

Wollmering, Bruce

**From:** Wollmering, Bruce  
**Sent:** Monday, February 17, 2003 6:59 AM  
**To:**  
**Subject:**

I'm resending the email I referred to yesterday in our phone conversation. You probably did get it but forgot given all the 'fan mail' you probably receive on a daily basis! ? ☺ Nice connecting with you. I miss seeing you in class. You'd love sex class I think. and I had a wonderful two and a half hours together. We went to Red Lobster for dinner. I gave him your greetings. He was on his way back from Lacrosse, WI to Fargo, ND after 'servicing' his latest find. That's about a six hour plus trip one way each weekend. She's apparently very special and might be "THE ONE" he says! He is such a fuck'n whore! I love him! ☺ He's sheer fun!

Anyway at RL we had five splits of Korbel champagne, steamed mussels, and two full dinners for the price of one since they goofed the original order. We were gluttoned when we left. I went to bed, he had a two plus hour drive ahead of him. I presume he made it without falling asleep. He says he 'jacks off' in a sock when he starts feeling tired or groggy! Whatever works to be safe! Have good week, and a victorious remaining season. Bruce, osb

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Wollmering, Bruce  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 19, 2003 7:51 AM  
**To:**  
**Subject:**

**CONGRATS:  
ON THE WIN OVER THE CARLETON 'KNIGHTS'**

**77-73**

Sorry I was sound asleep during it, but I celebrate with you  
!!!

Even though you're from  
you're getting  
well-deserved attention for who you are and what you do,  
not just your place of origin !!! ☺ Way to  
go.....Bruce, osb

# Saint John's University

Box 2000  
Collegeville, Minnesota 56321-2000

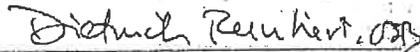
Date: February 19, 2003  
To: Fr. Bruce Wollmering, OSB  
From: Br. Dietrich Reinhart, OSB  
Re: Human Rights Complaint

**CONFIDENTIAL**

This letter serves as a preliminary notice to you that a human rights complaint has been verbally reported to the student and faculty/staff human rights offices naming you as the respondent. The complainant, (Saint John's student) has requested you to have **no contact with him, effective immediately**. No contact includes, but is not limited to: telephone, email, verbal conversations, attendance at SJU games, and/or any other communication directed from you to him. You are also expected to not encourage anyone else to contact him on your behalf nor should you take any retaliatory action against as a result of complaint.

You will receive a summary of complaint from the human rights office, per the joint human rights complaint procedure. An appointment will be scheduled with you to allow you the opportunity to respond to the allegations that have been reported. At this point, we feel it is appropriate to let you know that allegation is centered around sexual harassment/hostile environment.

As mentioned above, once the written complaint is received by the human rights office, you will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegation as part of the complaint investigation. Please know the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University take all allegations very seriously and the human rights office actively works to resolve complaints in a timely manner. In the interim, please feel free to contact either Nadine Schnettler, Faculty/Staff Human Rights Officer (x5071) or Sherry Smolik-Day, Director of Student Human Rights and Diversity (x5485) if you have any questions about the complaint process.



Br. Dietrich Reinhart

xc: Abbot John Klassen, OSB  
Provost Henry Smorynski  
Nadine Schnettler  
Sherry Smolik-Day  
Dean Rita Knuesel  
Dean Cheryl Knox

Office of the President

320: 363-2247  
FAX 320: 363-2984

**OSB WOLLMERING\_00235**

College of Saint Benedict  
Saint John's University

March 21, 2003

Complainant:

Respondent: Bruce Wollmering, OSB

Date of Incident(s): February 16 and 17, 2003

Receipt of written complaint: February 21, 2003

Re: Human Rights Case # 2002007

Upon conclusion of an investigation regarding the above complaint, the Faculty/Staff and Student Human Rights Officers documented the following:

**BACKGROUND**

1. Complainant received unwelcome special interest and attention in the [redacted] he took in Fall 2002 from respondent. Examples of this special interest reported by complainant include, but are not limited to:
  - Placing complainant's photo on overhead projector as an example of modern hero/archetype.
  - Placing play-by-play copies of complainant's [redacted] games with his name highlighted throughout on complainant's desk at the beginning of class by respondent.
  - Commenting on complainant's haircut during class approximately four times throughout the semester.
  - Interrupting complainant while he was taking his final in respondent's class and asking him for his autograph on the [redacted]
  - Singling out complainant by calling for his opinions often in each class.
  - Initiating conversations of a personal nature with complainant prior to the start of class that seemed to have no "rhyme or reason" and were unrelated to class content.
2. Complainant received unwelcome email from respondent on January 19, 2003, which refers to respondent being sound asleep but that he "celebrates" with complainant (referring to complainant's [redacted] success).
3. Respondent made an unwelcome phone call to complainant in mid January. Respondent offered that this was a conversation between friends while complainant said the conversation was "nothing too strange but uncomfortable overall". Complainant said he

didn't really have anything to say but that respondent seemed to keep the conversation going for what complainant felt was too long. This phone call was estimated to be around four to five minutes long.

4. Respondent initiated an unwelcome phone conversation of a sexual nature with the complainant on February 16, 2003. The conversation initiated by the respondent included the following statements:

- Respondent is "not a "fucking Tiger Woods fan" and "next thing you know they're going to be measuring his erection."
- Comment about a former student "servicing his latest find in LaCrosse"
- Former student is "like a dog in heat" who goes and "services young women"
- When asked how class is, Respondent answered "sex is good ... sex is good ... sex class....., it's great, we don't hold anything back"
- "I hear you pee in the shower", "I really like peeing in the shower, you get a good jet stream of pee and it's like a mini-orgasm."
- Respondent asked complainant, "When did you start wearing lipstick?" (When complainant asked what respondent was referring to, respondent referred to a picture of the complainant in the St. Cloud Times newspaper.

Respondent confirmed that he did say everything as reported by complainant with the exception of the comment about Tiger Woods' erection. He did not specifically recall saying it but agreed he could have made a comment like that.

5. Respondent sent an unwelcome email containing sexual content to complainant on February 17, 2003. The content of the email included reference to a dinner and conversation respondent had with a former student known by the complainant, which included referring to the former student: "servicing his latest find", "he is such a fuck'n whore! I love him! he's sheer fun!", and "he 'jacks off' in a sock" to stay awake when he's driving. Respondent also stated that he and the former student "glutted" themselves and drank "five splits of champagne".

