

Nature and Extent of FISH

The sign of the Fish has been familiar to those in the Charlottetown area for four years now. However, many are unaware of the nature and extent of its functions. The idea for it originated in England, and the first North American branch began in Springfield, Mass. Although the Fish is now found in many countries, there is no international organization; each branch operates independently.

The Fish got its start here in November, 1974, sponsored jointly by the Kirk of St. James and St. Peter's Cathedral. Office space at the Kirk was donated, enabling the Fish to operate out of there for a little more than a year, until the location became known. (The unknown location of the office is maintained to preserve the confidentiality of the service.) This, combined with the fact that the service was outgrowing the office, prompted the move to a new location.

The telephone line, open from 2:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. every day, is manned by volunteers who give three hours of their time every two weeks. These volunteers are not expected to be counsellors or experts of any nature; rather, they are individuals who have a willingness to help. This desire is all that is required, for the organization has an extensive filing system of all the services available in the Charlottetown area. (Six volunteers work exclusively at keeping this file up to date.) In addition, a number of anonymous professional persons are available to the Fish, should consultation about how to handle a call be required. Thus, the Fish works as a referral agency in a large capacity. Many persons in need are unaware of what services are actually out there for them.

Also, many of the calls are from people who just need someone to talk to. Even persons who are surrounded by family and friends sometimes need an objective listener. Loneliness calls constitute the vast majority.

Whatever the nature, all calls are held in

strictest confidence.

The Fish also provides a "Daily Hello" service for older or disabled people (or even persons who live alone and just want the assurance of a daily safety check.) Upon registration with

very small budget, as it relies on volunteers: local service clubs pay for the two telephone lines (one for incoming calls, the other for outgoings), and another organization supplies heat and lights. A

help fulfill the need; for example, the establishment of a family association here resulted from needs that were being expressed in calls to the Fish. Another representative of the organization endeavoured in the setting up of a family court, and the one-parent family association here resulted from needs that were being expressed in calls to the Fish. Another representative of the organization endeavoured in the setting up of a hostel.

There is need for more Fish volunteers in Charlottetown. Serving the community in this way can be a learning experience - particularly for psychology majors. (In fact, one psychology course at Dalhousie requires that students spend some time at a Halifax Helpline.) It has been found that young people are good listeners, as they possess patience and understanding.

Those interested in telephone duty are trained by experienced volunteers; these training sessions are held twice yearly. As the fall session will be under way shortly, the organization would greatly appreciate hearing from any students who would like to help others (in any capacity.)

Phone 894-3474, or write to P.O. Box 1712, Charlottetown.
by Valerie Moore
Information from
Mrs. Connie MacMillan

Sign of the FISH



this service, the person to be called arranges the time of day he wishes to receive the call, and also designates an emergency number. If he does not answer at the pre-arranged time and has not notified the volunteer caller that he will be out, the emergency number is called; the friend or neighbour at that number is alerted to check and see that the person living alone is all right. In this way, help can be summoned quickly if needed.

The Fish has as its objective "help" - in whatever aspect they are able to supply it. This motive is reflected in the symbolism of its names: the symbol for fish was used by early Christians to identify each other, yet remain undetected by the Romans, who sought to persecute them. The organization is based on the words of Christ, "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, that you do unto me."

The Fish operates on a

local printer donates his services for the stationery, enrolment forms, etc., that the Fish requires. All advertising is given by the news media as a public service.

The Fish will continue as long as the need exists for it, and as long as there are volunteers willing to

PRAYER FOR THE SIGN OF THE FISH MOVEMENT

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD,
SAVIOUR OF MANKIND,

AS YOU DID CALL YOUR FIRST DISCIPLES TO FISH
FOR MEN, GIVE US GRACE TO LAUNCH OUT
INTO THE DEEP WATERS OF HUMAN NEED AND
TO LET DOWN THE SAVING NETS
OF COMPASSION AND CONCERN.

SEND US OUT IN YOUR NAME WITH HELPING HAND
AND HEALING WORD, AND ENABLE US BY THE POWER
OF YOUR LOVE TO SERVE OUR FELLOW MAN.
HEAR US, JESUS, MASTER, CHRIST ETERNAL,
WHOM WE WORSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND
THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD FOREVER. AMEN.

This was written by Archdeacon Davies - a clergyman who used to be at St. Peter's Cathedral, Charlottetown.