

By Thelma Hüser  
and Jim Hagarty

**BROOKSDALE** — Perth and Oxford county residents are getting involved in helping some of the victims of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster in the former Soviet Union.

On Sunday, Eileen Hart organized a benefit breakfast in Brooksdale and on Oct. 17, Leslie Switzer will stage a fundraising multi-cultural day in Kirkton.

Both women are part of a team of nine people — nurses, teachers and other professionals — from southwestern Ontario who will travel to Belarus (formerly Byelorussia in the Soviet Union) this fall to children who are still living in the radiation area. The group will be spending two weeks from Nov. 23 to Dec. 7 visiting orphanages, hospitals and small villages where the area was heavily contaminated.

The two local women are members of a group called Canadians Concerned for the Children of Chernobyl.

Ms. Hart's Sunday brunch for 150 people for two settings at Brooksdale United Church Sunday was sold out. She will be in charge of co-ordinating children's programs during her time in Belarus.

Fred Cox, chairman of the London chapter of Canadians Concerned for the Children of Chernobyl, and his wife, along with five-year-old Tanya Pankratz, her mother Mila and visiting translator Valentian Vinocurova, were in attendance at the Sunday brunch. They are staying in London for seven weeks where Tanya, who is anemic, is receiving a course of treatment such as nutritious food, vitamins, iron, fresh air and milk. There are 12 "Chernobyl children" staying in London at the moment.

Anyone wanting to donate small gifts or make donations can phone Eileen Hart at 475-4968.

A reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant exploded on April 26, 1986, affecting thousands of people in the surrounding area of Ukraine and Belarus, most of whom still live in the affected territory, eating food grown on contaminated land.

One estimate puts the number of children affected at 600,000 in Belarus alone. They often develop cancer and other problems including recurring headaches, nosebleeds, hairloss and increase susceptibility to pneumonia, tuberculosis and infection. Doctors in the affected areas believe many of these children must leave the area for periods up to two months a year if they are to have any hope of avoiding serious illness.

Meanwhile, Ms. Switzer, of RR 1 St. Marys, has planned a fundraising event called Children of the World at the Kirkton-Woodham community centre in Kirkton from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 17. Four different

cultures — West African, Belarussian, Japanese and Native American — will be represented at the show, the admission to which will be \$3.

Ms. Switzer said in a news release that children and their families will be able to move through the various centres, learning about each culture in a fun way, making crafts, hearing music, touching and seeing many different articles and tasting food. As well, there will be entertainment throughout the day by a singer, a storyteller, a drummer and dancers.

"It is my belief that we must become more aware of the many gifts and customs all people have to share in our world," Ms. Switzer said. "Through honoring each other, we learn respect for all mankind."

Canadians Concerned for the Children of Chernobyl is a group which is working to bring children from former Soviet Union countries to Canada for rehabilitation, to provide humanitarian aid such as medical equipment, children's multivitamins, babyfood, syringes and medicines, to increase Canadians' awareness of the needs of Chernobyl victims and to encourage them to support projects for the victims, and to co-ordinate their efforts with other agencies to maximize the benefits to the children and their families.

A mother of three children herself, Ms. Switzer will host Tanya Pankratz and her mother in her home next week.