Respondent stated that the content and language used in the phone conversations and emails were not a problem in and of themselves – only in that he misjudged the nature of his and complainant's friendship. Respondent referred to his communication with complainant as "guy talk" and "that's how guys talk to each other". Respondent said using the "F" word and comments such as "servicing his latest find" and "jacks off in a sock" is being blunt and direct with students.

#### INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

1. The phone conversations and emails from the respondent to the complainant appear not to have been welcomed by complainant and likely would support a finding of hostile environment type sexual harassment as defined in the Joint Human Rights Policy of the

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University. We also believe that respondent's conduct reflects a pattern of trying to engage the complainant in sexual conversation and fostered an unwanted and inappropriate faculty – student relationship.

2. Respondent's defense of the email and phone conversations as "guy talk" is not likely to be viewed as an acceptable defense because it does not reflect what would typically be considered as an individual's recognition of appropriate faculty/staff-to-student boundaries. The complainant reported that he was very disgusted, disturbed and distracted as a result of the sexual comments made by respondent. The potential for harm to complainant was further intensified in the eyes of the complainant due to the power differential between the complainant and respondent as reflected by role of the respondent as complainant's prior instructor, in his position as a department chair and because he is a member of the monastic community.

3. The special attention shown to the complainant while he was in respondent's class (photo on the overhead, play-by-play copies, personal comments about hair cuts, asking for complainant's autograph during final test), which was substantiated by other students interviewed, was reported by complainant as being unwelcome and as evidence of the potential for inappropriate teacher-student boundaries. This attention, coupled with respondent's communications after the course ended, shows a pattern of questionable conduct and judgment on the part of the respondent.

4. The investigation leads the human rights officers to express their general concern about what appears to be a pattern of conduct that could support claims of gender bias and male favoritism in the classroom. Some of the students who were interviewed concerning the allegations set forth in complainant's complaint volunteered that respondent rarely, if ever, talked to women in his classes when the actual class was not in session, as opposed to talking with men on a regular basis during the informal time just prior to the start of class. One such student also reported that student's impression that men seemed to receive the primary focus of respondent in his classes and that women are generally only asked questions that can be answered with one or two words while in the same classroom setting men tended to be asked more probative, open-ended questions.

5. During the course of this investigation, the human rights officers also became aware that the respondent may be in violation of the ethical guidelines (3.05) of American Psychology Association (APA) by placing himself in a multiple relationship of teaching and counseling students who are currently in his class.

6. In the process of interviewing witnesses for this investigation, other situations involving the respondent and current and former students disclosed a potential pattern of the respondent crossing appropriate teacher-student boundaries.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

- 1) Respondent will continue teaching his courses until the conclusion of spring semester, 2003. After which point, he will agree to resign, or at the very least,

take an indefinite leave of absence from the faculty of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University. Respondent would only be allowed to return from the leave upon his fulfilling the remainder of the recommended resolutions.

- 2) Respondent will immediately resign as chair of the Psychology department.
- 3) Respondent will agree to participate in and successfully complete personal counseling related to maintaining appropriate boundaries.
- 4) Respondent will not provide counseling services to any CSB/SJU students effective immediately.
- 5) While continuing to teach during the remainder of the spring semester and in the event respondent is allowed to return to teaching at some later date, Respondent agrees to be bound by the following restrictions when teaching, advising, and/or communicating with students:
  - a. There will be no social contact with any CSB/SJU students outside of the classroom.
  - b. All email and phone communications by the respondent to students must relate to current coursework and must be copied to the new department chair or the chair's designee.
  - c. Meetings with students must be related to coursework and should take place in open-door settings.
  - d. The current no-contact order between the respondent and the complainant will remain in effect indefinitely.
- 6) A copy of the complaint, the email of February 17, 2003, and the resolution agreement will be placed in the respondent's file that is retained in Academic Affairs. A copy of this resolution agreement will be placed in respondent's personnel file with the name of the complainant blacked out.
- 7) The respondent will sign a waiver allowing the University to disclose to prospective employers the reason for his removal from the CSB/SJU faculty.
- 8) The respondent will communicate a brief statement to his current students to make them aware of a complaint that has been filed and to serve as an apology for crossing appropriate student/teacher boundaries. This statement will be jointly prepared by the respondent and the human rights officers.
- 9) The complainant will be afforded the opportunity to meet with the Abbot of the Order of Saint Benedict, the President, and the Provost of Saint John's University upon completion of the human rights complaint resolution process.

Per the joint human rights policy, if the complaint has not been, or in the opinion of the human rights officers cannot be, resolved through this Informal Resolution, the complainant may proceed to the Formal Complaint Stage of the Joint Complaint Procedure for Human Rights Violations. The request form for the formal complaint stage

must be filed within 15 business days following the completion of the informal complaint stage.

The parties agree to abide by the Confidentiality and Retaliation provisions of the Joint Human Rights Policy.

**Accepted by Respondent:**

**Accepted by Complainant:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bruce L. Wollmering, OSB

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nadine S. Schnettler  
Faculty/Staff Human Rights Officer

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sherry Smolik Day  
Student Human Rights Officer

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

College of Saint Benedict  
Saint John's University

February 24, 2003

Complainant:

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Respondent: Bruce L. Wollmering, OSB

Summary of Human Rights Complaint # 2002007

**DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT(S)**

Complainant first met respondent when he was a student in an upper level psychology class taught by respondent during fall semester 2002. Complainant reported that he received a lot of attention and special interest from respondent in this class. Examples of this attention include:

- compiling a packet of statistics (play-by-play of game) and highlighting complainant's name throughout and placing these packets on complainant's desk at the beginning of class .
- calling on complainant frequently in class for his opinions – more so than the other students in the class.
- praising complainant for his class contributions.
- placing a picture of complainant, taken from the St. Cloud Times, on an overhead and showing it to students during class.

Complainant reported that other students in the class made frequent comments to him that he was one of respondent's favorites and that respondent gave him a lot of attention.

Complainant reported no contact with respondent after the class ended except for one time when he went to see respondent after the final, to let respondent know he thought the final was very difficult. Complainant stated that respondent said something to the effect that he'd consider that.

