

CC Works

Volume 12 Number 3

A Catholic Charities Quarterly Committed To Active Witness

Sister Maureen's Message



As summer days begin to wane and fall approaches, Catholic Charities looks back at the summer of 2009. The following stories in this issue

will inspire and challenge you.

This summer, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of CC Disabilities Services. It has grown from serving 11 persons in one residence to over 750 individuals in the Capital Region!

We also saw significant grants received by Fulton/Montgomery Counties, Community Maternity Services and Healthy Schenectady Families. These grants will enhance services and improve facilities.

The Refugee Resettlement program continues to grow with volunteers of various faiths welcoming refugees and making a significant difference in their lives.

At Sunnyside Center and Camp Scully there were wonderful opportunities for recreation, arts/and crafts and a myriad of other activities.

We look back on the summer with pride and gratitude, now we must look to the fall with hope and purpose. Many of those to whom we minister will be in need as cold weather approaches with all of its problems. We must lead by our example of service and advocacy on their behalf. Albert Schweitzer put it so well: "Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing."

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

Disabilities Services celebrates a quarter of a century

Other than perhaps a family-owned business, very few organizations could boast of having five original staff members for 25 years. Yet that is exactly what has occurred at Catholic Charities Disabilities Services (CCDS).

On July 24, 2009, CCDS held its annual picnic for employees and their families and combined it with a 25th Anniversary Celebration at The Crossings in Colonie. Among the employees who have remained with CCDS since its founding in 1984 are: Gary C. Siegal, Rita Spearman, Judy Holmes, Lynn Woodhouse and Betts (Brandenburg) Montenaro. Each of these individuals provided a reflection on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary which was featured in the Summer 2005 edition of *CC Works*.

Under the leadership of the late Sister Serena Branson, D.C., Catholic Charities began serving the needs of persons with developmental disabilities in 1984. From its humble beginnings, with 14 persons in one residence, CCDS now provides services for over 750 individuals in 11 counties in the greater Capital Region.

Today, Gary C. Siegal, Executive Director, leads a staff of over 350 employees. CCDS offices have moved a few times over the years and are now settled at One Park Place in Colonie. This office houses the administrative services unit, service coordination, respite services and is a training facility for new employees who serve in residential facilities. Although the 25th Anniversary of CCDS is certainly a milestone, Gary noted that the real celebration is "the joy that comes from being able to continue to serve those who are most vulnerable in our community."

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Catholic Charities Disabilities Services employees pose for a group photo in honor of their 25th anniversary. This photo will be placed in their time capsule to be opened at their 50th anniversary.

Summertime fun at Camp Scully

Mark Morrison

Mark Morrison grew up in the Boston area. He graduated from Siena College in 1981. Mark is a Senior Vice President of Global Treasury Management at Key Bank where he has been for 28 years. Mark and his wife, Mary Bligh, are proud parents of Mark, Jack and Anne.

Mark presently serves on the Catholic Charities Board of Trustees. Initially, he was amazed to learn how widespread the CC network is and the number of people it assists. In his opinion "CC is the best kept secret in the Capital Region." It is a constant challenge to get that message out in a meaningful and effective way.

Mark is impressed by the effort/commitment of CC staff and volunteers who serve the homeless and those in need, regardless of religious affiliation. Especially touching have been his own experiences touring CC housing, and meeting those who are being helped. It is gratifying to know that the time and effort spent makes a difference for so many people.

As a finance committee member, Mark is proud of the improvement in CC's financial reporting over the years. It is due to the integrity, hard work and effort of those who work on the accounting and auditing staffs.

Mark is also proud that the CC Board invites representatives from different CC organizations to provide feedback regarding current issues and future directions of the CC network. It is a valuable opportunity to listen to various viewpoints and encourages evaluation of current programs.

Mark's greatest source of pride however, comes from being part of a Board that is working in concert with a dedicated group of people whose sole purpose is to make life better for others. Mark is an important part of that effort and we are grateful to him for his many years of service.

By Sister Nola Brunner



FROM TOP:

Friends "take the plunge" at camp;

Two friends "bracing" for summer fun;

A Junior Life Guard is ready to help at a moment's notice



Summertime fun at Sunnyside Center

As the sun rises over Sunnyside Center, the only sounds that can be heard are those of chirping birds and buzzing insects. By 7:00 a.m., children start to trickle in and find their place on a swing or atop a see-saw; and within three hours, the air is filled with laughter and the heartening sound of happy children enjoying the sunshine.

