

CC Works

Volume 11 Number 1

A Catholic Charities Quarterly Committed To Active Witness

Sister Maureen's Message



This Winter Issue of *CC Works* is dedicated to our donors and our supporters. Catholic Charities has been the beneficiary of your generosity throughout the year. We could not fulfill the mission of Catholic Charities and operate our programs if it were not for your partnership.

With gas and oil prices over \$3.00 per gallon, people are just scraping by and it's more critical than ever to continue to help those people who become lost in the shuffle of everyday life. It is our mission to recognize human need at all stages of life and to respond to all persons regardless of race, creed or lifestyle, with special emphasis on the economically poor and vulnerable. We remember the ones less fortunate and put a face and give a voice to those who have been marginalized and forgotten. These are the people that you, the donors, may not see, but who are the recipients of your generosity.

While it is just weeks since Christmas and while we are already in the season of Lent, we look back to 2007 with gratitude and pride for your generosity and your trust in Catholic Charities as we serve those who call upon us each day.

Sister Maureen Joyce, RSM
Chief Executive Officer,
Catholic Charities, the Diocese of Albany

Disabilities Services moves to new location

Catholic Charities Disabilities Services continues to grow and expand the services it offers to people with developmental disabilities and their families. In order to better serve them, a larger office was required. The new location is 1 Park Place, Suite 200, Albany, NY 12205.

On Nov. 6, the new offices were officially opened. A ceremony was held, with Bishop Howard J. Hubbard offering the dedication and blessing. Participating were Sr. Maureen Joyce, town officials and members of the Disabilities Services Board of Directors, who performed the ribbon cutting.

Catholic Charities Disabilities Services continues to be one of the largest providers in the region for people with developmental disabilities, autism and Prader-Willi Syndrome. The office provides independent service coordination and in-home supports in the community.

For further information on services and how they may help you or a loved one with a developmental disability, call 518-783-1111 or visit www.CCDServices.org.

By Betts Montenaro



Cutting the ribbon at the Disabilities Open House, from left, Sister Maureen Joyce; Bill Picotte; Mary Brizzel, former Town of Colonie supervisor; Bishop Howard Hubbard; Patricia Hernandez, Disabilities board member; Harry Hotaling, of Conly Associates, the real estate company that helped Disabilities to find and secure the site

Christmas Store mission enables clients

John Murray

John Murray was elected president of the Catholic Charities Board of Trustees in 2006. John is inspired by the quality and dedication of other Board members, and by the leadership of Bishop Howard J. Hubbard and Sister Maureen Joyce.

He speaks proudly of the mission and how that mission is implemented and clearly articulated. This clarity of purpose makes it easy to understand the objectives of Catholic Charities and to identify with them. He sees his service on the Board as an opportunity to give back, using his business skills to benefit both the human services component and the not-for-profit activities of Catholic Charities.

He would like to see the message and work of Catholic Charities become better known and recognized in the community. He feels it is important to get out the message that, although Catholic Charities provides for the needy in the Catholic community, the largest number of those who benefit from its services are non-Catholics and non-Christians.

While the mission is supported by the public and private sectors, some frustrations continue to delay the work of Catholic Charities and the services it is able to offer.

John has great hopes and expectations for Catholic Charities as it moves into the future. He would like to see government continue to recognize the quality and cost-effectiveness of the services provided by Catholic Charities, and support those services by adequate funding. He also has great faith in young people. They appreciate the mission of Catholic Charities and are willing to invest themselves as volunteers.

He is constantly inspired by the commitment of the other Board members, as well. They are dedicated and give generously of their time, expertise and resources.

John is proud of the pursuit of excellence and the service that is given by Catholic Charities throughout the 14 counties of the Diocese. **By Sister Nola Brunner**

The Catholic Charities "Christmas Store" was created in 2007 to serve clients who reside in the Albany area. By working directly with local food pantries, Charities' staff devised a system to aid eligible residents. The store was located at the former St. James School in Albany, which simultaneously was being reconstructed into a Brighter Choice Charter School.

The mission of the Christmas Store was to enable clients to shop for unwrapped gifts for their children. Parents received a stocking stuffer, stuffed animal, age-appropriate toy and book, Beanie Baby, set of markers, large clothing item (e.g. coat, fleece or snow pants), small clothing item (e.g. gloves, scarf or socks), Christmas ornament or decoration, fleece blanket, and a game for the family to share.

