Thensted Center Dedication
Honors Jesuit Civic Worker

Dedication ceremonies May 1 will begin at 11 a.m. with the raising of the flag by the Color Guard of the U.S. Marine Corp. Following the flag raising, there will be the blessing and dedication of the facility.

Special guests scheduled to attend include state Sen. Armand Bridges, Rep. Raymond Labadie, Mayor Peter Smith, and Sister Rita Kanjian, the Reverend Edward Ray and others.

Two out of the building, named, and picnic lunches will be served. The day will conclude with Mass at 4 p.m.

Visitors are encouraged to bring snapshots of themselves to be left at the center as a permanent exhibit of the friends of the community.

BY GAYNELL TERRELL
Advertiser Area Writer

GRAND COTEAU — It is widely recognized that a community service group can exist — even expand — with no government support. But then, what do you think about Catholic sisters walking on motorbikes to complete their work?

These are just two of the many interesting features of the Thensted Center in Grand Coteau. The result of a joint Venture of the Home Health and Supportive Services of St. Charles Parish Church, the center was founded seven years ago by Sister Margaret Hoffman. In its early days, the center operated out of a mobile home behind the parish church. The center will feature a center in the area where people can meet, be offered counsel and training; a "welch" where simple banking and budget training will be made available; a meeting room for groups; a parlor; a library; a dormitory and living space.

Other services offered include transportation for senior citizens for its nutrition program, health and social service, and Meals on Wheels. Future services to be offered are a nursing clinic where people can learn how to take care of themselves and others, a youth center, and rooms for overnight stays in case of emergency.

Sister Hoffman notes that the center is not only to meet an immediate need, but to train, educate, and counsel persons who come into the center in hope that past mistakes can be avoided and future problems can be turned into positive factors.

All of these works that have evolved came from the people served. Anyone with any kind of material physical or psychological need can come. With one call, we sit down and talk it over with them," Sister Hoffman says.

She adds that much of the work at the center is done by about 120 community volunteers. All financial support is donated. She says she hopes that all of the programs will eventually be managed by volunteers and supervised by the four religious workers from the church.

How is she going to do that? "More and more involvement," Sister Hoffman says determinedly.

A board of directors that includes both community volunteers and former recipients helps govern the activities of the center. The center services a month, although Sister Hoffman admits several services are given each month to the same person.

Sister Hoffman notes the center has seen several instances in which a man or woman in the community wants to change their life. But to do that, they must have a support group. Hence, the Thensted Center.