At House of Hope

Youths Find Fulfillment

By Don Tanner
Religion Editor

Kids are searching for identity, for something to fulfill their life. They're seeking help for problems.

To provide that identity, fulfillment and the solution to problems is the goal of Fish, a house of hope, in Gardena.

Fish, sponsored by the Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society (JEMS), is a coffee house which provides Bible studies in a "now" format. Led by Luther Masumoto, 24, Fish opened in early August in facilities being rented from the Gardena YMCA at 1718 Redondo Beach Blvd., formerly used by the Pfleug Art Center.

Several Gardena churches are cooperating with Fish in its outreach to youths with drug backgrounds and other problems.

Open from 10 a.m. to midnight, program includes singing, Bible studies and rap sessions. Bible studies are held at 8 p.m. Mondays and Tuesdays and musical groups sing at 8 p.m. Fridays. Other times are devoted to raps on problems and other services designed to aid troubled youths spiritually.

Cases which need professional help are referred to cooperating agencies including planned parenthood, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, various homes for unwed mothers and the county health department; legal aid, hospitals, pastural counseling, welfare and other agencies.

Prime thrust of the house of hope is the Christ centered approach to meeting spiritual problems. Young people are counseled to determine their needs, and Fish gears its approach to fit their need, said Masumoto.

He said several have found Christ as their personal Saviour and others have received spiritual help and have returned asking questions during Fish's brief history.

The house of hope concept began at the recent annual [illegible] JEMS. Masumoto, a delegate from Chula Vista, shared his burden for such a ministry among troubled youths of his area. Students at Gardena High attending the conference indicated their desire for a similar ministry in Gardena. After the conference, a committee was formed in Gardena to found Fish.

Members include Roy Ishihara, a Gardena business man and former pastor, chairman; Dr. Ken Hiroshige, local dentist; Mrs. Agnes Munesato, housewife; Henry Tkemoto, a probation officer in South Bay; Masumoto, overseer; and Russell Takaki, student and assistant overseer. The committee was responsible to define the outreach and find a vocation.

JEMS is underwriting the house of hope, but it is open to donations from local citizens. Tax deductible donations may be sent to JEMS, 112 N. San Pedro St., Suite 317, Los Angeles 90012.

Several local stores have donated sample carpets to Fish; and the El Camino Kiwanis Club has donated a coffeemaker, hotplate and other supplies.

JEMS is an interdenominational organization and encourages local churches to assist the house of hope by adopting it as an outreach ministry, said Sam Tsuzuura, executive secretary.

Staff Photo

Russ Takaki, left, and Luther Masumoto, overseer of Fish, sing Jesus music at their house of hope coffee house.