Complainant reported that the next interaction he had with respondent was when he received a phone call at his apartment from respondent in mid-January, 2003, the day after the Hamline game. Respondent called to say he was sorry that the team lost, and then continued to talk to complainant for a few more minutes. Complainant reported that nothing inappropriate was said in this phone conversation, but that he felt uneasy during the phone call because Respondent talked to him for what he felt was a long time. His roommate, who was in the room at the time the phone call was made, asked complainant who he was talking to because he noticed that complainant looked uncomfortable during the conversation.

Complainant reported that a second phone call was made by respondent on February 16, 2003. Complainant was in his roommate's room at the time the phone call was made to



complainant's cell phone. Following are comments allegedly made by respondent during this phone conversation:

- Respondent congratulated complainant on earning \_\_\_\_\_ in the previous day's game.
- Respondent commented that he was watching Tiger Woods on television and that "he was not a fucking tiger Woods fan" and TV commentators were giving too many statistics about Tiger. Respondent then made the comment that "next thing you know they'll be measuring his (Tiger's) erection."
- Respondent made reference to \_\_\_\_\_ a student that complainant knew from \_\_\_\_\_ and who had graduated in May 2002. Respondent told complainant that \_\_\_\_\_ was like a "dog in heat" and he was "servicing a lady in Lacrosse." He talked more about how \_\_\_\_\_ likes to "service" young women. He mentioned that he had dinner with \_\_\_\_\_ at Red Lobster.
- Complainant felt uncomfortable with respondent's comments about \_\_\_\_\_ so he asked how respondent's classes were going this semester. Respondent responded by saying "sex is good." Complainant was confused with this response, and asked "what class" respondent was referring to. Respondent again responded, "Sex, it's good." And then, "Sex class ... human sexuality ... it's great, we don't hold anything back."
- Respondent then told \_\_\_\_\_ that he hears from the track guys, that complainant "pees in the shower in the gym." He then said, "I'll be honest, I really like peeing in the shower, you get a good jet stream of pee and it's like a mini orgasm."
- Respondent asked complainant when he started wearing lipstick. Complainant said he didn't wear lipstick. Respondent said that he saw complainant's picture in the paper and his lips looked red and asked when he started wearing lipstick.
- Respondent ended by asking complainant to stop by sometime to visit.

On 2/17/03, complainant received an email from respondent which congratulated complainant on making \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, apologized that he was sound asleep during the game, and then discussed some of the same things that had been mentioned by respondent in the phone call the day previously:

- Missed seeing (complainant) in class.
- (Complainant) would love "sex class".
- Dinner with \_\_\_\_\_ which they both "glutted" themselves with food and wine.
- Telling complainant that \_\_\_\_\_ had been to Lacrosse to "service" his latest find ... also referring to \_\_\_\_\_ "a fuck'n whore" ... and respondent added of \_\_\_\_\_ "I love him! He's sheer fun!"
- Respondent said of \_\_\_\_\_ drive home from Lacrosse that "he \_\_\_\_\_ 'jacks off' in a sock when he starts feeling tired or groggy!" And then added "Whatever works to be safe!"

#### IMPACT ON COMPLAINANT

Complainant is utterly disgusted and "sick to his stomach" by respondent's comments and email. He doesn't want to be at the St. John's campus for various reasons at this point,

including fear, disgust, and an inability to focus. He is upset that this will be one of his last memories of his senior year. He states that he is "angry/ irate" with respondent because of his position and power with students --- he believes the respondent should know better than to do something like this. He believes this should never have happened to him and doesn't want it to happen to anyone else in the future. He believes respondent has an "unhealthy want for sexual things."

#### RESOLUTION(S) REQUESTED

The following suggestions for resolution were made by the complainant:

1. Respondent participate in some type of counseling.
2. Respondent have restricted contact with students.
3. Respondent should give complainant a formal apology.
4. Respondent's apology and the email he sent complainant be a part of respondent's permanent file.
5. Complainant would like to have a meeting with the Vice President and President of St. John's University to discuss this further.

Summarized by the joint human rights officers (Sherry Smolik-Day and Nadine Schnettler) with information from the human rights complaint form and the initial interview with the complainant on February 19, 2003.

Prepared February 24, 2003.

January 19, 2004

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Father John Klassen, OSB  
Abbot  
St. John's Abbey  
P.O.Box 2015  
Collegeville MN 56321-2015

*Re: Reverend Bruce Wollmering, OSB*

Dear Abbot Klassen:

This letter is provided in summary of Father Bruce Wollmering's treatment program and progress during the first twelve weeks of his stay here at the Southdown Institute. The following comments reflect my own clinical impressions as his primary therapist and observations of other members of the treatment team with whom he works either individually or in groups.

As you know, Father Wollmering was admitted to Southdown following an evaluation at the Saint Luke Institute—an evaluation prompted by a complaint of inappropriate conduct towards a student. The diagnostic impressions emerging from his assessment included: Sexual disorder with compulsive and exploitive behaviors and unintegrated features, pathological gambling, and an occupational problem, all in the context of a Narcissistic personality disorder with histrionic and compulsive traits. To be ruled out was the possibility of alcohol abuse. Residential treatment was recommended and Father Wollmering elected to enter the Southdown program.

On the basis of the Saint Luke assessment, as well as preliminary experience with Father Wollmering in the program, several treatment goals were formulated: (1) diagnostic clarification to rule out alcohol abuse, (2) improved insight into, and management of, compulsive sexual and gambling behaviors, (3) improved understanding of personality factors contributing to his acting out and to his interpersonal difficulties, with a view to fostering more age-appropriate relationships, and (4) development of a more personal sense of God in his life. Father Wollmering's program is holistic and multi-disciplinary, utilizing a variety of treatment modalities and formats. In addition to his weekly individual psychotherapy sessions with me, he participates in an insight-oriented, psychodynamic psychotherapy group that meets five days per week and for which I am also one of the co-therapists. He engages in spiritual direction and a spirituality group, bio-energetic therapy, psychodrama, yoga, massage therapy and a variety of fitness activities. To target issues of sexuality and other compulsive patterns, he attends a weekly *Sexual Wellness* group and is part of the full Addictions track, which comprises a twice-weekly group and individual meetings with an addictions counselor. He also attends a rotating series of psycho-educational modules that include topics of codependency, dysfunctional family concepts, relapse-prevention and an introduction to cognitive-behavioral therapy as applied to a variety of problems. Optional activities include a poetry group, line dancing, and instruction in ceramics.

