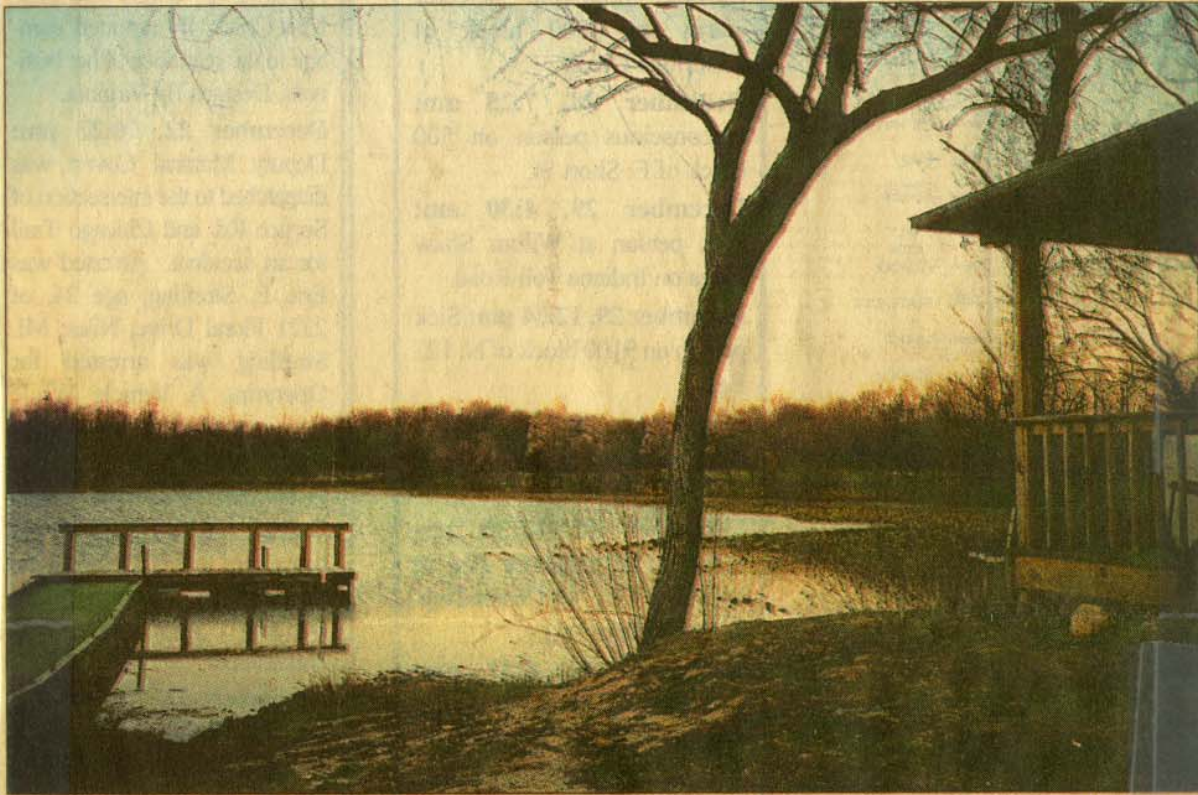


There are Leprechauns in the hills of Galena Township

by Ann Wolfe



Trail Photo/ANN WOLFE

Residents in Sharing Meadows enjoy the lake and summer playground.

Perhaps the best kept secret in Galena Township is the caring facility for the mature handicapped located at 600 N. 300 East.

A visit with Father Dennis Blaney at his residence in the green hills of Sharing Meadows offered an inspiring view of the successful recognition of a real need.

Sharing Meadows is the outgrowth of Father Blaney's 40 years of devotion to the handicapped. Originally from Michigan City, he found that parents often were so protective of their handicapped children, they resisted others attempts

to help them. His first efforts involved college student volunteers, who befriended and related to the disadvantaged, eventually gaining their trust.

This effort led to the establishment of small group homes in northern Indiana and summer camps in the Dunes.

An outgrowth of this commitment was the organization of the Share Foundation 18 years ago. Father Blaney describes the Foundation as the only group in northern Indiana which recognizes that handicapped individuals need more than surface talk.

Classes emphasize such

topics as, "What does it mean to be responsible?", and "What do real friends do?" The group also raised money for small agencies for the handicapped, respite care, and furnished death services in Lake & Porter Counties.

A newsletter was sent for 25 years, from the Methodist Church in Michigan City, to a mailing list of 11,000 across the country. The support received from this effort led to a ready response when donations were needed for the 1991 purchase of the 184-acre property in Galena Township.

A camp was operated on

the new property until the first of the buildings was completed in 1995. The only "Leprechaun Hunt" in this country was also organized that year. Last Spring, almost 2000 supporters visited Sharing Meadows to participate in the hunt for the 24 Leprechaun figurines. The foot-high figures offer prizes from \$50 to \$1000. A bountiful lunch was served of lamb, ribs, etc., and vegetables grown on the property, as well as desserts featuring local berries and fruits. The day also included a tour of the property and demonstration of the residents' crafts followed by Irish entertainment, as the concept of the Leprechaun Hunt originated in Ireland.

The community of Sharing Meadows now consists of one village of three homes, with two handicapped residents living with a house manager in each. This "Village of St. John" is

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continued on page 4**