Each day, the six groups of 5- through 12-year-olds navigate their way around camp, following a schedule that includes arts and crafts, cooking, computers, recreation, swimming, playground time, lunch, snacks and more. As if the myriad of daily activities was not enough, each Friday brings a special activity when the groups come together for some "All Camp" fun.

Some old favorites from past summers were brought back this year. The annual Scavenger Hunt that the children took part in during the first week of camp as a team-building exercise, a great "get-to-know you" activity, the All-Camp Birthday Party, and the Hawaiian Luau complete with dancing and lip syncing proved to be great fun again this year. The biggest hit of the summer was the Circus Carnival, where children had the opportunity to dunk their counselors in the dunk tank, play carnival games, and enjoy popcorn, cotton candy and snow cones.

New activities included Dr. Seuss Day and the first official Karakus Scott Memorial Blacktop Tournament. Karakus Scott was a counselor in Sunnyside Center's After School and Summer programs for several years. Sadly, Karakus passed away last October. The children named the tournament, which consists of numerous kickball, mat ball and dodge ball games throughout the summer, in his honor. The winner of the tournament was the self named team "Juicy". They received special tee-shirts and were the first team to get their name engraved on the Karakus Scott Memorial Blacktop Tournament plaque which is hanging proudly in our Rainbow Room. The campers also participated in the Literacy Program, a Double Dutch Demonstration by Nannie's Double Dutch and a Valley Cats Baseball Game.

The grand finale was on August 14, the last day of the summer program, when the children participated in the Sunnyside Olympics. There were races, contests and lots of swimming — a fitting way to end a fun-filled summer.



FROM TOP:
An afternoon at the pool; Winners of the Blacktop Tournament; Pretty painted faces

Cash for Clunkers Program puts dent in car donations for Wheels for Work

The Cash for Clunkers program, which began in July and ran through August 24, seemed like it should have been a great idea. The program took vehicles off the road that have seen better days and exchanged them for new vehicles, thus jump starting the American economy by getting consumers into new car show rooms. Unfortunately, the program has put the squeeze on Catholic Charities in general and on consumers who cannot afford to be negatively affected. While some charities take their donated cars and sell them to realize their profit as income, the Wheels for Work program takes donated vehicles, fixes them up and then gives them to persons who would otherwise have no transportation to get to their place of employment.

One of the stipulations of the Cash for Clunkers program is that the vehicles that are traded in cannot be resold and that the engines have to be destroyed so that they are not usable.

This practice is also hurting those people that cannot afford a brand new engine and might have had to purchase a used engine. It is now no longer an option for thousands of vehicles that have been traded-in to the dealer.

Michelle Abel, Program Director for the Wheels for Work Program, said that early in the Cash for Clunkers Program their donations "had been low before the program started, but had pretty much dried up" at a time when it could ill afford to happen. Michelle even put an ad in *The Evangelist*, the Diocesan newspaper, requesting vehicle donations.

Qualified cars under the Wheels for Work program should be 1998 and newer models, under 150,000 miles and able to pass inspection for less than \$1,000. All donated vehicles are considered a charitable contribution and are therefore tax deductible.

For more information please contact Michelle at Wheels for Work at 518-346-3861. **By Ben Patten**

Reports on the mission

Catholic Charities of Herkimer County will hold their 4th annual Window of Hope Award Presentation on Thursday, September 17. The award will be presented to the Very Reverend Anthony M. Barratt, Pastor of the Church of the Annunciation in Ilion and Our Lady Queen of Apostles in Frankfort. The luncheon will take place at Francesca's Banquet Facility in Ilion beginning at noon. The award will honor Fr. Barratt who has done so much to support Catholic Charities and its many programs. For more information call CC Herkimer County at 315-894-9917.

Catholic Charities AIDS Services on October 8, 6:00-9:00 pm, will present the 7th Annual Celebrate the Harvest, at the Albany Country Club in Voorheesville. Hear the soft jazz sounds of Grand Central Station, partake in delicious cuisine and bid on silent auction and raffle items. Call Daniel Hill for tickets or more information at 518-449-3581 Ext. 100.

Catholic Charities of Columbia and Greene Counties

■ CC of Columbia and Green Counties is spearheading a Community Auction on Sunday, October 11 to gather support from other organizations. The idea is to bring together several smaller agencies to make it a bigger event. Non-profit organizations are seeking donations that will be auctioned off and those organizations will receive the full benefit from the sale.