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Father Wollmering entered into the program willingly and declared his intention to be open to the process. He signed a release for a summary of his outpatient work with Richard Fingarson, LICSW and for the raw test data of the Saint Luke assessment, both of which have been received and reviewed. He expressed pleasure with the Southdown surroundings but admitted some unfamiliarity with the nature of the process, having come from an academic setting and accustomed to a different kind of work with his outpatient therapist.

The first several weeks of Father Wollmering's stay were characterized by a buoyant mood and tendency to function in his group psychotherapy in a rather intellectualized manner, in which his style was something of a 'teacher.' He could be dramatic in illustrating or making his points. It was difficult for him, however, to engage affectively with others or with his own underlying issues. He has struggled in particular with our psychotherapeutic relationship, objecting to interruptions during his participation in the psychotherapy group and seeking affirmation for his efforts that he feels is not forthcoming. For an extended time, he fell virtually silent in the group, unwilling to risk further challenge and stating that he did not know what to do. He has recently become more active again, but still finds it difficult to access and share his own vulnerabilities.

*Diagnostically*, as suggested by the assessment report, Father Wollmering's adaptive difficulties appear to be driven mainly by characterological issues, that is, by aspects of personality that are deeply ingrained and compatible with his view of himself. He is highly defended and, with the exception of his upset regarding our relationship, has thus far appeared to be generally free of distress. Regarding the *question of alcohol abuse*, the information provided by Father Wollmering does not suggest a pattern of abuse, although he acknowledged that there have been times in his life when his usage escalated. He does not consider it a problem and stated that he limits his intake to one double cocktail an evening. Whether this pattern nonetheless functions to assuage social discomfort or deal with other dysphoric feelings is undetermined.

With respect to addressing *compulsive sexual and gambling behaviors*, Father Wollmering has been candid about both, although he has not thus far dealt in detail with the issues and role of his gambling. The greater focus by far has been on his extensive sexual history, which has a highly compulsive and undifferentiated quality. He recently completed a comprehensive review for discussion with his addictions counselor, per the enclosed Sexual Misconduct Protocol. He has spoken of his experiences to a limited extent in his psychotherapy group and to a greater extent in his addictions and *Sexual Wellness* groups. There is a certain exhibitionistic quality to his self-disclosures and he admitted to some pride in overcoming what he perceived as the repressive attitudes of the church and his early development. He speaks of a pervasive suspicion that others' interest in him is sexually driven, yet at the same time seems gratified by the interest. He has described some experiences of repeated molestation in his early formation that might be expected to be very troubling to him, but that seem instead to have created a deep cynicism and a way of excusing his own behavior.

By his own account, Father Wollmering has not been sexually involved with anyone for the past twelve years, though it appears that he discontinued his promiscuous behavior out of fear for his health rather than because he felt it was wrong. He was heavily challenged in some of his treatment groups for his apparent lack of feeling about his actions and for a seeming absence of empathy. Denial of having sexual problem is still prominent, while his egocentric perspective is

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a limiting factor in his ability to understand the significance of his behavior or the harm done. With respect to the complaint that precipitated his referral, he has acknowledged the inappropriate and 'adolescent' style of his relatedness to his students, as well as the gratification in being sought out by them. At the same time, he remains puzzled by the negative reactions to what he insists were non-sexualized overtures made in the context of a "friendship." He admits to coarse and sexualized language at times, including in the treatment milieu, and states that he is better monitoring himself. His insight into both the blatant and subtle breaches of professional and personal boundaries is very poor, however, and his judgment compromised.

Another major focus of treatment, with which Father Wollmering concurs, has been to increase his *understanding of personality factors contributing to his acting out and to his interpersonal difficulties*. He appears to accept the diagnostic impression of a narcissistic personality disorder with obsessive-compulsive and histrionic features. As a psychologist, he expresses a somewhat facile understanding of these dynamics, noting that his grandiosity and excessive need for attention and affirmation compensates for his underlying sense of insecurity and fear of criticism. There is reason to believe that he indeed suffers anxiety about himself and others, but his defenses interfere with his awareness and it is not clear that he is motivated to change anything for other than external reasons. He admits to being dramatic, perfectionistic, impatient, blunt and often viewed by others as arrogant. He devalues and dismisses ("deletes") those whom he experiences as threatening or by whom he has felt rebuffed. Though he speaks of these as issues in need of work, it is difficult for him to enter into the details of his inner experience in this regard. There is a marked detachment in his manner of speaking—whether referring to his conflicts with others, the impact of his parents' sudden death three years ago, or the implications of his behavior.

Father Wollmering appears to struggle more with relationships than he is aware or can allow himself to admit. While he speaks of having a few deeply intimate friendships, he has gravitated towards younger people throughout his career and has virtually 'erased' from his life many members of his own Community whom he dislikes or with whom he is at odds. A parallel process has been observed in the treatment milieu, where he has reacted with dismissive, angry and abrasive responses to those whom he feels have intruded upon him, interfered with his desire for undisturbed time and space, or challenged and confronted him. He is highly self-referenced, controlling and—by his own admission—does not handle criticism well. Even mild challenges are experienced as attacks and sources of humiliation that he counters with retaliatory remarks or seemingly nonplussed comments that are infused with underlying anger. He recognizes his impulsive reactivity and his tendency to respond to people in extremes, but either he does not have a good self-observing capacity in this regard or else he chooses not to curb himself. Recently, he has sought feedback from others when he senses that he has been insensitive or heavy-handed. He is attempting to address selected interpersonal conflicts in his group psychotherapy, and while the emotional depth of his efforts is unclear, but they are worthwhile. Unresolved and unprocessed antipathies absorb considerable energy and have inhibited his ability to do his own psychological work.

