

THE GOOD NEWS

WINTER 2014

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



Bountiful capital campaign expands Food Bank's ability to serve

In 2009, with the nationwide economy in meltdown and unemployment rising, the Food Bank of the Southern Tier found itself starving for space.

Demand for healthy food was growing in the agency's six-county service area, where one in every seven people lives below the poverty line. The Food Bank was doing its best, distributing more than four million pounds of food a year and developing creative programs to feed and educate the hungry. But its walls were bulging and there was much more to do.

As is so often the case when good people pray for good things, good things started happening.

First came the opportunity to

purchase a building that would more than quadruple available floor space and provide the agency's first freezer and a much larger cooler. The building belonged to one of the Food Bank's most generous donors, John Potter, owner of Seneca Beverage Corp., who granted the Food Bank the right of first refusal on the property.

The Food Bank's board did its due diligence and determined that the building would definitely provide the needed capacity. But it had to be purchased and modified, and that would require money.

Thus, the "Strengthening the Root of Local Hunger Relief" capital campaign was born, with a goal of \$5.75 million.

More prayers, more answers

The campaign got off to a strong start. A \$500,000 gift from the Corning Foundation sparked its first phase. Despite the economic woes of the time, other kind and caring donors, including Seneca Beverage, the Wegman Family Foundation, and 150 individuals (including every Food Bank employee), corporations and foundations, contributed more than \$4 million to meet the first-phase goal.

In February, 2011, the Food Bank moved into its new operations center and the bounty for needy



Three mobile food pantries travel thousands of miles annually, distributing healthy food throughout six Southern Tier counties.

families began to grow.

While the campaign's next phase generated contributions to fuel the expansion, the Food Bank continued to innovate, expanding the scope of the Mobile Food Pantry program, nearly doubling the number of children and school districts benefitting from the Backpack program, and tripling the reach of its Hunger Education program.

Even more important, the agency has now been able to expand its annual food distribution to needy families from seven million to nine million pounds a year.

And there's more. According to Food Bank president and CEO Natasha Thompson, the new facility has already enhanced the agency's

response to emergency situations.

"When floodwaters rose in Broome and Tioga counties in 2011, we were able to provide 450,000 pounds of food, cleaning materials, and other urgently needed items with an efficiency that either wouldn't have been possible in our old building or that would have interrupted day-to-day operations," Thompson said.

"The campaign also gave me the opportunity to sit with donors, often for the first time, and to share our vision. Everyone was on board with this project and campaign. Once they heard about how much we can do given the appropriate resources, it didn't take much convincing."



Volunteer Ann Wilcox prepares some of the nine million pounds of food the Food Bank distributes annually.

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Good news from around the diocese



Catholic Charities Community Services

Catholic Charities Community Services hosts its third annual Breakfast with Friends on Friday, March 7, at Irondequoit Country Club in Rochester. At this free event, clients share heartfelt stories about the positive impact the agency has had on their lives. Jeanne White-Ginder, mother of the late Ryan White, will be the special guest speaker. Ryan White, who died at age 18 in 1990, was infected with HIV at 13 by a contaminated blood treatment for hemophilia. Through lobbying and public appearances during his short life, he helped change the public perception of HIV and AIDS. His mother, now a spokesperson and educator for AIDS-related-issues, will discuss the past, present, and future of HIV/AIDS.

Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes

The new coordinator of Catholic Charities of the Geneva Community Lunch Program needs no introduction locally. He's former Geneva mayor Stu Einstein, who also brings to the role experiences gained from a lengthy career with International Paper as well as distinguished service in the U.S. Army.

As mayor, Stu was instrumental in developing the Office of Neighborhood Initiatives, which remains a strong community partner with Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes and other community service providers. He is also executive director of Success for Geneva's Children, a not-for-profit focused on issues that impact Geneva's young children and families. Needless to say, he's using his familiarity with the city and the agency's partners to help bolster the impact and efficiency of the Community Lunch Program.

