

THE GOOD NEWS

FALL 2016

A QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT FROM CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER



Back To School Backpack Program

Preparing children to go back to school is a time of financial strain for many of our families who need to purchase clothes, shoes, school supplies, etc. This late summer, as in past years, all seven of our regional agencies provided back-to-school support for needy families in their areas primarily through backpack programs. As described here, each of these programs have developed somewhat differently, but show common elements of collaboration involving businesses, church groups and civic groups.

Catholic Charities of Chemung/Schuyler organized its Annual Back to School Giveaway, providing 550 backpacks with supplies to children in Chemung and Schuyler Counties. In addition, 56 kids received free haircuts while at the giveaway. In Schuyler County the giveaway event also included crafts such as iron-on patches for their new backpack, personal care items and back to school supplies. In Chemung, children were able to choose new sneakers and fall coats. Allison said of her experience in Schuyler County: "I enjoyed the crafts to make – especially picking out the backpack iron-on. My friend and I both have sparkly folders, notebooks and cool pencils and are ready to kick off our first year at middle school! Thank you!" Agency leadership extends special thanks to its presenting sponsor Chemung County Excellus BC/BS, and to its volunteer staff and donors.

This year, at its Annual Back to School Event, held on August 12th, **Catholic Charities of Livingston County** distributed 248 backpacks to children in need throughout Livingston County. Local businesses, churches, groups and private donors came together to provide needed supplies. While many children were absolutely ecstatic and thankful to receive the supplies needed to begin their school year, the story of one little girl stands out. As "Lily" approached the table of supplies, she was so excited to pick out items she needed. She gently looked through the backpacks and found the perfect one with characters on it from the movie "Frozen". Her face lit up as she thanked staff members and told us "Frozen" was her favorite movie.

Catholic Charities of Steuben County expresses its thanks to the businesses, organizations and individuals who donated supplies, resources and time to their 2016 Back to School Drive. The agency's Turning Point program helped more than 250 students in Bath area school districts and 174 students in Hornell area school districts have a successful start to their 2016-2017 school year, equipping students with both backpacks containing school supplies and vouchers for haircuts. In Bath, Corning Incorporated volunteers coordinated by United Way of the Southern Tier helped to fill backpacks with supplies and Assemblyman Phil Palmesano joined four other volunteers to help hand out backpacks. Many other businesses helped in both locations. Steuben County Rural Ministry, now offering Turning Point programs in Canisteo, provided socks and underwear to 100 children in 79 households. Canisteo Wesleyan Church, First Presbyterian Church, Canisteo First United Methodist Church and First Baptist Church each held an "Undie Sunday" to collect underwear and socks for the drive.

Through funding from Community Services Block Grant funds, **Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes**



Assemblyman Palmesano helps student from Steuben County choose items for her new backpack.

organized a short-term fast-turnaround backpack program which provided more than 200 backpacks to needy students. Partners in the effort were faith groups, food pantries, the Department of Social Services and Head Start programs.

A retired restaurant owner, local Catholic and evangelical congregations, the Moose Lodge, local businesses, individual donors and volunteers, and members of the Cornell University Lacrosse team all played a role in making **Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga Counties** Backpack Giveaway a great success. Between the Ithaca office in Tompkins County and the Nichols office in Tioga County, the agency distributed 330 backpacks filled with school supplies. A retired volunteer organizer solicited funds from local businesses and organizations and recruit-

ed college athletes to fill the backpacks. Catholic parishioners and the Salvation Army in Tioga County donated boxes and boxes for giveaway in Nichols.

For **Catholic Charities of Wayne County**, the backpack program was organized through the Wolcott Community Clothing Center, a Catholic Charities program led by volunteer Jill Lee and supported by many other volunteers. The program has grown steadily over the past few years, and this year was able to provide 250 backpacks.

In partnership with Pepsico and Tops, **Catholic Family Center** once again this year coordinated the Feed the Children Initiative. In the course of five hours, eight hundred families received enough food and daily essentials to last a family of four one week.



Students from Tompkins Tioga and Chumung Schuyler show their new backpacks..

Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes

September during National Recovery Awareness Month, **Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes**, in partnership with the Cayuga County Drug Treatment Court, created many opportunities to spotlight addiction and support recovery efforts across the region.

The agency hosted a Community Roundtable, giving participants including community and agency leaders as well as the general public, the opportunity to focus beyond the typical signs of and trends of addiction to the question of 'now what?' This dialogue was essential in providing community leaders the chance to understand what the community can do to support recovery in addition to working to prevent addiction.

