigh, Seamus Treacy, Brian Murray;

standing, Frances Durack, Ann Feeney, Kathleen O'Sullivan, Helen Armstrong, Bernadette O'Doherty, Deirdre Moran, Marie N. Eidsrcoil, Pauline Martin Ann Marie Greenan, Siobhen O'Connell, and Michael McLoughlin. (Photo by Fay Broody Studio)

### Mercy Hospital Aux. plans bus trip

Back Mountain Branch of the Mercy Hospital Auxiliary will hold its

meeting at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 9 at the Mercy Center, Dallas. Sr.

Ann Horgan, RSM, will be the guest at the meeting. Sr. Ann is the project director for Mercy Center.

The work shop for the Christmas Boutique will be held every Wednesday, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. All members are urged to attend and help with this project.

On Wednesday, Aug. 17, the auxiliary will sponsor a bus trip to Blueberry Hill for lunch and shopping, a matinee at the playhouse to see "Come Blow Your Horn," followed by dinner at Johnny's.

Reservations may be made with Mrs. Paul Menapace or Mrs. Regis Brice.

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