Catholic Charities of Livingston County

Moving from dependency on public funds to employment independence has become easier in the county because of the agency's Employment initiative. In its first year, the program has provided job-skills assistance to 300 individuals, 85 of whom landed some kind of meaningful work. Funded by a grant from the Department of Social Services, Livingston County Catholic Charities works with the county Office of Workforce Development to provide the job skills necessary to succeed in today's workforce. Sometimes, skills-development involves not only training programs, but volunteer work at thrift stores, animal shelters, and other places where the skills required to find and keep jobs are honed under the watchful eye of employment experts. The program is designed to remove all barriers to employment, including language difficulties for immigrant individuals and families.



Catholic Charities of Steuben County

Steuben Council on Addictions (Steuben Prevention Coalition) will receive \$125,000 in Drug-Free Community (DFC) grant funds to involve and engage their local community in preventing substance use among youth. The DFC Program provides grants of up to \$625,000 over five years to community coalitions that facilitate citizen participation in local drug prevention efforts. In addition, the staff of the agency's Healthy Families Steuben was honored by the Steuben Rural Health Network with the 2013 Distinguished Award in Human Services. According to Kelli Mannon, Steuben Rural Health Network Director, "Healthy Families' hard work and dedication to the families of Steuben County has not gone unnoticed. Each and every day you impact the life of a child, a mother, a family. You have persevered through trying times and still exceeded all expectations. Thank you for making a difference in our community. Thank you for your passion, commitment and willingness to serve without falter."

Catholic Charities of Wayne County

You might say the activity at the Wolcott Clothing Center has been extra large. In just a few weeks in December, generous neighbors donated 100 winter coats in response to a campaign assisted by WACK Radio and "Herb" Philipson's Outfitters for the Great Outdoors store in Newark. All coats went very quickly to help keep local men, women, and children warm this winter.

The December results were consistent with the evidence of growing need for donated clothing in Wayne County. Recently, the Wolcott center added a section for infants and children. Thanks to Jill Lee and a dedicated, ecumenical group of volunteers from all over the county, the center is open on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and on Wednesday evenings from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga Counties

The Southern Tier might be a great place to live most of the time, but when floods hit, they generally hit hard, sometimes leaving residents with little more than the clothes on their backs. That's when Catholic Charities shows its true colors, helping residents restore their lives. Last year, in response to flooding caused by hurricanes Irene and Lee in 2011, the Tompkins/Tioga office channeled to victims nearly \$200,000 raised from a diocesan-wide second collection in household items, furnishings and clothing; transportation assistance; housing support; utility and medical assistance; and rebuilding materials and labor. This assistance has proven particularly valuable to elderly individuals who live alone, including a 77-year-old Tioga County man whose family homestead endured 11 feet of floodwater and was rebuilt like new; and a 90-year-old WWII veteran whose mobile home was completely restored after a flood.



Catholic Charities of Chemung/Schuyler Counties

In Schuyler and Yates counties, the RSVP program is actively assisting residents with essential services. RSVP (Retired Seniors Volunteer Program) pairs more than 325 over-55 volunteers with people who need services ranging from tax-preparation assistance for the elderly to reading services. RSVP volunteer drivers provide transportation services for the Office for the Aging, and for the departments of Social Services and Veterans' Affairs. RSVP volunteers also assist at food pantries and donate their time at dozens of non-profit agencies. In any given year, it's not unusual for annual donated services to surpass 40,000 hours in volunteer time and a million dollars' worth of services rendered.

Catholic Family Center

Marlene Bessette's assuming the leadership position (see story on page 3) was not the agency's only exciting news. In response to the 2013 "Heart" fundraising campaign, hundreds of donors opened their hearts, contributing \$132,000 in December alone! Overall, the agency captured \$820,000 in philanthropic contributions in 2013.

Providence Housing

Between November and February, more comfortable, affordable housing became available in Rochester, thanks to Providence Housing and its network of funding and support organizations. The former campus of Holy Rosary on Lexington Ave. was transformed from a single house of worship into an entire, welcoming community, with the school, rectory and convent converted to 35 affordable apartments; and the church redeveloped into St. Mary's Place refugee center. In addition, 25 single-family homes, each averaging 1500 square feet, were built in the neighborhood.

Across town on Joseph Avenue, the new Son House Apartments--named after the famous blues singer--were opened in February on what used to be a troublesome vacant lot. The 21 one-bedroom apartments provide affordable housing specifically for homeless individuals.