Within the program, Father Wollmering has made a few friends, but they are generally peers who provide the positive feedback and affirmation on which he depends for an adequate sense of self. Because his need to feel admired and special is great, he does not necessarily recognize more subtle or indirect forms of affirmation and may underestimate or fail to notice positive

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signals from others. He states that he would like to cultivate age-appropriate relationships, but also admits that he is uncomfortable in close relationships. Indeed, much about his style of relatedness succeeds in keeping people at a distance. The impression is of a lonely man who has alienated or intimidated many of his fellow residents and who relates on a relatively superficial level with most. Of note, he has left the grounds for leisure excursions only three times since his arrival, an atypical pattern for those in the program.

Finally, Father Wollmering recognizes that *recovering a more personal sense of God* in his life is the core question of his priesthood. He acknowledges that he has lost his sense of God, other than a nominal and humanistic sense of wonder in nature. He continues to express his desire to focus on his relationship with God, and while he has moved away from sacramental functions, the meaning of his priesthood will emerge from this more fundamental question of his spiritual relationship. What is true interpersonally is also true spiritually. He does not find it easy to name his own sense of identity, but tends to describe who others think he is. In his spirituality group he is fearful of sharing highly personal experiences of God lest he feel foolish. Nonetheless, he has noted some moments from the group that have moved him and which he has been encouraged to revisit. He appears to be trying to establish more rhythm to his daily prayer.

As is evident, Father Wollmering has not found it easy to make himself vulnerable to others and to the painful process of self-discovery. The makeup of his personality makes it difficult to open himself in a trusting way and to receive others as they are. In the past two weeks, following my expressed concern as to whether treatment is proving beneficial, he appears to be making more intentional efforts. Members of his addictions group have noticed that he is trying somewhat harder. How much of this is compliance and how much is motivated for his own sake is unknown. There is still a discrepancy between his own favorable view of his progress, however, and the impressions of the treatment team. Following our scheduled conference call, team members are willing to meet with him to try to provide some direct feedback, which it is hoped he can use to advantage. A recommended length of stay has yet to be determined.

I look forward to our conversation and further invite you to be in touch at any time with concerns that may arise.

Sincerely,



Shauna Corbin, PhD, C.Psych.  
Psychologist

The content of this letter has been reviewed and approved by the Chief Executive Officer.



Raymond F. Dlugos, OSA, PhD, C.Psych.  
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Fr. Bruce Wollmering



OSB WOLLMERING\_00294

CONFIDENTIAL

THE  
Southdown

INSTITUTE

1335 St. John's Sideroad East  
Aurora, Ontario L4G 3G8

Tel/Fax: 905-727-4214

January 13, 2005

Abbot John Klassen, OSB  
P.O.Box 2015  
Collegeville, Minnesota  
56321-2015

*Re: Father Bruce Wollmering*

Dear Abbot Klassen:

I am writing in response to your request for an update regarding Father Bruce Wollmering's progress at the time of his return for the Southdown Aftercare Workshop this past October. As I mentioned in our telephone conversation, the most current and immediate information regarding Father Wollmering's functioning and level of risk will most likely come from his outpatient therapists. Nonetheless, I am glad to share with you my impressions based on the brief written feedback forwarded by his confreres and my interview with Fr. Wollmering and Br. Richard Oliver on October 4, 2004.

Father Wollmering appears to have made serious efforts to re-establish and improve relationships within his monastic Community, with reportedly good results. By his own account and that of others, after returning from Southdown he addressed the Community as a whole, shared in a credible way the substance of what he had learned about himself during treatment, and offered an apology for his past behaviour. He subsequently made efforts to be more understanding, cordial, and friendly towards others and stated during our interview that there were now only four monks—down from 34—to whom he had trouble relating at all. Others have confirmed a positive change in his attitudes and manner of mixing and participating in the group at large. He regularly attends community meals and choir and stated that he feels more at home than ever before.

Father Wollmering has implemented all of the recommendations made by the Southdown treatment team, as well as the elements of his personal covenant intended to support his well-being and healthy relationships at all levels. Among his ongoing supports are:

- o monthly meetings with his former outpatient psychotherapist, Richard Fingarson.
- o weekly sessions with a Jungian dream analyst which he finds very helpful.
- o continued spiritual direction with his former director
- o regular meetings with his support group, of which Brother Richard is a member—

Brother Richard confirmed that they are kept apprised of events in his life.  
NOTE: Father Wollmering expressed concern that one member of his support group is very abrasive and he finds it difficult to take in what he says because of the way in which it is delivered. He has considered asking him to drop out, although Brother

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Re: Father Bruce Wollmering Page 2 of 3

Richard thought this might mean that it is just who he needs in the group. Moreover, Father Wollmering could not immediately think of a replacement. We discussed the helpfulness of revisiting the support group and having the members share their impressions of how things are working. I understand that this has since happened, with good effect.

Father Wollmering felt that behaviours of the sort that had led to the previous harassment charge were under control. He stated that he had almost no contact with students or even those former students whom he had considered friends. None of the students have invited him for lunch and he has instead lunched with several of the faculty. He has become good friends with the master gardener, whom he regards as "a safe person" for him since he is married with children. They see each other once a week and he believes that the gardener "considers me one of his closest confidants." Brother Richard pointed out that such a close friendship with a non-Community member *could* sap some of the vigour from his involvements in Community.

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Father Wollmering volunteered the issue of his relationship with the candidate who had been assigned to work with him on the cemetery project. He admitted that they had gone biking, picked raspberries together and spent at least some time together every day. He did not feel there was a problem as long as things were kept public, at least not until you confronted him and asked him to limit their contacts to once a week. At the time of our interview, the candidate—now a novice—was still assigned to work with him once a week. Brother Richard reported that Father Wollmering brought the information about the candidate to the support group, but more as an announcement than as something to review for feedback. The impression was that he knew there was a problem with it. Although Father Wollmering said that his purpose was just to let people know, Brother Richard pointed out that it also reflected a pattern of behaviour for him.

During this session, Father Wollmering admitted that he still did not see the difference between this relationship and others that was cause for concern. Brother Richard pointed out his excitement when he was around the candidate and reminded him that he was a psychologist, while the candidate naturally wanted to fit in. He further underscored the power differential and the need to make distinctions in his relationships, suggesting that "his heart contaminates his judgment." Father Wollmering admitted that it is hard for him when someone either reciprocates his overtures or takes initiative with him. At my prompting, he also acknowledged that you had recently received a letter reporting his inappropriate behaviour from years past, but he seemed to minimize its significance.

