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Visitors having a view of the handicrafts made by the children of the Shanthi Bhavan.

## A Day Care Home for Slum Babies

**MADRAS:** Four-year-old Shanthi cannot boast of having working parents who earn a regular income. Shanthi's father, Karuppannan is a casual labourer who gets work when the building contractor offers him one. Kannamma, Shanthi's mother, earns her living by selling flowers at street corners and contributes her mite to keep the hunger away from three stomachs. The family 'lives' in a dilapidated hut in a Teynampet slum.

But, when at work, the parents are least worried about their daughter being left alone in the hut. For they know she is safe in the hands of her sisters in Shanthi Bhavan, a welfare organisation of the Stella Maris College which runs a Day Care Centre and where she is the most popular inmate.

While the city has several Day Care Centres catering to the needs of middle class families, those which accommodate children from the weaker sections of society could be counted on one's fingers, Sr. Theodolinda Pereira, Director of Shanthi Bhavan, said.

Through maternity and child welfare schemes, the Shanthi Bha-

van distributes milk and food to the needy people of the area and encourages women to attend talks on nutrition and hygiene. Besides the Day Care Centre, the Shanthi Bhavan offers sponsorship, foster care and vocational training.

The Day Care Centre consists of a creche and nursery where more than 100 children in the age group of 2 to 5 are provided recreation and entertainment through various audio-visual programmes. The sponsorship programme enables the child to live with his own family and at the same time making use of the educational opportunity provided by the Shanthi Bhavan through a benefactor, who volunteers to take a personal interest in the child. As many as 294 children are provided help under the programme, Sr. Theodolinda Pereira said. Foster care attempts to give family environment to children who are deprived of family care due to some crisis in the household. The social workers carry out the task of placing the children in suitable families and supervising the placement until termination and simultaneously re-

habilitating the natural family to enable the child to return to them when time and conditions permit.

Besides, Shanthi Bhavan conducts regular health camps and runs a health clinic where more than 75 ailing people per week are given treatment. A tailoring unit and a handicrafts unit also function at the Shanthi Bhavan.

Recently, Shanthi Bhavan conducted an exhibition of handicrafts and playthings mostly made by the Children of the Day Care Centre and sponsorship children which attracted a large number of school children. Shanthi Bhavan also trains post graduate students of social work in various aspects of welfare schemes.—Our Staff Reporter.