Camp Stella Maris

For many of us, Camp Stella Maris conjures up youthful memories of great fun on hot summer days. But in the past decade, the camp has taken on a new sense of importance to a wide range of audiences. While traditional summer programs continue to thrive, Stella Maris now offers year-round programs such as counselor and leadership training and programs for school-age kids as well as getaways for adults, either with their kids or without them. The camp also partners with parishes and agencies to create programs for children facing special challenges, from insecure housing to poverty to tragedy and crisis. For more information on the new Camp Stella Maris, please refer to www.campstellamaris.org.

A Letter from Bishop Matano



While spending long days settling in to his new duties in January, new Rochester Bishop Salvatore Matano graciously accepted our request to reflect on the role of Catholic Charities in the diocese. The following letter is the result. We sincerely thank him for his generosity of time and spirit.

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Since my arrival in the Diocese of Rochester I have had the opportunity to meet many wonderful people in our parishes, schools and apostolates, among them those who comprise the vast network of Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Rochester. I truly am impressed by the number of people served through the many ministries of Catholic Charities, which annually touches the lives of 250,000 persons through its nine divisions and two affiliates. Almost every area of life is enhanced through Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Rochester.

Throughout the pages of Holy Scripture we read of Jesus constantly ministering to the needs of those whom others had forgotten. He healed the sick, made the deaf to hear, to those without speech He gave the gift of being able to praise God, He raised up the crippled and restored sight to the blind. Through these miraculous cures, Jesus was laying the foundation for the second great commandment: "to love our neighbor;" which rests upon the first great commandment, "to love God," as Jesus so loved His Heavenly Father.

This concern for our brothers and sisters in the family of God through Catholic Charities is greatly aided by the over 200 active volunteers who serve on the Boards of Catholic Charities agencies. When I was informed of this large number, I was deeply grateful that these volunteers so zealously have taken up the mandate of the New Evangelization proposed by Blessed John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and now Pope Francis. To bring the presence of Jesus by lifting up the poor and the suffering, through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, by living the Beatitudes is to put into practice the message of the New Evangelization and to live out our Baptismal commitment to follow Christ.

On the evening of January 16, 2014, I was pleased to meet many of our supporters at an event honoring Mrs. Marlene Bessette as the new President and CEO of the Catholic Family Center, the Catholic Charities division serving Monroe County. Mrs. Bessette has placed her many talents and gifts at the disposal of the Church in order to serve families who struggle in so many ways, single parents who have no one to whom they can turn, those families suffering from poverty, families that are part of our family, God's family.

The following afternoon, January 17, 2014, I met with our State legislative delegation at the annual Bishop's Legislative Luncheon, where emphasis was placed upon the dignity of the human person and addressing cooperatively the Community Foundation's report on poverty, particularly in the city of Rochester. I was able to comment that this concern

has been and will continue to be an ongoing priority of Catholic Charities. All of us are able to understand that poverty destroys incentive, reduces one's self image and ultimately causes one to lose hope, especially when there appear to be no options for improvement.

On Sunday, January 19, 2014, I celebrated Holy Mass at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart on the occasion of the World Day for Refugees and Migrants called for by Pope Francis. It was a truly moving and inspiring celebration to witness the faith of our brothers and sisters from other countries, who have come to these shores to build a new life. Some have so very little, but they all do possess two great treasures: love for God and love for their families. They add so much to the religious and cultural landscape of our Diocese. They have dealt with challenges and hardships, and yet they remain so very grateful for any help given to them, often through Catholic Charities.

Our parishes also share in the work of Catholic Charities by their own outreach programs and providing direct emergency assistance for heating bills through special donations, as well as supplying food and clothing among other services.

Together with the ongoing efforts of Catholic Charities in Rochester, it is my sincere hope that we can truly witness to the two great commandments by living out our Catholic faith. Faith is what ultimately sustains all our good intentions and makes them realities. The Most Holy Eucharist gives us the strength to go on and never to give up; Christ present in the Eucharist motivates us to "become the One we have received," as Saint Augustine says so beautifully.

Thank you, my sisters and brothers in the Lord, for all that you do to support Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Rochester. I also offer particular words of gratitude to Mr. Jack Balinsky and the directors and staff of Catholic Charities agencies who have made their work a true vocation.

