

10th anniversary

Downey Side plans fund-raising drive

Downey Side is celebrating its 10th anniversary, and during April and early May will conduct an area-wide fund-raising campaign.

The campaign begins April 15 and 16 with "Hampshire County Tag Days." Downey Side representatives will be in Hampshire county communities soliciting funds in stores and on downtown streets. Linda Lappin of Springfield is chairman of the campaign.

Donations can also be made directly to Downey Side at 999 Liberty St., Springfield.

In its 10 years of existence, Downey Side has provided permanent homes for more than 250 homeless teenagers. It currently provides care for 53 boys and girls in area Downey Side homes.

The homes were developed by the Rev. Paul Engel after he found a 17-year old boy living alone in a one-room apartment.

Fr. Engel enlisted the help of Margaret Downey, a Springfield school teacher. The two succeeded in providing the boy with a new home environment.

"It was from this experience that we came to the realization that many youngsters faced similar neglect and needed help," recalled Fr. Engel.

With Miss Downey, a Springfield Congregational minister, two lawyers, two doctors, and two businessmen, "Downey Side was formed," said Fr. Engel.

Today, youths are referred to Downey Side by the state Dept. of Youth Services and the Division of Child and Family Services.

Downey Side homes are located in: Springfield, Westfield, West Springfield, Chicopee, Greenfield, South Hadley and Pittsfield.

A fire in the Holyoke Downey Side home resulted in the abandonment of the house, but Fr. Engel announced after the fire the organization will relocate in another Holyoke home soon.

Downey Side homes are

operated by Downey Side families who act as foster parents to the teenagers who live in the homes.

Tag days similar to the kick-off one in Hampshire County are slated for West Springfield, East Longmeadow, Springfield, Westfield, Holyoke, and Franklin County.