One of the highlights of the month included an Open Mic night, where residents were able to gather and share comedy, prose or meaningful stories in support of the recovery effort. The event, pictured, was held at the Auburn Public Theatre. "Creating opportunities where the community can participate in activities that support recovery is essential", said Bill Lamb, Director of Services. "This event was fun, and entertaining with a purpose," he added.

Additionally, the agency, again in partnership with the Cayuga County Drug Treatment Court has secured author Timothy James to speak about the addiction and recovery process. James is the author of the book *From the Needle to the Pen*.



Open Mic Night at Auburn Public Theatre.

Catholic Charities of Chemung/Schuyler Counties

Cathy came to us after discovering the man she had just married was psychotic and had forced her to leave her home. When she had nowhere else to turn, a friend told Cathy about **Catholic Charities of Chemung/Schuyler Counties'** First Step Victim Services. One of the Advocates, Marie, met with Cathy. "Years of things that had happened came out when I was talking to Marie and she was just so supportive," states Cathy. "I explained what I was up against: the mortgage and taxes weren't paid and I was going to lose the car because the car payment wasn't paid. I got help with my taxes and Catholic Charities helped with my car payment... I couldn't live out here without a car."

Cathy's home is a testament to her need for tranquility and peace. She recently built a fireplace by creating plaster stones by hand and her own beautiful paintings can be seen throughout her home. Staying in her home is imperative to Cathy. When Cathy needed hip replacement surgery recently, Marie was there to care for her two dogs and pick her up from the hospital.

When asked, where would you be without the assistance of Catholic Charities? Cathy replied, "Probably living in my car." Cathy's eyes welled with tears, "Emotionally... I think I just would have given up. I'm not there anymore, but I thought about it a lot. I would have gone to sleep and not gotten up. It upsets me to think I've been put in that position so many times. And thankful that I didn't do anything about it and without you guys (Catholic Charities), I probably would have this time. It was something that put me over the top. It was like enough is enough, I'm 62, it's time to rest."

As exemplified by the support given Cathy, the First Step Victim Services program provides advocacy and referral services to all victims of crime in Chemung & Schuyler Counties, with a strong focus on victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse. If you are a victim, or know someone that may be a victim, don't wait to get help. Call Catholic Charities today at 607.535.2050; Call or text our 24/7 Hotline: 607.742.9629.



Bath Simmons Rockwell General Manager Ed Spiess and Sales Professional Paul Parshall.

Catholic Charities of Steuben County

Turning Point would like to thank Bath Simmons Rockwell General Manager Ed Spiess and Sales Professional Paul Parshall, who donated approximately 606 lbs of ham steaks, pork butt steaks, bacon, ribs, sausage patties, pork chops, and ham roasts on behalf of Simmons Rockwell. The much-needed food was split evenly between Turning Point's food pantries at Steuben County Rural Ministry, Turning Point Bath, and Turning Point Hornell. To acquire the donation, Mr. Spiess and Mr. Parshall purchased five pigs weighing in at a total of approximately 900 lbs. during the annual 4-H Livestock Auction at the Steuben County Fair Friday, August 19, 2016, and then paid for processing. The total value of the donation was \$3,400.

"The meat looks fantastic, and will definitely help with our increased numbers in Bath," said Turning Point Bath Food Pantry Manager, Kristin Stewart. "Last month we provided food to over 1,200 individuals—adults, children, and the elderly. This number does not include the mobile food truck or food available in the lobby."

Turning Point, a service priority for **Catholic Charities of Steuben**, stabilizes families in economic crisis and supports them as they strive for self-sufficiency. For more information or to get involved in Turning Point programs in your area, please contact Turning Point at (607) 776-4575 in the Bath area, (607) 698-4725 in the Canisteo area, (607) 962-0704 in the Corning area, or (607) 324-3457 in the Hornell area.

Catholic Charities of Steuben's mission is to build communities that care for all people by strengthening and enriching the quality of life for individuals, families, and children; working to reduce poverty; and advocating for social justice. For more information, visit CatholicCharitiesSteuben.org.

Catholic Charities of Livingston County

Catholic Charities of Livingston County has taken a major step forward in its evolution as a service provider by winning approval to provide Home and Community-Based services and Children's Health Home Services under Medicaid Managed Care.