The Christmas Store was made known through a mass mailing of brochures to local churches, businesses, schools, youth groups and Catholic Charities donors. Their response was overwhelming. Gifts of money, clothing, toys, decorations and games poured in. The kindness of volunteers wanting to participate was heartwarming.

Volunteers from a variety of parishes, schools and businesses within Albany County worked side by side with Catholic Charities staff to make the program a reality. Donations also came from such groups as Albany Medical College, St. Joseph's Parish, Christ the King Parish, Toys for Tots, Kohl's Department Store of Clifton Park, St. Pius X Parish and School, and many individual donors. Lunch donations were provided by Ragonese Italian Imports, The Orchard Tavern and My Favorite Caterer.

Catholic Charities employees — Tamaé Memole, associate executive director of Community-Based Services; Shannon Kelly, program coordinator of Emergency Assistance; and Kim Morawski, administrative specialist — spent a considerable amount of time during the weeks prior to the store opening and during its operation to make sure families in need were able to have Christmas in their homes. The store was open December 17-21, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with two evening shifts until 7:30 p.m.

Volunteers were divided into two teams: client in-takers and shoppers. The former met with the clients to go over documentation and to fill out paperwork. Shoppers helped the parents choose unwrapped gifts for their children and guided them through the process. During down-time between client appointments, volunteers sorted donations onto the age-appropriate tables. The volunteers wanted to be a part of the experience and were eager to help in whatever way they could.

Helping to meet the needs of the community was a wonderful way to observe the true spirit of Christmas. One of the positive things about the Christmas Store is that, for many of the clients served, it was their entry into the wrap-around support services offered by Catholic Charities. Through this program, many clients are continuing to receive assistance and moving toward self-sufficiency.

It was a gift for all those involved in the planning and operation of the Christmas Store to know that they had made a difference for someone this Christmas season.

By Sister Nola Brunner & Kim Morawski



'Footprints' mark help for Albany's homeless

Just before Christmas, Catholics from six parishes and two minority apostolates in the Albany Diocese jointly took on a major project with three big goals:

- raising awareness of the problem of homelessness,
- educating people about the meaning of Christmas and
- creating a spirit of community.

The project, *Footprints of Christmas*, was a dinner-theater play that involved the participation of more than 150 people from Sacred Heart Church in Albany, St. Joan of Arc in Menands, the Black Catholic Apostolate, the Vietnamese Apostolate, St. Matthew's in Voorheesville, Christ the King in Westmere, and St. John/St. Ann's and St. James, both in Albany.

The play, which was performed in three locations in November and December, explained the origins of some Christmas customs and fostered an understanding of the meaning of the holy day.

Rev. George Brennan of diocesan Catholic Charities coordinated the project. He explained that it grew out of the desire many parishes have to educate Catholics about the call of the Gospel to be of service to the poor.

"In the course of my ministry to homeless people who are served by Catholic Charities," he said, "I met many parish youth groups who provided meals and holiday gifts, and were eager to do more."

Funds raised through the dinner-theater benefited Lwanga Shelter and Mercy House, two Catholic Charities agencies that aid the homeless in Albany.

Homeless individuals and formerly homeless were actively involved in the project, Father Brennan said. "We wanted this to be a ministry with the homeless, not just for the homeless," he said.

Although they are not identified, each performance included homeless or formerly homeless individuals acting, serving food or volunteering behind the scenes.

In addition, staff members from each of the shelters were involved, as were youth and adults from the sponsoring parishes and apostolates.

Natasha Chang, a member of the Black Catholic Apostolate, welcomed the opportunity to work with others. "This allowed churches and apostolates to come together and work on a project," she said. "I enjoyed working with and getting to know people I wouldn't have ordinarily met. It takes great effort to pull off an event like this."

Father Brennan said, "This was not just a Christmas pageant. There was such a range of emotions. Every aspect of our senses — sight, sound, smell, touch and hearing — was used to proclaim the Christmas message, a message which is meant to touch and transform every aspect of our lives." **By James Breig**



Brother John Bryda participates in the *Footprints of Christmas* program

Grant invests in youth

A one-time-only Albany County grant is about to put new computers at the fingertips of scores of children in Albany's South End.