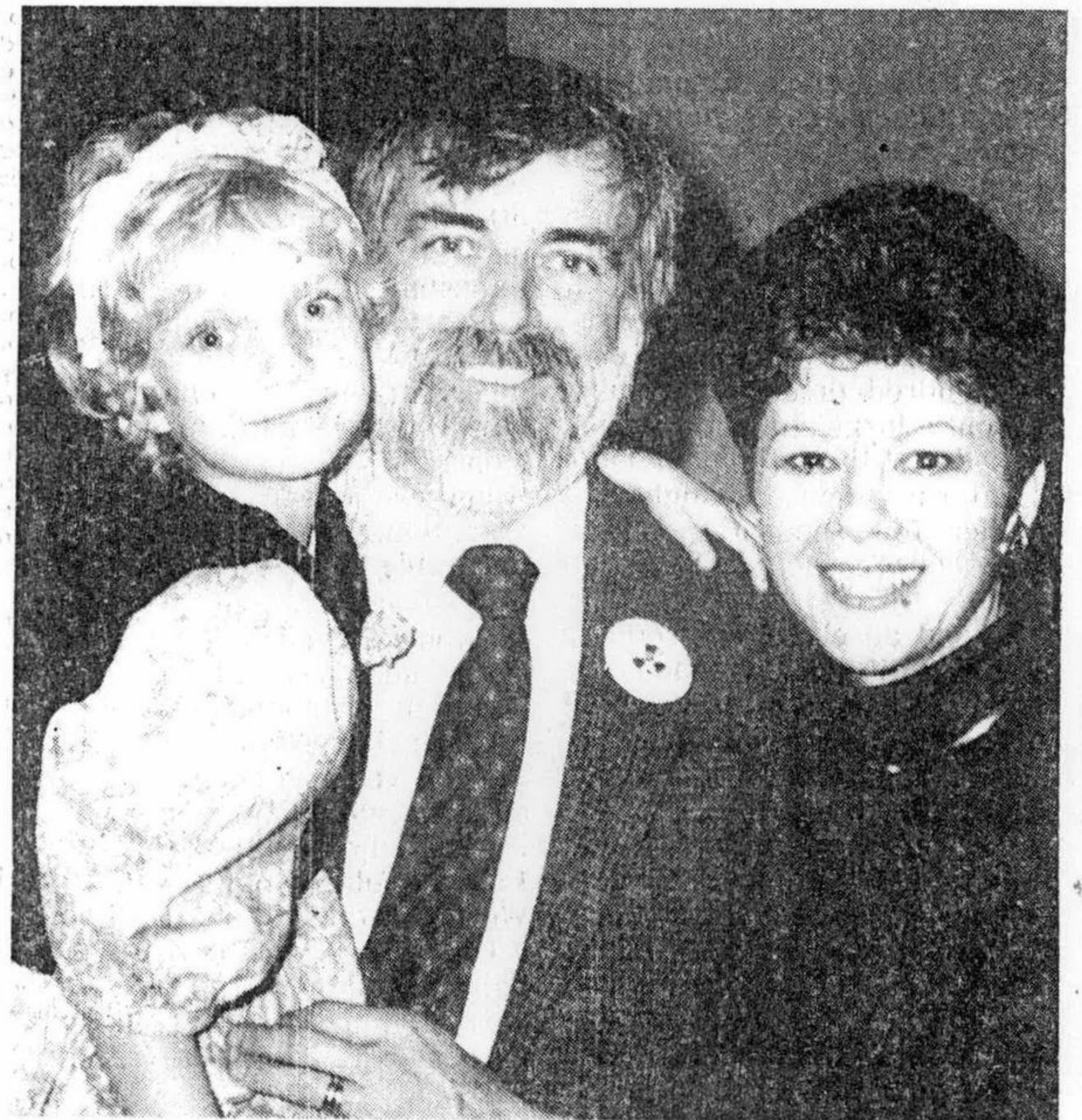


Photo by Thelma Hüser

Tanya Pankratz, 5, Fred Cox, chairman of the London chapter of Canadians Concerned for the Children of Chernobyl and volunteer Eileen Hart, of Brooksdale, who organized a fundraising brunch for the cause on Sunday.

