

THE GOOD NEWS

WINTER 2015

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



Christmas Hope: In Advent and Throughout the Year

In his Christmas letter to the Diocese, our Bishop, the Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano wrote:

“The Christmas season provides an excellent opportunity for us, like Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and Magi, to strengthen, to renew, to embrace and to proclaim our faith.”

For us at Catholic Charities, the Christmas season is a time to renew and strengthen our resolve to respond to Jesus’ call to love our neighbor – to provide “Help that works. Hope that lasts!” We do so not only in this Christmas season, but throughout the year.

This issue of the Good News focuses both on special activities which some of our agencies undertake in the Christmas season but also on work that our agencies do throughout the year.

Both our Christmas season activities and our work throughout the year are supported not only by individual agency fund-raising activities, but also, very importantly, by the *Catholic Courier*/Catholic Charities Christmas Appeal, which this month marks its 45th annual campaign. Proceeds of the annual appeal are distributed to the emergency funds of various Catholic Charities offices and affiliate agencies throughout the Diocese. The appeal provides a way for people to put their faith in action, noted Jack Balinsky, Diocesan Director of Catholic Charities.

“We have a Gospel call to help our neighbors,” Balinsky said. “This appeal is a way we can respond to this call. I am very grateful to the *Catholic Courier* for supporting us in this important way over so many years.”



Catholic Courier and Catholic Charities Christmas Appeal

A cooperative effort to
assist people in short-term
financial crisis.

Any financial help you
can offer can be sent to
Christmas Appeal
P.O. Box 24379
Rochester, NY 14624-0379



“To love God and neighbor is not something abstract, but profoundly concrete: it means seeing in every person the face of the Lord to be served, to serve him concretely. And you are, dear brothers and sisters, the face of Jesus.” — Pope Francis

In the Christmas Season ... and Throughout the Year



Catholic Family Center

Each year at the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, Catholic Family Center's clients are blessed by the generosity of so many 'angels' in the community. Here are just a few examples of the many ways caring people make the holidays special for the people CFC serves:

- The **Kiwanis Club of Irondequoit** prepares and delivers Thanksgiving meals for to approximately 200 CFC clients;
- A Housing Services staff member connected her church to the Refugee Resettlement program and they will prepare Thanksgiving baskets for 18 refugee families with a total of 77 people;
- Aging and Adult Services arranges for gifts for their elder and vulnerable adult clients through "Project 3 Wishes" (an individual lady who recruits volunteers to purchase gifts for the clients) and utilizes CFC's holiday vouchers for adults that don't have family and/or have limited income. They also participate with Children, Youth and Family Services in the giving tree at **St. Mary's Church Downtown**;

Catholic Charities of Livingston County

Catholic Charities of Livingston County is again this year carrying out its Christmas program. Many local parishes, businesses, and organizations such as **Kiwanis**, **Rotary**, and other civic groups that have participated in the past, have signed up again this year to collect and donate new gifts and food to its neighbors most in need. **St. Patrick's Church** in Mt. Morris and **St. Anne's Church** in Rochester also hang gift tags on their giving trees in their parishes each year and gifts donated by parishioners are distributed to families in the Christmas Program. **Foodlink** has also granted Catholic Charities of Livingston County 40 Thanksgiving food baskets and 40 Christmas food baskets. The homeless families living in each of the agency's two emergency housing units over Christmas will receive assistance with gifts and food from the **Dansville Methodist Church** and other local groups. In 2013, the **Christmas Program** served close to 300 individuals in Livingston County.



Catholic Charities Community Services

Catholic Charities Community Services gratefully accepted a donation of 120 turkeys from **Woodcliff Hotel and Spa**. Turkeys were distributed to families who received services from the agency in time for Thanksgiving.

Thanks to staff, volunteers, CCCS Board members and corporations, just over 1,000 individuals who are served by CCCS will have a brighter Holiday.

Catholic Charities Community Services **Christmas Giving Project** delivers gifts to clients and their families who do not have resources to put anything under the tree at Christmas time. The **Christmas Giving Project** answers clients' wishes and provides a special doll, a basketball or even a new pair of warm socks. The agency is fortunate to have partners like **Slinx**, **Kodak**, **LaBella Associates**, **KAFI Insurance**, **Ciccarelli Advisory Services**, **Home Instead Senior Care**, **Pyramid Brokerage Company**, **RDC Drug**, **Greece Jazzercise**, and many **local parishes, community groups, and families** who help brighten clients Christmas morning and to let them know that someone cares about them. As the gifts pile up from generous donors, the scene becomes an example of people's generosity toward the poor. The gifts brighten futures, calm fears, and make people's lives more manageable. It is the reason for the season.