Invoking the intercession of our patron, Saint John Fisher, I remain
Devotedly yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
Bishop of Rochester



Marlene Bessette takes charge at Catholic Family Center



A former Xerox executive who fell in love with Catholic Family Center after a charitable assignment there has become our largest agency's president and CEO.

Marlene Bessette began working with CFC in 2012 on a nine-month social-service leave from Xerox, where she had spent 28 years in a variety of increasingly responsible management roles.

While serving, she became so captivated with the agency's mission and the employees' passion around serving the poor and vulnerable of Monroe County that she decided to resign from Xerox for the opportunity to make a difference in the community as CFC's COO.

She held that position since January 2013,

when Diocesan Director Jack Balinsky and the CFC board of directors appointed her to her new position, effective January 1, 2014.

"Not only am I energized by the sense of purpose that working for CFC adds to my life," she said, "but I am excited by the possibilities of an agency with such incredible people and a phenomenal legacy of service to the poor and most vulnerable."

"CFC has the widest breadth of behavioral health and human services in Monroe County and is uniquely positioned to be a powerful change agent in the battle against systemic drivers of poverty. With a focus on teamwork and process improvement, I believe that the whole of CFC will become greater than the sum of its parts."

Bessette has been widely recognized for her leadership excellence. She received the Xerox President's Award in 1995, Rochester Business

Journal's "40 Under 40 Award" in 1998, and the Positive Difference Award from the Xerox Women's Alliance in 2009. She has also actively volunteered for various organizations, including Pathway Houses of Rochester, the Women's Alliance at Xerox and the Church of the Transfiguration in Pittsford.

"I am impressed with Marlene's extraordinary capabilities and am confident she will carry on the tradition of excellent leadership at CFC," said Jack Balinsky.

"We are blessed by Marlene's decision to utilize her considerable skills and significant management expertise gained at Xerox to lead CFC into the future," said P.J. Guisto, chair of CFC's Board of Directors.

Bessette lives in Pittsford, NY with her husband, Eric. They have two children, André (AJ), 25, who lives in Richmond, VA; and Danielle, 21, who attends the University of Rochester.

Life Issues office expands services for pregnant women

Diocesan Life Issues Coordinator Jann Armantrout is convinced that there's growing concern in New York State about actions that threaten the lives of unborn children.

"We're living in a generation of ultrasound services," she said, "which indicates a growing awareness that life begins at conception."

That, plus the New York Legislature's refusal to pass a bill last spring that would have expanded abortion in the state, indicate to Armantrout that "people are now wondering how well we're ministering to women and what we can do to help them carry pregnancy to term."

The Life Issues office is doing more than its part, supporting pregnancy-care centers throughout Monroe County as well as in Elmira, Newark, Ithaca, Sodus, and Elmira with ultrasound machines funded by the Knights of Columbus. All centers are staffed by at least one paid staff member and many committed volunteers.



"Women who see ultrasounds of their (unborn) children in the presence of those who support life and who realize that there are services to support them physically, emotionally, and spiritually are much less prone to abortion," Armantrout said.

The office has also established a toll-free telephone number (855-755-5935) that women can call for quick access to counseling and to make an appointment at a local pregnancy center. Since mid-September, the number has led to help for 25 women who otherwise may have made another choice.

"We also step in to help in crisis situations," Armantrout said, citing an instance last Labor Day when infant formula was in short supply.

"The WIC (Women, Infants, Children) Program makes funds available for formula, but sometimes those funds run out or are misused," she said. "Baby formula is sometimes used to 'cut' illegal hard drugs rather than to nourish infants."

The office helped ease the crisis by drop-shipping formula to all the pregnancy-care centers, an initiative funded by the Pledge for Life program.

But current services are only the beginning, according to Armantrout. To help stem the pregnancy problem, there's also a growing need for education.

"We'd like to expand services that will increase women's sense of self-worth and teach parenting and family-life skills," she said. "Underlying most difficulties with problem pregnancy is poor understanding of the meaning and purpose of sexual expression. We'd like to do more to help young people understand the value and the wisdom of expressing sexuality within marriage."



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there's a way to help
Catholic Charities.**

**Planned gifts
help ensure that
Catholic Charities
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continue to assist
more than 250,000
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