New Day Art, a Catholic Charities after-school and summer program that served over 100 children last year, is launching its new computer lab as part of a nearly \$10,000 grant under the county's Community Youth Investment initiative.

Another \$20,000 is being used to repair and renovate the Hilltowns Community Resource Center in Westerlo. HCRC is Catholic Charities' service center for Berne, Knox, Westerlo and Rensselaerville residents. The program served nearly 250 children last year, out of a total of over 850 individuals and almost 400 families. The HCRC provides a wide variety of assistance programs that help meet basic needs.

Dr. Jack Simeone, director of Grant Research and Development for Catholic Charities, said, "This grant will provide a warmer, more hospitable environment" to those who visit the center, which is a former two-bedroom house trailer.

Albany County Executive Mike Breslin said, "We are pleased to help New Day Art expand its after-school and summer art and academic enrichment programs to include new computer experience and skills, and to assist in repairing and refurbishing the Hilltowns Community Resource Center that serves so many struggling families and children at risk throughout the Hilltowns."

The two-part grant secured by Catholic Charities came out of \$250,000 committed by the County Executive to fund enhanced services for youth.

New Day Art's new computer lab will include five new computers, a printer and software, and will allow for the establishment of a new and structured computer-aided education program for grade-school and middle school students. **By Ken Goldfarb**

Albany County Executive Mike Breslin, left; Chair of the Albany County Legislature Charles E. Houghtaling, Jr., back; Sister Maureen Joyce, back right; and Sheneka Ford-Stuman, right. See story, right, *Grant invests in youth.*



Reports on the mission

Catholic Charities of Columbia and Greene Counties

- CC of Columbia and Green Counties has a new mission statement and logo.



The mission statement is: *Catholic Charities of Columbia and Greene Counties serves, empowers, and advocates for persons in need, addresses the goals and functions of our current programs and programming for the future.* The new statement and logo speak to the agency's commitment to serving individuals while giving them the skills and abilities to further themselves.

- CC of Columbia and Greene Counties has expanded the Supervised Visitation Program to include a component in Greene County in addition to the current program in Columbia County.
- Staffing updates: Kim Botto is a welcome addition to the agency as the new WIC Coordinator. Deanna Crow will be working with teens at risk of a PINS petition in Greene County. Nicole Percé's experience with teen crisis management and parenting will be a great asset to the Supervised Visitation Program. Pat Osborn retired after 25 years in the WIC program.

Catholic Charities of Delaware and Otsego Counties

- The *Put a Light in the Window Campaign* was used in the agency's Main Street windows in Oneonta to remind the community that at Christmas, as always, there are those among us who have many unmet needs. Individuals and businesses contributed \$100 or more to a special fund, which helped to match a \$3,000 O'Connor Fund challenge grant, providing for the weatherization of our Single Room Adult Housing facilities, serving 27 otherwise homeless adults.

Windows were lit with flickering candles, representing service to and solidarity with the poor and vulnerable. Putting a light in the window for the stranger or the neighbor in need is a gift we continue to give throughout the year.

- CC of Delaware and Otsego Counties thanks Fidelis Care for its generous donation of Holiday Food coupons which were distributed to people being served through our Drug Treatment Court, AIDS Services, Community Maternity Services and SRO Housing programs. The agency looks forward to working with the Fidelis Care staff as it rolls out a new healthcare option for low-income residents in early 2008.

Catholic Charities Disabilities Services

has five employees who are participating in the New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies' (NYSACRA) Disabilities Studies Certificate Program. This is a grant administered by NYSACRA; it is funded through the state departments of Health and Labor. Robby Buckmire and Albertha Columbus, who work as residence counselors, will now be able to take four college classes tuition-free. Carmen Robinson, Krysta Valet and Danuta Al-Abnaki began the college preparation course in January.

Diocesan Housing and Property Management

- Residents of the Bishop Broderick Apartments (one of the 16 communities for seniors managed by DePaul Housing Management) remembered the guests and residents of the Catholic Charities Housing Office during the fall and holiday season.
- Residents of St. Jude Apartments & Branson Manor Senior Apartments, located in Rensselaer County (two more of the 16 communities for seniors managed by DePaul Housing Management), donated more than a dozen boxes of food, candy, gloves hats, personal care items, cards and

books to support the men and women in our military serving in Iraq. Mothers in Action, which operates in Clifton Park, sent the items to our troops.

