

For The Love Of Children, Support The Community Chest

It's
Giving Time
in Monroe County,
Community Chest
Helps
Catholic Charities



Miss Teresa Connell, who presided over the adoption of more than 3,000 youngsters in her 39 years with Catholic Charities, gets together with some of the Catholic Family Center's clients. Shown are Dominic Salamida of Webster, a Xerox chemist; his wife, Constance, and their children. Tonla was born to them nearly five years ago. Martin, two years old, was adopted through the center, and Susanne, who will have her first birthday in June, is on loan as a foster child until it is determined whether she can be adopted.



Teresa Connell:

39 Years of Matching Haves and Have-Nots

Some people who want children haven't any, and some who have can't take care of them.

That's the reason Catholic Family Center's adoption service plays so vital and appreciated a role in the Rochester Diocese. "Happy homes for wanted children" is the goal.

Miss Teresa Connell, retiring after 39 years of concern for little children in adoption work for the Rochester Catholic Charities, estimates she has helped place more than 3,000 babies with new parents.

Reminiscing this week, on the eve of the area-drive for the Rochester Community Chest which supports a large share of the Catholic Family Center work, Miss Connell recalled the thousands of couples and children she has brought together.

"It's easier to do today than it used to be. Would-be parents are more enlightened about their natural possibilities for having children. Medical science now helps them find out earlier in life whether they can produce a family of their own, so they come to us earlier."

"Un-wed mothers, too," she continued, "are better informed. They see the value to the child of giving the baby up for adoption."

Most of the children placed for adoption through the Family Center are born out of wedlock, the Charities records indicate. Few babies these days are turned over by married couples who feel they cannot provide for the children.

During the current year 315 mothers have been under care of the several adoption staff workers of Family Center, Miss Connell said. For nearly 30 years of her long dedication to this work she handled the adoption cases all alone.

"In the 40's, the years of World War II, our office dealt with more than 800 cases of adoption for unwed mothers," she recalled. The hardest year was '46-47, when I was looking after 160 pregnant girls."

When Miss Connell joined the diocesan agency in 1930 (the present Bishop of Syracuse, Most Rev. Walter A. Foery, pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, was then Director of Catholic Charities) it was providing for 90 infants and young children in "boarding homes." Adoption was not so emphasized then as it is now, she said.

"This past year we were caring for 235 children in adoptive homes and providing foster boarding care for 295 other different children."

The total "case-load" of the Family Center in '68-'69 — providing case-work, counseling and related services — was 3,720 families. This included 242 applications for adoption and boarding care for children.

"A big part of the job in my early days here," Miss Connell recalled, "was guarding the health of the children." She had been an Army nurse in World War I, had been in industrial nursing after the war and was supervising nurse in surgery at Rochester's General Hospital before coming to the Charities. "I think they hired me on the strength of this," she said.

Her memory of the early days at the Family Center focuses on the confusion of "running around day after day taking the children to clinics."

"We spent a lot of time with testing then. Social workers believed they had to know every detail of a child's background. So the babies available for adoption were kept in foster homes until all this psychological investigating could be completed."

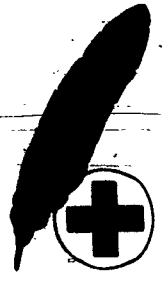
As a consequence, she admitted, adopting parents rarely could begin to raise their children from infancy. The move to new homes after the child was 6 months to a year old was often traumatic for the baby.

Now there is no delay for psychological tests unless there are "symptoms of imbalance or deficiency." Babies are placed in the adoptive care of their "parents" much earlier.

The emphasis is on the stable family, the happy home. The interviews conducted with the prospective parents estimate their capability for this responsibility and determine which child should go to whom. Because many parents seeking babies today already have a child of their own, the home spirit suitable for a new baby already exists.

Miss Connell, known to thousands of area people because of her four decades of service for family happiness, hears from her "babies" and their "parents" for years after she has helped place a child. In quiet retirement now at 49 Troup Street, Rochester, she hopes to have their letters and visits for many years more.

Photos by
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