

Probation alternative

Restitution program underway in Region

By DIANE MARSHALL

A restitution project as an alternative to probation for juvenile delinquents aged 12-16, has been in operation since June of this year in York Region, said one of the project's organizers, Mr. Len Diner.

"The purpose of the program is two-fold; it is to show that the juvenile is responsible for his wrong doings and that in working for the community, he will develop a higher self-worth and a more positive outlook on life," he said.

The juvenile must plead guilty in court to the offence he committed after which the judge would refer the child to the restitution project and adjourn the case.

Then, the restitution project worker, the juvenile and his family would develop a contract to do some service for the community or compensate the victim.

If the juvenile works well in the project, he or she returns to the court and the case will be adjourned sine-die, meaning the case is forgotten about unless the child commits another offense.

CO-OPERATION
"We have received fantastic co-operation from the community with the restitution projects," Mr. Diner said. "We have 13 contacts where the children can work to pay off their debt to society, so to speak."

Some of these contacts are parks and recreation departments, elderly homes, helping the mentally retarded or the crippled, and working with animals.

"The projects usually last only about two or three weeks and right now we have 10 children working," he said. "We have had great success so far; the projects have therapeutic value, the family and staff can see changes in the child. The projects re-direct their energy into constructive channels."

DISCRETION
Children committing offences such as theft, vandalism, attempted assault, shop-lifting and joyriding are left up to the discretion of the judge whether they should be eligible for the restitution projects.

Judge T.N. Moore of the provincial family courts in Newmarket, Betty Fields, assistant co-ordinator of group homes and Merlin Green, senior probation officer, are all in favour of the project, said Mr. Diner.

"The idea is not unique in Ontario. The most sophisticated operations, having gone on for three years, are in Kingston and Windsor, but there are some in Ottawa, Sudbury, Peterborough and Orillia," he said.

There have been **No tennis for residents this autumn**

By NAZNEEN SADIQ 881-4408

The residents of Bayview Fairways "won't be playing tennis this fall", says Brian Wigglesworth, director for parks and recreation for Markham.

The residents' petition to have tennis courts constructed in Duncan Park was presented to the town council but money was not available at the time.

The 5-year-plan for facilities in the 1978 capital budget will include a priority recommendation that the residents themselves can contribute towards certain costs.

An approval of this proposal will enable the Bayview Fairways Tennis Club to act as pioneers for all future developments.

negotiations with the York Region Police to see if full diversion could be possible, that is, if children who complete the programs properly could possibly remain without a criminal record but these plans are not finalized yet according to Mr. Diner.

The advantage or disadvantage of probation is that it keeps

the child within the court's jurisdiction more or less but it is easier to shrug the responsibility of their crime onto someone else.

But in the restitution programs, it is up to the individual to make up for what he has done.

One case, Mr. Diner mentioned was that of direct restitution in which a delinquent who had

vandalized a building by painting it, spent his project time cleaning it off.

SELF-WORTH
"I am very interested in comparing the self-worth of a delinquent who has been on probation to that of someone who has participated in a restitution project, before and after," said Mr. Diner, a social work

student who is returning to Sir Wilfrid Laurier University in the fall to obtain his Masters.

He has his Bachelor of Psychology, and wrote a paper on the rights of juvenile delinquents.

He is working on an Experience '77 grant for the summer on the restitution projects and sometimes as a probation officer.

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