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Grants & Awards

The NYS Department of Health recently announced that Catholic Charities of Fulton & Montgomery Counties will receive one of 16 grants given statewide for Tobacco Control Youth Programs (**Reality Check**). Although we've had this program for several years, the grants were competitive and many programs that provided this service over the years were not refunded. The five-year grant for \$875,000 (\$175,000 per year) will serve Fulton, Montgomery and Hamilton counties.

The NYS Crime Victims Board approved a three-year grant in the amount of \$562,520 (first year will be \$182,135) for Catholic Charities of Fulton & Montgomery Counties **Domestic Violence and Crime Victims**.

CMS secured a legislative member item from Senator Neil Breslin for \$30,000 to upgrade and enhance the playground at the **Little Flower Intergenerational Daycare Center**, and a legislative member item from Assemblyman Ronald Canestrari for \$4,000 for emergency assistance to families served by its Albany-Based **Outreach Services (ABOS) Program**.

CC WORKS

A Catholic Charities quarterly committed to active witness

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Disabilities Services

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Betts Montenaro noted “when I first started with the agency in June of 1984, I had no idea that I would be here 25 years later. It didn’t take long for me to realize that there was nowhere else I would rather be. I have made so many deep and lasting friendships; I have learned things I never dreamed of and I have had the honor of working with people who are dedicated, compassionate and very good at what they do. I am grateful to all who have taught me along the way and I am looking forward to our future. We truly are family!” Those sentiments were echoed by other long term staff members.

Rita Spearman, who has been with the Agency for the last quarter century said, “What an incredible journey, twenty five years later, and I’m still here at Catholic Charities! As I look back over the years it’s still amazing to me how this agency has grown and progressed. It has and continues to be a privilege to be a part of an agency that continues to go above and beyond to provide quality services to individuals and their families.”

On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of Catholic Charities Disabilities Services, Sister Maureen Joyce, RSM, noted that “those who so faithfully serve the developmentally disabled are living out the Gospel message on a daily basis. Gary, Rita, Lynn, Judy and Betts, truly have a vocation in every sense of its meaning. Catholic Charities and those we serve have been blessed by the 25 years of service given by each of these devoted individuals.”

Catholic Charities Disabilities Services will soon be sealing a time capsule, which will be opened on the 50th Anniversary of the agency. The group photo on page one, along with various items of interest submitted by the staff will be put into the capsule. Hopefully, all five original employees will be able to help open the time capsule in 2034.

By Marge Mineau

Refugee Resettlement Program - *an update*

Heart-warming moments are many in Catholic Charities’ new refugee resettlement program: the happy reunion of three brothers separated for a few months as they each separately left Egypt for the United States; the awe on the faces of Iraqis discovering the beauty of the Adirondacks for the first time; the delight of a woman picking out donated fabric from which she could make gifts for others.

Such stories continue to build as more refugees arrive in the Albany area and are paired with volunteer groups from churches and mosques who prepare for them and offer them American hospitality.

Since early March, when the first refugees arrived, Catholic Charities has welcomed nearly 30 Iraqis who fled their homeland due to violence and persecution. Future arrivals will include refugees from Myanmar (also known as Burma) and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Case managers from Catholic Charities Housing have been busy finding suitable apartments, working with faith groups to collect and deliver furniture, and arranging for the refugees to get public assistance and Food Stamp benefits to which they are entitled for a few months. They are responding admirably in the face of very limited federal funding for the project.

Faith groups have proved invaluable. Their financial contributions are paying for rent, food and utilities through the delays in accessing public assistance benefits.

Volunteers are helping the newly arrived refugees with English. They are also helping the refugees develop resumes and are accompanying them as they apply for jobs.

Most importantly, the volunteers are befriending the refugees. They have taken them to Fourth of July fireworks displays, to picnics in local parks and to weekly soccer games with other refugees. They have invited them to their homes for dinner and to their churches for welcome potluck suppers.

Such support has come from the First Unitarian Society of Schenectady, the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany, Eastern Parkway and Faith United Methodist churches in Schenectady, Niskayuna Reformed Church and the Black Catholic Apostolate/St. Joan of Arc/Sacred Heart parishes. Parishioners of St. Lucy’s in Altamont have donated furniture and household goods.