Services which will be provided under the Adult Home and Community-Based Services waiver include:

- Psychosocial Rehabilitation
- Habilitation
- Family Support and Training
- Empowerment Services
- Pre-vocational Services
- Intensive Supported Employment
- Ongoing Supported Employment
- Education Support Services

For Children's Health Homes Services, to be operated as part of a four-Diocesan Catholic Charities organizational structure, services will include:

- Care Coordination of Medicaid Services
- SPOA Services: Community Psychiatric Support and Treatment (CPST), Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services, Family Peer Support Services, and Youth Peer Support and Training

Movement to provision of these more complicated services, while positioning the agency to be an ever more valuable contributor to the county, has required an inordinate amount of staff training in various facets of service delivery, client data tracking and billing. While there will be no doubt challenges in the start-up period, particularly in ramping up staff in relation to uncertainty about numbers of referrals, this initiative puts the agency in a much stronger position moving to the future.

Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga Counties

"It's a relief for my kids to know I'm in a safe place," Lisa Riley says of her current home. Lisa is a grandmother, a volunteer at Catholic Charities' free clothing closet, and a guest at the agency's new transitional housing program. She is also a recovering drug addict whose decades-long substance abuse led to her homelessness.

A few months ago, she found out about "A Place to Stay", a **Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga Counties** housing program based in a residential neighborhood near downtown Ithaca. Through a "Women Building Community" grant from the Ithaca-based City Federation of Women's Organizations and other generous support, Catholic Charities was able to rent and furnish a lovely, newly renovated home to provide housing for up to four women at a time. Lisa was one of the first guests to move in. Over the past four months, the program has hosted women ranging in age from late teens to early 50's.

"A Place to Stay" is designed to provide women with a safe, serene home for 90 days, along with the support and guidance they need to find and maintain their own permanent housing. When people are no longer homeless, "couch-surfing" (going from place to place) or living in their cars, they can focus on attending addiction recovery treatment, setting goals and planning for their future.

Lisa notes that the women living at "A Place to Stay" motivate each other to stay sober and off drugs. Community spirit is built through cook-outs in the backyard, cleaning their home together, and meeting each other's family members when they stop by. Recently, one guest brought her friend's well-behaved dogs for a visit to the house's big back yard. Lisa's favorite visitor is, of course, her three-year old granddaughter.

"A Place to Stay" is meant to feel like home but it is transitional; it's a step along the way to greater self-sufficiency. Catholic Charities staff members have arranged for Cornell Co-Op Extension to bring cooking and nutrition classes into the house. Alternative Financial Credit Union is introducing the guests to credit counseling and financial literacy. The agency is also exploring ways to obtain low-cost gym memberships for their guests. Those ready to seek employment will be given guidance in resume writing and interview preparation. As their time in the program draws to a close, the agency assists our guests in securing their own affordable housing.

While Lisa will be missed when she moves out, Catholic Charities staff are honored to have helped make it possible for her to succeed at the hard work of addiction recovery. She is gearing up to take her GED and is planning to attend community college to become a drug and alcohol counselor. She is proof of how life can be altered and new worlds of opportunity can open up when people have a place to stay.



Catholic Charities of Wayne County

The new Thriving Families Program (TFP) of **Catholic Charities of Wayne County** has successfully completed its first grant year. Funded by the federal government's Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Program, TFP is a marriage and relationship enhancement program targeting young adults ages 18-24 and includes a curriculum focused on developing healthy and sustainable relationships through self-examination and self-determination of the individual's values, as well as development of positive communication skills, conflict resolution, financial literacy, and soft skill sets for the work force. Mental health, substance abuse, and trauma screenings as well as case management services are additional components



provided to participants to minimize barriers towards positive relationships with others.

After a government-required 9-month ramp up period, the program was launched officially on July 1, 2016. It began with a pilot program of 'How to Adult' provided to groups of High School seniors. This program was received with enthusiasm and positive feedback. Students, school staff, and administrators spoke of the benefits of the program and students commented that not only did they learn a lot about themselves but they also had fun.

As TFP works to strengthen relationships in communities throughout our county, there are various family events scheduled which include a family movie night, family dance night, and a 'Cooking Together' night, all designed to promote healthy interaction between parents and children.

TFP is currently providing curriculum to Hannick Hall residents (a women's residential substance abuse treatment center operated by Catholic Family Center), and to Sodus High School. The program is also slated to begin providing services to inmates at the Wayne County Jail in October, as well as adding 2 additional schools in November and another 2 schools in February 2017. Classes for the community are scheduled beginning in mid-October.

The TFP is a huge undertaking as it will provide services to all of Wayne County and is designed to specifically provide services close to where clients reside. The program will be held at schools, local libraries and community centers, churches and any available space that can accommodate the county's young adults. The program has also made arrangements for transportation for participants who otherwise would not be able to attend the program.