- The administrative offices staff of Diocesan Housing is blessed with the services of a hard-working woman who does light cleaning of our offices. She is very devoted to her family, including a developmentally disabled son and a daughter who is a single mother. In the late fall, her son was diagnosed with a terminal illness; in December, her daughter was hospitalized for emergency surgery. The staff knows that this woman lives simply and uses her almost all of her income to support her family. So, they wanted to do something nice for her. The staff of 41 and 43 N. Main in Albany donated almost \$500 and took her out for a mini-shopping excursion so she could buy some much needed seasonal clothing (including a warm winter coat) for herself and some gifts for her family.
- The residents and staff of CCHO's DePaul Residence hosted the first Annual Family Christmas Party for the children living in CCHO's Homeless Family Apartment Program. CCHO's staff, led by the family case managers and staff of DePaul Residence, wanted to bring holiday cheer into the lives of the families as well as the residents (several of whom are seniors) of DePaul Residence.

This inaugural event, organized by CCHO but supported by the generous donations of: Staff of the Division of Criminal Justice Services, Maria Pool of African Reflections, Michael Stratton of the College of St. Rose, St. Rose's Office of Academic Media Technology, Lodge's Department Store, long-time family supporter Cathy Toedt (DePaul Housing and McCloskey staff member) and her family (who also served as Santa's Elves during the party), St. Pius X Church in Loudonville, St. Clare's Church in Colonie, St.

Continued on back page.

Key Foundation supports CC's works

Catholic Charities received a combined \$15,000 grant from Key Foundation, a foundation funded by KeyCorp and from KeyBank, to provide philanthropic support to two Catholic Charities programs tailored to Albany city youth — the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) and the New Day Art afterschool program. This funding will help support the operational activities of these projects which have become vital to the existing neighborhood communities of the inner city of Albany, New York.

"As part of Key Bank's role of giving back to the local communities, it is glad to provide support to these two Catholic Charities programs, with an eye to further partnering," said Ellen Sax, Key's Vice President of Community Relations.

"This funding will allow these programs to continue to serve those in need in the neighborhoods where Catholic Charities works on a daily basis," said Sister Maureen Joyce. "It's wonderful when we can partner with a strong community focused partner, like Key Bank, as they strive to help people become more economically self-sufficient."

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany sponsors inner city and rural programs throughout Albany county which are designed to provide youth-development programming on a year-round basis.

CC WORKS

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Christmas in the Hilltowns

Each year, the Hilltown Community Resource Center (HCRC) rents the Helderberg Senior Center in Berne from the Sunday before Thanksgiving to the weekend before Christmas. In this facility, HCRC sets up a Christmas Store, where families can come to "shop" for good-quality, gently used clothing and household items.

HCRC receives most of the items for the store from the Confirmation class's annual clothing drive at St. Pius X Parish in Loudonville. The clothing is delivered to the Senior Center on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. The week following Thanksgiving, volunteers sort clothing by size and gender, and set up the store. The week after, families come at a scheduled time to pick up the gifts. On the last day, the Christmas Store was open to the public to take any remaining clothing and household items.

In addition to donations from St. Pius, I used my van to transport items that had been dropped off at our office in Westerlo. There were enough items for two trips with the van packed to the roof. As I returned to the office to load up for the second trip, I noticed my gym bag was missing. The efficient crew of volunteers had taken my bag along with donated items and sorted my belongings with the rest of the items! When I returned to the Christmas Store, I spent a bit of time "shopping" to recover all my possessions. Although I appreciated the volunteers providing me with a legitimate excuse not to exercise, I was glad to have my new sneakers back.

The Hilltowns Christmas Program is designed to assist families struggling with economic hardship, which leaves limited resources for providing clothing and gifts for their children during the December holidays. The Christmas Program is a cooperative effort of individuals, families, organizations and businesses interested in helping people in need.

HCRC matches family requests for assistance with individual and organizational sponsors. In 2007, 89 families were sponsored. It provided a joyous Christmas to 204 children and 125 adults. For the 17th year, the Albany County Sheriff's Department partnered with the Hilltowns Community Resource Center to host a party for our families. As a result, 121 children from 47 families enjoyed food, conversation, craft-making and a visit from Santa.