In response to your question regarding a "safety plan" for Father Wollmering, I would say that his adherence to the discharge recommendations and his own covenant together represent such a plan and that it is a comprehensive one. My concerns remain the following:

- Father Wollmering still does not recognize early enough, or grasp the full implications of, relationships in which the balance of power is very lop-sided in his favour.
- His level of self-awareness remains limited, including about his own motivations and the level of attention and energy he may be pouring into a selected relationship.

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- Young men still seem to have strong appeal for him.
- His relationship with the candidate developed rapidly, over just a six-week period. He nonetheless considers him "a friend" rather than a likable young man just beginning his Formation. It is an over-estimation of the relationship, in which he ought to have played more of an objective mentoring role. Similarly, his view that the master gardener considers him "one of his closest confidants" after only a few months may be factual, simple hyperbole, or another misjudgement of the strength of a relationship.
- There seems to be at least partial awareness by Father Wollmering that some of his actions and choices are problematic, and he may not be sufficiently forthcoming about this with his support group and other treaters.
- The episode with the candidate occurred very soon after his return home, in a context that assumed good accountability.

Given that Father Wollmering apparently was working his aftercare program diligently at the time of these events, I believe it is fair to say that he is still at least at moderate risk for becoming inappropriately over-involved in other relationships. He is making good efforts to modify his behaviour, but his patterns of attraction and ways of cultivating relationships are very ingrained. If he is genuinely transparent with his support group, therapists and spiritual director, occasional contact with undergraduate male students may not be a problem. It would be unwise, however, to assign young men (whether students or not) to collaborate with him on projects that require repeated or extended contact.

Father Wollmering appears to have made important and commendable strides in improving the quality of his relationships with confreres. He also seems to have reconciled himself to major changes in the social group with which he affiliates, although this continues to present challenges for him. I would reiterate the importance of obtaining recent input from his current outpatient therapists, who may be in a better position to provide an opinion based on their ongoing contacts with him.

I hope information this is helpful to you. Please let me know if you would like to discuss it further.

Sincerely,



Shauna Corbin, PhD, C.Psych.  
Psychologist

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SAINT JOHN'S ABBEY

BOX 2015

COLLEGEVILLE, MINNESOTA 56321-2015

OFFICE OF THE ABBOT

September 16, 2004

Dr. Shauna Corbin  
Southdown  
1335 Saint John's SDRD, East  
Aurora, Ontario  
CANADA L4G 3G8

Dear Dr. Corbin:

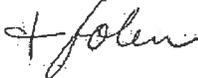
Hello from Collegeville on a beautiful September morning. I am writing you with a follow-up request to **Father Bruce Wollmering's** therapy at Southdown and specifically his work with you as major therapist.

Father Bruce is returning to Southdown for a Continuing Care workshop from October 4-6. We have an External Review Board and I am asking you if you could draw up a Safety Plan for Father Bruce. That is, what is the level of risk for Bruce? What are the things he needs to avoid? What are the things he needs to do maintain a program of "sobriety?"

In August I received a letter from a graduate who has known Bruce over the past twenty two years. The letter outlined behavior patterns that are completely consistent with the inappropriate behavior that led to the sexual harassment charge in spring of 2003. This further allegation prompts me to ask if it is advisable for Bruce to be around undergraduates at all. For example, Bruce enjoys outdoor work in our woods and Arboretum, where there are many undergraduate men. Is this a risk or does Bruce understand enough about himself that he will not "glom" onto another student?

If you can put your thoughts on these issues into writing it would be very helpful to me. Again, thank you for the good work you did with Bruce while he was in treatment.

Sincerely,



Abbot John Klassen, OSB

PHONE 320 363-2544 FAX 320 363-3082 E-MAIL abbot@osb.org

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CONFIDENTIAL

September 30, 2004

The Right Reverend John Klassen, OSB  
Abbot  
St. John's Abbey  
P.O.Box 2015  
Collegeville, MN 56321-2015

*Re: Reverend Bruce Wollmering, OSB- Final Letter*

Dear Abbot Klassen:

I most sincerely apologize for the oversight and extreme delay in forwarding this final letter to you. I do recall that a specific post-discharge plan was discussed at Father Bruce Wollmering's closeout meeting with which he was in agreement, and trust that this was implemented. This summary is a review of his treatment here at Southdown, followed by the clinical team's recommendations. Much of the information will also be familiar to you from my previous written communication and our telephone conference calls. My comments are organized around the treatment goals formulated shortly following admission.

**Goal 1. Diagnostic clarification: Rule out alcohol abuse / dependence.** Father Wollmering did not believe he had a problem with alcohol. He admitted to episodic periods of excess, but linked it to situational factors and reported having been able to stop when he chose. In his work with his addictions counselor, the counselor eventually concurred and concluded that he was not alcohol dependent. The issue of drinking in the company of students was acknowledged, but not further explored, and Father Wollmering considered the question resolved. Indeed, his primary difficulties appear to be characterological in nature, constituting a narcissistic personality disorder with histrionic and anti-social features.

**Goal 2. Improved insight into, and management of, compulsive sexual and gambling behaviors.** Father Wollmering viewed his gambling behavior in much the same light as he did his drinking; that is, situationally determined and within his control to stop. Absent reports to the contrary, the addictions counselor again agreed that there was no evidence for an addictive pattern. The original diagnosis of pathological gambling could not be confirmed with the information available.

Father Wollmering's history of sexual activity, on the other hand, has a compulsive and undifferentiated quality. Speaking of that period in his life, his attitudes remained unchanged and he did not view his behavior as truly problematic or harmful. Instead, he was pleased

with his ability to have overcome the strictures of the church regarding sexuality, enjoyed the power of his physical attractiveness, and was gratified at being the object of others' interest and admiration. He reported that he had been abstinent from active sexual contact for the past twelve years, but poor judgment and weak boundaries reportedly persisted in his personal relationships with students and former students, for example, engaging with them socially and drinking and gambling in their company. He tended to rationalize or minimize the significance of these and other actions regarded by others as highly inappropriate. His abstinence apparently did not include sexualized talk, seductive behaviors or some forms of inappropriate touch.