*Group going to Belarus*

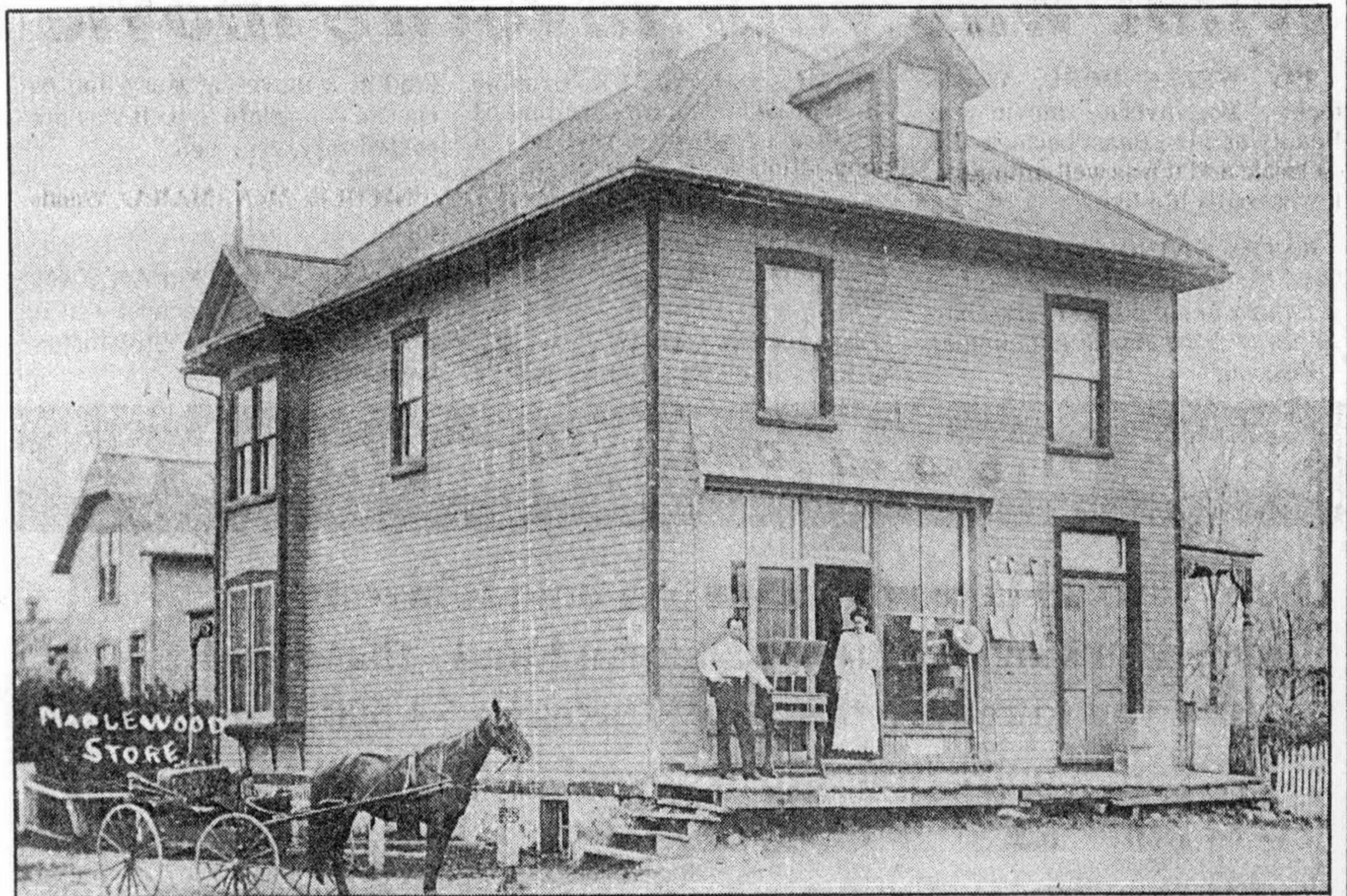
*Sept. 27, 1992*

## Area people aiding young victims of Chernobyl disaster

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a look at the way things were

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THE OWNERS of Maplewood store pose for the camera in this photograph taken in the early part of this century. (Postcard courtesy of John Gruszka)