Catholic Charities of Chemung/Schuylar Counties

The agency's **Christmas Sponsorship Initiative** targets families who do not receive or qualify for other forms of assistance, as well as individuals who are making significant attempts to support themselves, e.g. the under-employed. Based upon the needs of an individual family, donors provide needed household items, which are then delivered to recipients, usually when children are not home. This is a wonderful experience for parents, as "Santa" may have never visited the home before. Last year, Catholic Charities was able to sponsor 25 families, sharing the gift of hope with 52 children and 42 adults.

Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes

Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes is the happy beneficiary of a local family's efforts to respond to the needs of their neighbors. In 2010, the Smith Family, including siblings Hannah, Louis and Jacob, put their heads together to think of a way to help people in their community. The children, students at **St. Francis-St. Stephen School** in Geneva came up with the **Gloves for Love** campaign, an initiative that seeks to gather new, donated gloves and hats and distribute them to people across the community. In that first year the family collected more than 217 sets of gloves and hats. More than 350 pairs were collected in the second year. Through outreach to their classmates, their parish, friends and family, the project has continued to grow. For Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes, the donation of gloves and hats is a welcome addition to holiday efforts. The contributions come just before Christmas, a time when requests for assistance are many. Families can pick sets of gloves and hats for their children as gifts, or for themselves as a means of keeping warm. In addition to distribution at the agency's offices, hats and gloves are distributed at the **Geneva Community Lunch Program** to guests who come for meals on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Receiving new



gloves and hats is a gesture that is greatly appreciated by lunch program guests. And the volunteers who prepare and serve holiday meals continue to express their admiration that the effort has been spearheaded by young children. For Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes, the Smith family and their **Gloves for Love** campaign really has become a holiday tradition that is a sure sign of the giving spirit of Christmas.

Food Bank of the Southern Tier

The Food Bank of the Southern Tier announced a new holiday themed 5K run / walk event to be held before the start of the 40th Annual Sparkle event in Corning's Gaffer District on Saturday, December 6th. The **Selfless Elf 5K presented by Wegmans** was run in conjunction with the 40th Annual Sparkle.

"In promoting the run, the goal is to attract all types of runners and walkers to participate," said Natasha Thompson, President & CEO of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier. "We're encouraging runners and walkers of all ages to turn out wearing festive holiday-themed outfits. Our hope is that we can get the community together for a fun event while raising awareness about the important issue of child hunger."

Proceeds from the event will help support the Food Bank's **BackPack Program™**. More than 38,000 children across the Southern Tier are eligible to participate in free or reduced price school meal programs. Many of these children don't have access to adequate nutrition over weekend and holiday breaks when school is not in session. The **BackPack Program™** provides a pack of healthy, child-friendly, and easy to prepare foods to children in need each Friday. In the 2014 - 2015 school year, the Food Bank's **BackPack Program™** will operate in 41 school districts across the Southern Tier; delivering packs of food to more than 2,500 students each week.

Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga Counties

The Tioga Outreach Center of Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga Counties, located in Nichols, again this year continued its Thanksgiving/Christmas traditions. Thanksgiving Baskets were provided to low-moderate income families of three or more. Christmas toy baskets were made available to families with children ages infant to 12 years. In Tompkins County, Catholic Charities continued its collaborative effort **Share the Warmth** with the **Ithaca Rotary** to help insure that people have warm outer wear for the winter.

While the Christmas season activities described in this newsletter are just a small part of the activities of these agencies and while our other agencies also engage in activities, we share here ongoing efforts of other agencies who provided help and hope throughout the year

Catholic Charities of Livingston County

Highlights on ongoing activities of Catholic Charities of Livingston County include:

- So far this year, 25,000 individuals with an urgent need have received assistance. Types of assistance have included provision of a warm coat, computer assistance, phone call for referral and more.
- The **Help* Works Emergency Services** program has assisted 3,728 people to date with rent, security deposit, utility bill and budget counseling.
- Twenty-four families participated in the **Emergency Housing** program and all were successfully placed in permanent housing.
- Fifty-one women participated in parenting classes offered by the **Community of Caring** program while in the Livingston County Jail.
- The **Food Pantry** and **Clothing Cupboard** program has served 2,868 residents so far this year.
- Through the **Hope Youth Mentoring Program**, 48 youth-at-risk were matched with a mentor, while 50 children remain on the waiting list.
- Through the **Employment Program**, 108 clients have obtained employment. CCLC employment counselors partner with staff from the County Social Services and Workforce Development office.