St. Madeline Sophie Parish, St. Henry’s and St. Michael’s parishes, the Islamic Center of the Capital District, Islamic Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat of Albany, and members of Scotia Reformed Church and Kingfisher Buddhist Sangha are now preparing for upcoming arrivals.

Sister Monica Murphy, CSJ, provided a special treat by inviting refugees and volunteers to the diocesan-owned Pyramid Life Center for a day of swimming, canoeing and simply enjoying the beauty of the Adirondacks. Even strangers are making the refugees feel welcome, as when an Albany resident invited drenching wet Iraqis into his home when he saw them walking from their English class in the rain.

“American people are good,” a refugee exclaimed when describing that scene. One father talked about his sleepless nights in Jordan after fleeing Iraq and waiting to be taken to safety in the United States. “We look in on our boys each night now and give thanks to God for your congregation,” he told a volunteer.

Catholic Charities seeks other faith groups willing to be part of this very rewarding project. Please contact Marianne Comfort at 453-6650 for more information.



Volunteer Sue Berzini from the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany enjoys some time with Alea, Israa and Hawraa at Pyramid Life Center in the Adirondacks

Reports on the mission

- CC of Columbia Green Counties is pleased to announce a new service to families in our communities, the Kinship Care Program. The Kinship Care Program addresses the specific needs and concerns for non-parent caregivers who have accepted the responsibility of caring for another's child. Support groups, social and educational activities, and information and referrals are the core elements of the program.

An increased number of children are living with non-biological parents. They are living with grandparents, aunts and uncles, older siblings, or close family friends. The caregivers provide the needed love, support, and safety for the children when the biological parents are unable to do so. The resulting new families have unique needs including unplanned additional expenses, obtaining the proper authority to make medical and legal decisions and managing personal dynamics of the new family unit.

The Kinship Care Program provides guidance and information to help caregivers access available resources, along with help in completing forms. Assistance is also given to obtain necessary funding, insurance, respite care, and counseling aid in maintaining emotional and mental health. As a result, the newly created families are able to create and sustain unity to function independently.

United Way of Columbia and Greene Counties provided the necessary funds to begin the program in

May 2009, which allows Catholic Charities to meet individually with each eligible family to listen, evaluate, and provide the best help.

Additional funding for monthly Support Groups to begin in July 2009 is provided by grants from the Fund for Columbia County and the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation.

- CC of Columbia and Greene Counties also provides a variety of services geared towards improving the quality of life of those less fortunate, including WIC, Substance Abuse Prevention Education, Emergency Assistance with a food pantry and Supervised Visitation. For additional information on the Kinship Care Program or other programs please call the Hudson Office at 828-8660.

Community Maternity Services

- CMS is sponsoring two benefit performances at the Capital Repertory Theatre in the 2009-2010 season. The first is *The Lady With All the Answers*, a one-woman show portraying the life and letters of Ann Landers. The second is *To Kill A Mockingbird*, based on Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize winning novel about prejudice and courage. Both performances are Sunday matinees – 2:30 p.m. The first show is November 1, 2009; the second March 28, 2010.

Tickets for each performance are \$40, or \$70 to attend both. Group rates for each performance are: 20 percent discount for groups of 10-29; or 30 percent discount for groups of 30 or

more. For reservations, contact Anne Marie Couser, 482-8836, or annemarie@cccms.org.

- CMS will also participate in the Macy's Shop for a Cause fundraising event. Purchase a \$5 ticket, and CMS will keep 100 percent of the proceeds, and you'll save 10-20 percent on most of your Macy's purchases all day. There will be numerous raffle prizes and entertainment throughout the store the day of the sale. The sale will be Saturday, October 17, in Macy's stores throughout the country. This year, there will be fewer exclusions from the sale and each ticket will offer a 25 percent off coupon to be used on one item. Tickets can be purchased by contacting Anne Marie Couser at CMS at 482-8836, or AnneMarie@cccms.org.

Healthy Schenectady Families was awarded an expansion grant beginning July 1, 2009 from The Schenectady Foundation. A new supervisor has been hired with the intention of hiring two additional Family Support Workers. HSF is part of a nationwide, credentialed, home visiting program of Healthy Families America. HSF serves all families in Schenectady County, regardless of age or income, who are prenatal or parenting a child from birth to five years of age. There is only one requirement, and that is that the child is not older than three months of age upon entering this program. The program is voluntary and can not be mandated by any other agency or legal system.



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