With the launch of this new program, the size of the agency has doubled and the office has been relocated to a new space in Newark. Thus far 7 new staff members have been hired, as the search continues for the additional 6 future employees to complete the program. At the one-year anniversary of TFP staff marvel at the many positive changes it has brought to the agency!

Catholic Family Center

In early 2015, the United Way of Greater Rochester, Inc., Monroe County and the City of Rochester, together with Assemblyman Joe Morelle and promise of support from the State, launched a major collaboration to work on reducing the extremely high poverty level in the community, which has come to be known as the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI).

Through the leadership of Marlene Bessette and Ron Rizzo, staff from **Catholic Family Center** played a major role throughout 2015 helping to develop and frame this initiative.

In late September, 2016, RMAPI leadership announced the first major program initiative stemming from these efforts.

Catholic Family Center has been selected as the lead agency for the Mentors for Success pilot program. This adult mentoring program will support 300 individuals/families in the Marketview Heights/Beechwood/EMMA neighborhoods as they address barriers to employment and move to self-sufficiency over time. Catholic Family Center has developed partnerships with Action for a Better Community (ABC) and The Community Place of Greater Rochester to deliver professional mentoring. The program is based on two evidence-based mentoring models. Catholic Family Center was also awarded a Jameel Poverty Action Lab grant to monitor and evaluate the success of the pilot project. The Notre Dame lab for Economic Opportunity will be a partner in this work.

Catholic Charities Community Services

Catholic Charities Community Services is proud to announce that funds provided by the New York State AIDS Institute Department of Health are serving as a catalyst to launch a new housing program which offers help to people living with HIV/AIDS to address their housing needs and more. The focus of HomeSOURCE (Support Ownership of: Understanding personal health; Retaining appropriate housing, and meeting Career and Educational goals) is to remove barriers which might cause a consumer to lose his/her housing. Program elements include employment skills development, budgeting, attention to medical treatment adherence as well as putting together a plan to improve overall personal health. "The great thing about this program is that it gives us the tools we need to address critical housing issues while at the same time, opening the door toward employment and financial independence for our participants," explains Housing Supervisor Kim Martin. "Our goal is to assist participants in their journeys toward self-sufficiency". For more information on HomeSOURCE, contact Kim Martin at (585) 339-9800 ext. 380 or email: kmartin@dor.org

Food Bank of the Southern Tier



Nine year old Robert Cooke eagerly grabs a marker and runs up to the white board. "Watch this!", he says, as though he is a trained magician about to reveal an impressive trick. He begins to write a math equation he learned how to solve in math class earlier that week.

"Two times ninety" he announces as he writes. "Equals" he pauses for dramatic effect as he looks out over his shoulder at his audience, awaiting the grand finale. With a half grin, as if to say, "drum-roll please...", he turns back to the board and excitedly writes as he exclaims "180!"

He returns to his seat, beaming with pride. Robert is a typical young boy. He's "one of the best in his class", he brags. Math is one of his favorite subjects. Today, Robert can concentrate on wowing his classmates and teachers. One thing he doesn't have to worry about is being hungry.

Robert, along with sisters, Angel who is 10 and Breanna who is 11, participate in the Food Bank's Backpack Program™ operated by the **Food Bank of the Southern Tier**. The program helps many families like the Cooke family, according to Linda, the Home-School Counselor.

The Backpack Program™ at the Food Bank has been evolving since its creation in 2005. It is different from the one-time annual backpack initiatives for return to school described in the lead article of this newsletter. During the school year, students are provided every Friday with a backpack with food for the weekend. The program is now in full swing:

- All 41 districts in the Food Bank's six county service area participate.
- 2,800 children are served weekly.
- 121,045 packs were distributed in 2015-2016.
- 3,000 hours were donated by volunteers in preparing the backpacks.

Food Bank staff are now studying ways to improve the program but also considering other child hunger initiatives that are potentially less expensive and could have greater impact. Possibilities being considered include: school-based Mobile Food Pantries, School Food Pantries and year-round Kids' Farmers Markets. The Food Bank will be hiring a new Youth Program Coordinator to help explore these various options.

Providence Housing Development Corporation

When **Providence Housing Development Corporation** was established in 1994, it was clear that its primary mission was "to develop and manage safe, affordable housing for low income individuals and families, senior citizens and special needs population."

