

# A Home Environment for Teen-age Boys

By **REV. ROBERT J. BAFFA**  
Executive Director  
Sixteen Ninety

NESTLED AMONGST the trees on a small piece of land setting back from the main thoroughfare of Route 7 in South Burlington is a beautiful white colonial house that goes practically unnoticed. Few people know of the work being done behind these walls. In this huge old colonial building reside eight teenage boys who for the most part were neglected and homeless but who have now found a home without fear of rejection. The boys call their home "Sixteen Ninety," taken simply from the street address which is 1690 Shelburne Road. Founded in 1973, this group home provides love and affection as well as security in the lives of these children.

The program at Sixteen Ninety provides a controlled but homelike environment with normal family community relationships. Our aims are for personal growth and positive change in the lives of our residents while maintaining a family atmosphere. Is it not better to provide a plan of family living that is preventive in character, with the intent that creating a family is more rewarding and hopeful than waiting till homeless children have gone down the long road of petty crime, reform schools, prisons and mental institutions? Sixteen Ninety thinks so and has proven that this type of group living is a preferred alternative to the traditional institutionalization.

THE BOYS at Sixteen Ninety on the whole consider this their home and work with the staff in helping to keep it homelike. They all have different chores to do each day



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above and beyond keeping their own things clean and neat.

During the summer the boys keep busy with their jobs, the family garden and recreational activities such as hiking, camping, swimming. Three of the older ones have jobs with the Neighborhood Youth Corp and the younger boys do odd jobs around the community. The boys all have savings accounts and are encouraged to save their money so that when there is something they would like to buy, such as a bicycle, they have their own money which they earned. At the beginning of the summer the boys took a Bicentennial trip to Philadelphia and the Jersey Shore for a week. For this trip they raised one third of the cost themselves by mowing lawns, doing spring cleaning, odd jobs and having a garage sale. The boys took great pride in raising this money knowing that they had contributed as a whole towards a fami-

ly vacation.

THE BOYS attend the South Burlington School System which is exceptional in its interest in fulfilling the needs of these children. Some who were D and F students before, are now C and B students participating in many of the extracurricular activities such as band, chorus, baseball and basketball. Through developing the mental, physical and spiritual aspects of their lives, children terrified by the chaotic experiences of their early childhood, become normal, well adjusted and productive members of the community.

Sixteen Ninety Shelburne Road must not only continue to exist, it should be expanded to the degree practical. At the present time we are trying to raise sufficient funds to put a down payment on a nearby home so that the program can be expanded to serve the needs of more of Vermont's deserving youngsters.

We are proud in the recognition we have received throughout the State and due to the generosity of people throughout Vermont we can truly say: "No one stands taller than when he stoops to help a boy."

The Rev. Robert J. Baffa is executive director of Sixteen Ninety and also is a part-time associate pastor of St. Stephen's Parish in Winooski. He serves as chaplain at the Chittenden Community Correctional Center and was a founder of "Crossroads," a halfway house for ex-offenders. He has been an assistant at Cathedral and Christ the King Parishes in Burlington and was ordained in 1966. He is a native of Philadelphia.