

Juvenile Delinquency

Independence Hall to be haven for mistreated youngsters 3/16/78

By BOB SMITH

Halloran Hall is about to spawn Independence Hall.

Halloran Hall — the first of its kind in the county — is a residential home for delinquent teenage boys and girls in Soquel.

Independence Hall, which will be built near Halloran Hall but on a separate site, will have accommodations for six mistreated but not delinquent girls.

Halloran Hall is the creation of Mrs. Anne Leonard and now houses five boys and six girls and has a staff of 11, including six CETA workers.

Residents, ranging in age from 12 to 18, are referred to Halloran Hall by the juvenile court system here and in neighboring counties.

Independence Hall is an outgrowth of the concept that resulted in Halloran Hall, and also in the disappointment Mrs. Leonard received when she tried to expand her program into the social service area.

She found that, legally, she couldn't house the girls referred to her by the social agencies with

those sent to Halloran Hall by the juvenile court system.

So, the need for Independence Hall was born.

The land has been purchased, and the Board of Supervisors have okayed the project for a site north of Soquel Drive, between Maplethorpe and Victory Lanes in Soquel.

Independence Hall, when completed, will resemble nothing else but a very large, very attractive, wood-sided, two-story home. Inside, it will have 2,500 square feet of living space, including quarters for two live-in counselors.

The site fronts on Maplethorpe Lane, is separated from Soquel Drive by a grove of eucalyptus trees, and from the remainder of a proposed housing tract by a small community park.

"Six girls, 16-17 years old, will live there," she says. "These are kids who have had too much trouble, are too old to live in a foster home."

They aren't bad kids. But they have suffered psychological

damage — "girls who have been abused, sexually and otherwise. They will be referred to Independence Hall by the social services, not the juvenile courts."

Once there, counselors and teachers will work with them, preparing them for life on their own.

"They'll spend two months to a year here, depending on their ages. If they were 17, we would work real hard with them."

The goal is getting them ready for an emancipated life — a life as a legal adult, even though the calendar age is something else.

"It has been hurtful for me to not be able to take these kids," says Mrs. Leonard.

Halloran Hall was heavily supported by the community, and although her "begging" days for it are probably over, she is now looking for community help on Independence Hall.

Built by Frank and Colleen Giuliani, Halloran Hall was finally purchased from the couple last December. But not at the

\$160,000 appraised value. Instead, the contractor honored his initial agreement with Mrs. Leonard and sold it to the non-profit organization for his cost — \$73,000.

Giuliani has agreed to construct Independence Hall on the same basis. The facility's board of directors has voted to name the new unit Giuliani's Independence Hall.

In the short time it has been open, Halloran Hall has its own success story. Fourteen teenagers have completed the program at the hall, attending public high school classes or Cabrillo College part time, and private classes at the facility the rest of the time.

And 12 have stayed out of trouble, Mrs. Leonard said. "Two repeated and are back in trouble."

"One girl came to us from a psychiatric facility. She wouldn't even take off her bathrobe," Mrs. Leonard related.

"Then she decided she wasn't going to be mentally ill anymore." Today, the girl has a new life in a foster home, is on the Soquel High School honor roll.

Maria Biondi is another success story. She came to Halloran hall from Sunnyvale. She attends classes at Loma Prieta High School in Santa Cruz, has been working one month as a cook at the Live Oak senior center, and now is anxiously awaiting the start of nine day trial period with a foster family — her foreman at the senior center.