Catholic Charities of Steuben County

Catholic Charities of Steuben has partnered with **ProAction of Steuben and Yates, Inc.** to bring poverty simulations to groups and organizations in Steuben County.

A Poverty Simulation is a realistic portrayal of living in a low income household for one month. Participants are assigned roles in households that have been based on real families receiving services from community action agencies. It is important to note that these sample families do not represent the poorest households that are precariously on the edge—they might get to the end of the month having fulfilled every obligation or they may come up short.

During the simulation, family members will go through four "weeks" broken into four, fifteen minute blocks of time during which they interact in a simulated community which includes a

grocery store, bank, utilities company, mortgage/rent collector, pawn shop, employer, school, social services office, community action agency and more. Participants face the challenges that millions of Americans face as they attempt to keep their home safe, the utilities on, their medications current, their kids in school and fed.

At the end of the simulation, participants are invited to share their experiences. Did they make ends meet financially? If not, what were the consequences? Perhaps they were evicted or lost custody of their children. Did they experience something they'd never thought about before? How did they feel as the "month" progressed?

Participating in the Poverty Simulation affords a deeper understanding of what it is like to live in a typical low income household. It provides insight into issues that may arise at work, at your child's school or with their peers, in the faith based congregation to which you belong, at the grocery store, and in our community in general.

Insight gained by participating in the poverty simulation lends understanding as to why those in poverty make the choices they make, and will assist participants in responding to these choices effectively.



Catholic Charities of Wayne County

Highlights of ongoing activities of Catholic Charities of Wayne County include:

- At its 10th anniversary celebration in September, the agency honored Father Peter Clifford and Father Jim Hewes as founding Catholic *motivators* of its agency.
- Through the **College Bound** program, the agency is working with 200 high school seniors to facilitate their acceptance into college.
- **La Casa**, a transitional housing program, serves as the hub of the agency's ministry to farmworkers and their families in the northern part of the county.
- At the **Wolcott Community Clothing Center**, over 200 backpacks were distributed to school-age children in August, and once again, the Center is in partnership with **Radio WACK-1420** and **Herb Phillipson's** in Newark along with **Fidelis Care of New York** to distribute new and gently used coats.
- The **Early Intervention, PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision)** and **General Counseling** programs continue to be staples of the agency's activities.
- The **Mobile Food Pantry** program has been instituted in cooperation with **Newark Rotary**, distributes food to 200 families each month.

continued on page 4

Our Affiliates

continued from page 3

Camp Stella Maris



Did you know that Camp Stella Maris serves our community year-round? Beginning at the conclusion of Summer Camp in late August, CSM offers a wide variety of services to individuals, groups and agencies throughout the year. The Adventure Based Learning Experience (ABLE) program provides excellent team-building opportunities for schools, faith groups, families, and corporate teams. Many organizations choose to use the beautiful facilities at Camp for their retreats and meetings. CSM also serves hundreds of youth with weekend camps and our School Age Program.

Providence Housing

Providence achieved another milestone this fall when Director of Asset Management Helen Bianchi achieved her Broker's License, positioning Providence to engage in third-party management opportunities. Providence will take over management of Eastgate Apartments in Corning in January. We are saddened by the resignation of Executive Director John McDermott after eighteen months of outstanding service, as he seeks to return to the private sector. CFO Cathy Vail has been appointed Interim Executive Director as the Board begins a Search Process for a permanent Executive Director. Board Member Mark Greisberger has become the point person for project development on a volunteer basis.



John McDermott

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Upcoming Life Issues Events

March for Life and Diocesan Mass for Life

Bishop Matano will again be joining hundreds of people from the Diocese of Rochester at the 41st annual March for Life in Washington, DC on January 22. For details to join in, go to www.dor.org.

Bishop Matano will also be celebrating a Mass for Life

on Sunday, January 18, 2 PM at Sacred Heart Cathedral in support of all human life, especially the unborn. A reception will follow Mass, hosted by the Knights of Columbus. All are welcome.

Public Policy Weekend February 7-8

Parishes throughout the diocese will be petitioning NYS legislators to pass the 9 points of the Women's Equality Act that truly benefit women and reject the 10th point expanding abortion provisions.

For more information on any of these events, contact Suzanne Stack, Life Issues Coordinator at 585-328-3210 x1304 or ssack@dor.org.

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