

At Plymouth Center

Rosen's legacy: a smaller bureaucracy

By Mike Scanlon
staff writer

Common wisdom has it that birds fly, chickens scratch and bureaucrats hobnob.

Not for David Rosen, who's resigning after a three-year stint as court-appointed master of the Plymouth Center for Human Development.

Under his tutelage, the once scandal-ridden state mental institution lost half its patients and more than half its employees.

Those people — at least the patients — didn't just disappear down a hole. Rosen now administers about 100 group homes housing six retarded people each and about 80 foster care homes with one or two people in each.

About 375 remain at the Plymouth institution, but Rosen figures such places — "warehouses," critics have called them — are doomed.

"Institutions as we know them are not going to be around, but it's not going to happen overnight. It took a long time to get them there, and it's going to take a long time to get them out."

ROSEN, 56, will become deputy director for

community placement programs in New Jersey.

A native of Bineland, N.J., Rosen spent 19 years in that state's mental health department before a 10-year stint in the Michigan department.

Rosen, who was named to consecutive appointments as master by U.S. District Judge Charles Joiner, describes that job with the Michigan department as "a little bit of a troubleshooter."

He temporarily headed the Lapeer center before becoming one in a string of acting directors who steered the Plymouth center after former director William Womack was axed in a 1978 furor following allegations of mismanagement and patient abuse. Womack sued and won rehiring to a different job in 1979. He has since retired.

Rosen said his successor will be named by the federal judge from two candidates' lists, one submitted by the state of Michigan and one jointly assembled by the Michigan Association for Retarded Citizens and the Plymouth Association for Retarded Citizens. The two groups are plaintiffs in the federal suit over Plymouth conditions.

INSTITUTIONS like the Plymouth Center exist at all, Rosen figures, only because 15th research-

ers added two and two about the causes of retardation and came up with five.

"What happened, 100 years or more ago, people thought this was a medical problem. And they also felt that these people were deviants and society should not be exposed to them.

"There was another weird reason and it was probably the greatest reason for institutionalization.

"A researcher by the name of Henry H. Goddard did a study of an institutionalized retarded family in an Bineland, New Jersey — my hometown — and he indicated the primary cause of mental retardation was heredity. And if we put everybody in institutions, then they wouldn't be able to mate and therefore not propagate the race.

"We soon found out there were well over 200 causes of mental retardation," Rosen said. But a move to withdraw people from institutions waited until the Kennedy administration. A Kennedy sister is retarded.

GROUP HOMES are desirable, Rosen thinks. "It's rather simple. The mentally retarded people are more like you and I than unlike us. Con-

gregate living in an institution having 300 to 1,000 people is not much different — is probably a little bit worse — than 300 to 1,000 people living in an Army situation; dormitories and being regimented to some degree.

"Institutional programs have come a long way in the last 10-20 years, but I still don't want to live in one. Most retarded who can express themselves indicate they'd prefer to live in the community. There's nothing they can get in an institution they can't get in the community — and in a better environment.

"As an example, in an institution, too frequently the ratio of staff is one (attendant) to eight (patients), as opposed to living in a group home where the ratio is usually one to three."

About 2.5 percent of the population is retarded — "it can happen in the best of families" — with about 0.1 percent living in institutions.

"I feel very strongly that the Michigan system is being turned around, and it would be exciting to stay," said Rosen, who said he took the New Jersey job to be "able to administer and provide leadership to a program that assists people in living appropriately in the community."



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Detroit area housing costs low among urban centers, according to realty group

Housing costs continue to increase nationwide, but a new report from the National Association of Realtors shows the Detroit area offers bargains compared to most other major centers.

Nationally, monthly principal and interest payments on the average priced existing home financed at prevailing rates in 15 major metro areas reached \$810 this year. This is a 112-percent gain from the \$352 payment in 1978.

For the Detroit metro area, the equivalent 1981 figure is \$625, about an 83-percent jump from \$342 in 1978. The current figure ranks Detroit costs below 12 other cities with only Pittsburgh and St. Louis offering lower costs.

HIGHEST MONTHLY principal and interest payment was in San Francisco with \$1,403, followed by Los Angeles with \$1,234 and Washington, D. C., with \$1,046.

"Home affordability also must consider other factors," said Robert D. Shimmin, president of the Western

Wayne Oakland County Board of Realtors (WVOCBR).

"While our overall affordability ranking remains unchanged, we don't compare as well with many other cities in areas such as real estate taxes, utility and insurance costs. Thus, our monthly tax cost of \$187 ranks behind only Boston at \$300 and New York at \$257.

Monthly utility costs of \$101 and hazard insurance costs of \$20 are both halfway in the 15 cities studies.

Shimmin said the study showed total monthly housing costs in the Detroit area including these factors reached \$934. San Francisco again led in this category with a 108.3-percent increase followed by Houston with 105.3-percent gain.

In terms of total housing costs as a percent of average gross family income, Detroit continues to rank at the lower end of the scale at 35.5 percent.

"Home affordability also must consider other factors," said Robert D. Shimmin, president of the Western

Franklin woman on Arts Council

Gov. Milliken last week announced three appointments to the Michigan Council for the Arts. Selected for membership to the 15-member volunteer board are Claire MacNaughton Bennett of Marquette, Madeline Harris Berman of Franklin and Oscar E. Remick of Alma.

Mrs. Berman, a program specialist in Oakland University's Division of Continuing Education, will succeed Thomas Turk of East Lansing for the remainder of a term expiring June 1, 1984. A graduate of Wayne State University and Northwestern University, she is a past member of the Arts Committee of New Detroit, which estab-

lished the Detroit Arts Council. She is a former member of the Detroit Arts Council and the mayor's Community Cultural Council.

Mrs. Bennett will succeed Lois Cohadas of Ishpeming, who did not seek reappointment, for a term expiring June 1, 1985. She is immediate past president of the Lake Superior Art Association and a member of the finance committee and gallery committee for the Marquette Arts Council.

Dr. Remick, president of Alma College, will succeed Alfred B. Connable of Kalamazoo, who did not seek reappointment, for a term expiring June 1, 1985.



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