Father Wollmering acknowledged the enlivening and rejuvenating effects of his affiliation with younger men, and it was a source of pride that they accepted him as a virtual peer. He did not distinguish, however, between relationships with them and with his age-peers, resulting in a serious blurring of boundaries regarding his role and responsibilities. In the treatment milieu as well, he seemed unaware of the inappropriateness of suggestive comments or overtures to others. In the latter part of his stay, following many heavy challenges, he began to consider the subtle and not-so-subtle ways in which he may have communicated messages of interest to others. By the close of treatment he was voicing agreement with the importance of cultivating more and healthier relationships with his confreres. He nonetheless expected to maintain his ties with students and graduates whom he had come to consider good friends. With respect to ongoing casual contact, he did not appear to appreciate the need for changing his usual social habits.

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**Goal 3. Improved understanding of personality factors contributing to Father Wollmering's acting out and to his interpersonal difficulties.** Father Wollmering essentially agreed with the diagnostic impression of a narcissistic personality disorder, acknowledging that others often perceived him as dismissive and arrogant, although this did not seem to disturb him. At the same time, he stated that everyone liked him—perhaps an example of just how dismissive he could be of those who were at odds with him. In his own words, he simply “deleted” them from his mind. Father Wollmering was very aware of his strong need for attention, affirmation and approval, which was plainly observable in the treatment setting. With those who consistently gave him positive feedback, he maintained friendly, unconflicted and benign relationships. With those who challenged or disagreed with him, relationships quickly soured. Unfortunately, this became true of his primary therapy with me, and he found it difficult to trust and persevere in the process. A meeting was arranged with several team members during which several therapists also shared with him their major concerns and impressions of the impediments to his progress. He subsequently seemed to distance himself in other modalities. The one exception was his spiritual direction, in which he continued to feel a positive connection. He had accepted the team's feedback, but his hypersensitivity to challenge and real or perceived criticism interfered with his ability to make use of what he heard. In this sense he was unable to overcome his own defenses.

Most of Father Wollmering's interpersonal difficulties are a function of his personality. The strong narcissistic, histrionic and anti-social features that characterize his functioning compromise his relationships in general, contribute to acting out behavior, and limit his capacity for insight and empathy. In the latter part of treatment, he did make a more

consistent effort to contain himself, with the result that members of his psychotherapy group perceived a positive shift in attitude. At the same time, the treatment team's clinical impression was one of barely controlled hostility that continued to seep into his interactions and of superficiality in most of his relationships. There were one or two exceptions at any given time, including an older woman religious whose humor and bluntness he could accept, and a friendship with a male peer who was very affirming of him and who prevailed upon him for a professional favor. Father Wollmering did express his awareness that he tended to be very hard on others and intermittently tried to soften his approach and dealings with them, but it was difficult for him to sustain. Although he has his own inner pain and struggles, he does not allow himself to be vulnerable to others—or indeed to himself—and maintains instead an air of aloofness, detachment and imperturbability. This does little to foster the growth of intimacy in his life, but it appears to be his most resting state.

*Goal 4. Develop a more personal sense of God in his life.* This was the primary focus of Father Wollmering's work with his spiritual director and the area in which he felt the most movement. He was initially inclined to utilize readings and quotations a good deal, but was encouraged by his director to use his own words in sharing what touched him most. He was also encouraged to live his spirituality—to "put some weight on it"—through his personal relationships. For example, his vocational identity as a monk rather than as a priest means engaging with Community. Similarly, if he wishes to become more truly accepting of others as they are, can he feel more troubled about the ease with which he has dismissed them in the past? As he said of himself, he too easily compartmentalizes the different domains of his functioning. At the close of treatment, however, he began to refer to openings between the various parts of his life. He was supported in trying to widen these openings in order to achieve better internal integration and a more coherent sense of self.

There is no question that Father Wollmering is a bright and accomplished man with many gifts. However, while he recognized the difficulty that others had with him, there was little convincing evidence of his desire to change. There was a considerable discrepancy between his own positive estimation of his progress and that of the clinical team. He asserted growth particularly in the area of interpersonal relationships, yet it was minimally evident in the milieu or his therapy groups. He tended to split his interactions with others defensively, both staff and residents, and many residents found themselves in turmoil around him. With a few exceptions, he displayed little distress, limited insight, and low awareness or investment in his effect on others. An anti-social element to his personality was more evident over time. In the overall perspective, treatment appears to have had very little impact on him. While he has a good record of abstaining from full sexual activity, he is thought to remain at substantial risk for engaging in behavior similar to that which brought him to treatment.

In different ways, I believe that Father Wollmering and I were both disappointed that treatment was not a better or more helpful experience for him. He prepared a personal covenant that reflected his intellectual understanding of the central issues and included a statement of his intention to try improve his approach to Community life. Whether he can make this work remains to be seen, but if he does, it will also mean a number of relational losses with which he has to cope.

The following recommendations were discussed at the closeout meeting:

(1) Weekly individual psychotherapy to support Father Wollmering's stated wish to improve the quality of his relatedness, reinforce appropriate boundaries, and deal with transitional issues. He has confidence in an outpatient therapist with whom he worked prior to residential treatment and wishes to resume with him. The helpfulness of this process may be evaluated at the time of the first aftercare workshop.

(2) Development of a small, committed support group of fellow monks, who may serve a supportive/challenging function for him in lieu of an individual Support Person.

(3) Future ministry should not include direct work with students or young adults, nor should it include the practice of counseling or psychotherapy. This is compatible with Father Wollmering's current plans.

(4) Contact with students and former students should be limited, details to be further discussed with his leadership.

(5) Return for the *Southdown Connection* workshop in six months' time.

Thank you for your support of Father Wollmering's treatment. Please feel free to contact me or Louise Bray, his Aftercare Coordinator, with any questions or concerns that may arise.

Sincerely,

  
Shauna Corbin, PhD, C.Psych.  
Psychologist

cc: Fr. Bruce Wollmering

**Skudlarek, William**

**From:**

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 16, 2006 1:04 AM

**To:** Klassen, John; Skudlarek, William

**Subject:** ANOTHER CASE

**RE: Accusation against Bruce Wollmering**

The Star/Tribune write-up listing the three people who had been subjects of complaints caused a 2004 graduate of St. John's to begin losing a lot of sleep and ruminating about his own experiences with Fr. Wollmering.

