

# Volunteers of America celebrate 80th birthday at Waldorf Astoria

There was a gala celebration for the 80th anniversary of the Volunteers of America in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City this week and several local persons were on hand for this special occasion.

Lt. Colonel Robert N. Coles, director of the Volunteers here, led the delegation with Father Joseph Davies, a member of the board, and Father Kilmore Rigg. Also present were two sons of Lt. Col. Coles, Captain Nelson Coles and Staff Captain Robert N. Coles Jr., currently attending the University of Louisville in Louisville, Ky.

Father Davies, who is pastor of St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Virginia Ave., had the honor of giving the invocation at the formal birthday dinner in the ballroom of the Waldorf Astoria. He was also appointed to the National Advisory Board of the Volunteers of America at this session.

## Many services

General John F. McMahon, who heads the Volunteers and who has been here in Hagerstown on several occasions, has noted that the overall policy guideline of the Volunteers of America, the national social welfare

organization, is flexibility.

As it begins its 80th year of service to those in need General McMahon has said, "It may be a cliché to say that the public's attitudes and mores are changing faster than our laws and institutions are adapting to the new social climate, but there's a good deal of truth in it. We're coping with that difficulty by reviewing regularly our programs to make them relevant to the needs of the communities served by our posts."

Citing as an example of the activities of the Volunteers organization, General McMahon noted that in Houston, Texas, the Volunteers of America was set to open a new Halfway House for male alcoholics. But at the request of city officials it suddenly was converted to a recovery home for women alcoholics. "There are so few facilities for women that local authorities suggested the need for them was more pressing than another installment for men."

## Rehabilitation

Eighty years ago, on the New York Bowery, the Volunteers of America concentrated on rehabilitating derelicts and former convicts and relieving

poverty in the slums. Today, the focus is increasingly on improving the quality of life for low- and moderate-income families, the elderly and handicapped children and adults.

Activities operated by the Volunteers include 21 nonprofit housing complexes accommodating more than 14,000 tenants, nine nursing homes with 1,483 beds, 25 group homes for children with family and behavioral problems, 12 group homes for retarded children and adults, 56 Halfway Houses for rehabilitating alcoholics and ten pre-release centers which prepare paroled prisoners for re-entry into society.

It is in the field of group homes for children with family and behavioral problems that the Volunteers of America in Hagerstown is associated. There is a group home for boys on High Street and a group home for girls, known as "Quality Hill House" on S. Prospect St., which is under the

direction of Lt. Colonel Robert N. Coles and his wife, Lt. Colonel Martha Coles.

## Many service centers

There are 750 service centers with a variety of programs, among them nurseries for adoption-bound infants, maternity homes, day care centers for children and shelters for runaway adolescents, family centers which provide health care, vocational guidance and personal counseling, Senior Citizens' Centers with health clinics, nutritional and recreational programs, and missions where homeless men are given food, lodging, employment in sheltered workshops and spiritual regeneration.

The work of the Volunteers of America is all encompassing and ever changing to meet the needs of the time. There is a wealth of heart that goes into all of the dedicated work of its members.