It was and is equally clear that another important part of the mission is to assist the Diocese and Catholic Charities. It has done so. Two good examples of support to the Diocese has been the transformation of campuses at St. Salome's and Holy Rosary into affordable housing. Providence has also assisted Catholic Charities, including creation of three new community residence facilities for developmentally disabled persons, two in Penn Yan, Benton House and Pickering House, and Crowley House in Lyons.

This spring and summer, Providence has assisted the Catholic Charities family in another important way, purchasing a building in Newark and leasing it to Catholic Charities of Wayne County. The facility, located at 180 E. Union Street, now is the main office for the agency. The move to a new, larger facility was necessitated when Catholic Charities of Wayne County was awarded last fall a Federal grant of \$1.6 million a year for five years for its Thriving Families Program, to provide education and assistance to the 18-24 years old population throughout Wayne County.

Catholic Charities continues to be grateful to Providence for these projects and the many other ways in which Providence supports Catholic Charities.

Camp Stella Maris

In the summer of 2016, **Camp Stella Maris** enjoyed another very successful camping season, serving over 2,000 resident campers and continuing successful Leadership in Training, Counsellor in Training and Day Camp Programs.

Another very important event occurred the second week in September; as it has each September for more than twenty years. Nearly seventy individuals who reside in community residences for developmentally disabled persons operated by Catholic Charities Community Services had the opportunity to experience the joys of camp on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of that week. This is an experience which they look forward to all year.

While this event is important in and of itself, it symbolizes the wonderful service to the community offered by the camp on a year round basis. In the 2015-2016 school year:

- 170 campers participated in 5 unique camping experiences: Camp in the Cold, Winter Ski Camp, Christmas at CSM, Teen Leadership Camp and LIT Reconnect.
- 128 adults and children participated in such programs as Mommy and Me, Daddy and Me, Family Camp Weekend, Women's Get Away Weekend and Camping with Seniors.
- 3,527 participants from 40 organizations and 54 groups used camp facilities to hold retreats, trainings, meetings and reunions.
- 1,500 individuals from 36 different groups participated in the Adventure Based Learning Experience (ABLE) program to improve problem-solving leadership and communication skills.
- 40 students from the Livonia School District participated in a specialized program, with students receiving homework help and enjoying fun activities in a safe, caring environment.



Life Issues: Moved by Mercy

"When we let our hearts be moved by God's mercy, it shapes everything," said Timothy Cardinal Dolan of New York in his statement launching the year-long Respect Life Program: Moved by Mercy. Cardinal Dolan is the chair of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The full text of Cardinal Dolan's statement is available along with many other resources at www.usccb.org/respectlife.

As we finish out this Year of Mercy, it's so appropriate to consider being "moved by mercy" in a variety of concerns involving the Consistent Life Ethic. As Cardinal Dolan said in his statement, "From each tiny child waiting to be born, to individuals nearing death, all are precious and deserve our care and protection."

"Women and men suffering after abortion, individuals tempted to end their lives, couples longing to conceive a child, people pushed to the margins of society by a 'throwaway culture', expectant mothers facing challenging pregnancies, and every other person—each 'has a place in God's heart from all eternity,'" Cardinal Dolan said, citing Pope Francis' 2016 apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*).

Cardinal Dolan is referring to the six articles in this year's Respect Life Program, which address each of these situations. The articles address the tragedy of assisted suicide, navigating infertility, facilitating healing after abortion, end of life care, attentiveness to God's creation, and supporting birthmothers.

Project Rachel has been facilitating healing after abortion in the Diocese of Rochester for 20 years now, thanks in large part to Fr. Jim Hewes, who passionately led this ministry for 18 years. The dedicated and growing mem-



bers of the Project Rachel Team work to help women and men, regardless of their religious affiliation, find the peace available to them through the gift of mercy. We are blessed to be developing a new model of ministry with the help of a wonderful couple with marketing expertise. This will expand our outreach tremendously so we can reach many more women and men in need of God's mercy.

To explore ways to be a part of this rewarding ministry, email Project Rachel Coordinator Deacon Dave Snyder at dsnyder@dor.org. You can also call Suzanne Stack, Life Issues Coordinator, at 585-328-3210 x1304.

To explore the help available through Project Rachel here in the Diocese of Rochester, confidential contact is available at **888-9-RACHEL (888-972-2435)** return2peace@rachelroc.org www.hopeafterabortion.org.

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Catholic Charities urges support of the Catholic Courier Christmas Appeal through which much needed funds are made available for emergency assistance at Catholic Charities agencies.

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THE GOOD NEWS

CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

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