I interviewed he and his sister for 3 hours, and did a phone followup today.

I would characterize his allegations as sexual harassment although there were physical advances which he rejected. His contacts with Fr. Wollmering actually extended to Spring of this year, although the major experiences were 2003 and 2004.

He described a pattern of a great deal of interaction which gradually led to an ever-increasing amount of sexual talk, joking, occasional attempts to get him to accept masturbation, grossly sexual humor, showing or sending pornographic images (of women), etc. This was done in a context where there was clearly power abuse.

This student set limits or it sounds like it could have gone much further.

Several elements of concern to me, beyond the description of some pretty disgusting talk and interaction are:

(1) That the initial contact occurred because Fr. Wollmering was dropping by the student's room and watching TV and socializing with his roommate -- Fr. Wollmering later breached confidentiality and explained that the roommate was a client. Obviously going to the room of a student who is a counseling or psychotherapy client and watching TV is pretty bad boundaries. (This did not trouble the young man because he didn't know that it was inappropriate.)

(2) That according to the student Fr. Wollmering claimed to have gone with a student to masturbate at the cabin.

(3) According to the student, Fr. Wollmering not only took him out to dinner, but got him out of parking tickets; got him into classes; and in effect rewarded him with all sorts of privileges. The student commented: "It was kind of like knowing a mobster on campus."

(4) According to the student, while he was still underage Fr. Wollmering would take him out and buy him drinks, with some St. Cloud restaurants going along with it without checking his age.

(5) The student takes his faith quite seriously, or at least did. He loves St. John's and feels it is a great school, but has really lost his faith at present. He asked Fr. Wollmering about his faith, and allegedly was told that Fr. Wollmering has not served Mass since 1976. When the student asked Why? he allegedly responded that it was "bullshit" and that he "gave up on it a

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long time ago. The student noted that Fr. Wollmering never went to Mass and believes he even skipped Christmas Mass and commencement..

(6) The student says that Fr. Wollmering said that he was not celibate and he bragged that he had more than 300 sexual partners when he was in graduate school (after he was ordained). The student said: "I'd been interested in the faith but this was a real downer -- he was the opposite of what I thought."

This young man loves St. John's as a school and his sister is a student and he wants his younger brother to go there. He does not want his parents to know about this, fearing that they will pull his siblings out of the University. He decided long ago to go to someone else for recommendations (he is pre-med).

It appears that he was able to compartmentalize and rationalize all of this until he learned of another complainant from the press coverage.

**I am going to try to find a suitable therapist, and we are also discussing the possibility of a private discussion with the leadership. But I have some questions:**

(1) We are exploring his health insurance coverage in terms of psychotherapy, but are wondering about whether it is possible for the Abbey to cover his therapy if he doesn't have coverage which would apply? I have in mind several people in the community. I don't think this is likely to be long term, but he is in crisis now. If this is possible, how can it be set up?

(2) Should I be talking to the Review Committee about this, once he gives permission?

(3) What are the possibilities in terms of a meeting to discuss this with the leadership? Any chance of doing it down here?

(4) I indicated that I would inquire about Fr. Wollmering's situation. He is listed as "retired" in the newspaper piece, but does he have interaction with students? Beyond the sexual stuff, this man sounds like he does serious damage to the faith.

Gary Schoener

PS: Wednesday I will be best reached on my home phone (                      ) or cell phone (                      )  
Thursday afternoon the same is the case. Friday and Saturday I will be tied up doing evaluations, but can be reached in the evening.

8/16/2006

OSB WOLLMERING 00550



The Staff

Fr. Finian McDonald, OSB  
M.ED., Counselor Educa-  
tion and Counseling  
Psychology, Boston  
College, 1972.



Ms. Kathleen Schiemann,  
M.S., School Counseling,  
St. Cloud State College,  
1972.



Dr. Anthony Tabor, Ph.D.,  
Clinical Psychology,  
Loyola U., Chicago, 1959.



Fr. Bruce Wollmering,  
OSB, M.ED., Counseling  
and Guidance, U. of  
Arizona, 1970;  
Director

Ms. Rebecca Welch, Receptionist

Additional Available Services

On Campus

--University Health Service

Dr. Louis Wittrock, M.D.,  
Campus Physician  
Phone (363) 3142

--Transactional Analysis Counseling  
Group

Beginning Feb. 5 and led by  
Mr. Norman James, Chairman,  
SJU Psychology Dept., Pro-  
visional Teaching Member of  
the International Transactional  
Analysis Association. For  
information contact Mr. James  
Phone (363) 3561

Off Campus

--Central Minn. Mental Health Center  
(serves residents of Benton, Sher-  
burne, Stearns, and Wright Counties)  
1321 13th St. N., St. Cloud  
M T F -- 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.  
W TH -- 8:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.  
Phone 252-5010

--Emergency Psychiatric Service  
St. Cloud Hospital  
Phone 253-5555

--MOUNTAIN (Youth Emergency Service)  
A counseling, referral, and  
information PHONE service  
6:00 p.m.-2:00 a.m. daily  
Phone 253-3131

Additional Available Services

Off Campus

--St. Cloud Drop-In Center  
507 Third Avenue South  
6:00 p.m.-2:00 a.m. daily  
Phone 253-2811

--Birthright

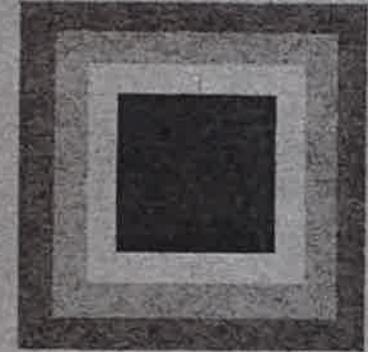
Around the clock help to  
women with unwanted preg-  
nancies.  
St. Cloud Hospital  
Phone 253-4848

--Family Planning Center

822½ W. St. Germain, St. Cloud  
Free V.D. testing & treatment,  
pregnancy testing, and contra-  
ceptive information.  
24 hour phone service  
Phone 252-9504

--Alcoholics Anonymous

AA - Phone 251-9676  
or  
Central Minn. Mental Health  
Center  
Phone 252-5010  
or  
St. Cloud Hospital  
Phone 251-2700



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