In years past, HCRC coordinated the distribution of the Times Union Fund for the Elderly to its senior citizens. Seventy Hilltown senior citizens were very disappointed when the *Times Union* decided to redirect their holiday fundraising efforts away from the elderly in need to programs for youth. They were going to miss the \$50 check they used to receive from the Times Union fund. HCRC undertook its own fundraising effort and, because of wonderful support from the community, was able to distribute \$50 to each of its senior citizens along with a holiday food basket.

It is truly a blessing to see the generosity of people and the compassion shown to those in need. Strangers help unknown individuals, children help peers, and everyone focuses on others. It's a gift that HCRC witnesses all year long.

By Kathleen Speck, HCRC program coordinator



2007 Volunteers for the Hilltowns Christmas Store

Reports

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Matthew's Church in Voorheesville, Kim and Mike Rowan, the NYS United Teachers, and Mike Holodak of "Mike Made This," whose donations paid for the party food and beverages.

The festivities included a full dinner prepared and served by DePaul Residence's chef, Gerald Graham (special thanks to Gerald for the extraordinary effort and good spirit); our DJ, Brian Mahar, who donated his time and equipment (and who also bore an uncanny resemblance to Santa himself), and transportation and party helpers by CCHO case management team, coordinated by the Family Case Manager, Nadine Scarlett. A good time was had by all!

AIDS Services receives grant

Catholic Charities AIDS Services received a \$5,000 grant from the Community AIDS Partnership of the Capital Region for a Syringe Exchange Development Project. The funding will allow the agency to host community stakeholder meetings and apply for future grant funding in order to develop a program to increase the availability of sterile syringes to drug users in the area, thereby decreasing the risk of HIV transmission in the community.

Catholic Charities and Veterans Stand-Down Day

Stand-Down Day: That term from the U.S. Army refers to a military program that allows soldiers to take a break from the rigors of war, to go a lesser state of readiness, and to be able to enjoy a hot meal, read and write, take a bath, and just relax.

In this case, the Eastern New York Homeless Veterans Coalition, along with an enormous number of volunteers and a huge variety of donors, combine forces on an annual basis to stage a Stand-Down Day for Homeless Veterans that provides, completely free of charge, a wide range of goods and services to help improve the lot of the homeless veterans.

This past October saw the 18th year this program has been in effect. Catholic Charities' main role was to help provide transportation for those from the outlying areas and for handicapped veterans in the region to the Stand-Down Day site, which has been held at the Colonie Elks Lodge on Route 155 in Latham for many years. Among other partners in this effort are the Sam Stratton Veterans Administration Hospital, Seton Health/St. Mary's Hospital of Troy, Empire Vision, and the NYS Division of Military and Naval Affairs.

Word of the event is spread throughout the homeless veteran's community, including where to find locations to board the vans and buses to Stand-Down Day. Quality of Life Transportation Services of Schenectady donates special vans to assist handicapped veterans.

The most recent event attracted 325 men and 25 women veterans, according to Doug Williams, an activist with the Elks and one of the major coordinators of this program since its inception. He said the largest percentage of those who attend are veterans of the Vietnam War. Food is donated and all get to enjoy two hot meals and a brown bag lunch. Francis Mahaney, a Navy vet who coordinates transportation, said, "We don't turn anybody away. We see a lot of happy faces. Many keep coming back year after year, but each year you see a significant group of new faces."

Those attending are encouraged to visit each of 12 stations for a wide variety of screenings, medical exams, testing, other health-related services and even a free haircut.

There's also legal counseling, job placement assistance and housing referrals. Following eye exams, vouchers were given for approximately 100 pairs of new eyeglasses, according to Maureen Toohey, Catholic Charities' coordinator for the Stand-Down Day.

Donated clothing was supplied by the Salvation Army and by U.S. military surplus. In addition, the New York State Elks purchase new underwear and socks for the veterans. Boy Scouts and high school students from Shaker and Burnt Hills volunteer with preparing meals and clothing distribution.

Flu shots and dental exams are offered, as well as HIV screening and counseling. Physicians, dentists and other healthcare providers volunteer their time to offer assistance with a wide range of physical, mental health and substance abuse issues. If medical testing reveals any significant concerns, the Veterans Administration sees that follow-up care is provided.

"We don't want those who defended our country to be forgotten," Ms. Toohey said. **By Ken Goldfarb**