

COURIER-JOURNAL

Southern Tier-Auburn Geneva

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A Time of Growth and Frustration

By Martin Toombs
Southern Tier Editor

Elmira — The first six months of existence for the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry has been a time of growth and frustration, according to Father Neil Miller, director of the office and its predecessor, the Southern Tier Office of Human Development.

The Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry began its work July 1, taking responsibility for all of the departments in the diocesan Social Ministry Division in the Southern Tier. Previously the office has formally represented only the Office of Human Development.

One frustration Father Miller reported is a personal one, in that the move from a

two-person office to one with four staff members and a group of regular volunteers has increased his administrative tasks and decreased his contact with the people the office exists to help.

Another frustration, he noted, is "not being able to meet all the needs," and the burden that the attempt is placing on the staff. And he expects the requests being made of the staff to increase in the future, noting that the requests for Christmas baskets in Chemung County has increased over last year.

The office, Sister Carmella and her volunteers at Notre Dame, and the parishes of Chemung County will be distributing 250 baskets this year, he noted, with the parishes taking 150. The annual meeting of the office, the

Salvation Army, Volunteers of America and Neighborhood House to compare basket lists will take place soon, he noted, and he expects the total number of families aided to exceed 1,000 this year.

But the additional staff has meant that more can be done than before, he pointed out. Sister Judith Reger has established counseling sessions in various parishes across the Southern Tier, making it possible for people to call their own rectory or one nearby to set up an appointment with her. She is getting increasing numbers of referrals from parish staff members and also has become a local contact for the services available through the Catholic Charities Rochester office, such as adoption services.

Volunteers now work

with the calls to the office for assistance. Father Miller reported: they deal with between 130 and 150 such calls each month. The volunteers arrange for emergency assistance and referrals.

Father Miller noted that the office also is working to strengthen the regional committees, now established in Tompkins, Tioga, Chemung-Schuylers and Stueben units. It is those committees, he noted, which will provide the local information on needs and problems, and are important to the office's success, he noted. They also are a source of information for the STOSM's new board, which itself has progressed during its six months. With a goal of 21 members, it now has 20, Father Miller said, and the five counties are all represented.

The board has two committees: one examining the provision of housing for the developmentally disabled in the area, and another studying the need for a public assistance grant increase.

Sister Rosaria Hughes joined the staff Nov. 1, and began her work writing grant proposals to increase the office's ability to meet the area's needs. Father Miller noted that the office has been accepted as part of diocesan Catholic Charities, giving it standing to apply for grants. In addition to work on proposals for funding of food bank and counseling programs, Sister Rosaria also has been assisting other local agencies with their grant writing, Father Miller noted.

Giovina Caroscio is the staff for the Department of

Justice and Peace in the new arrangement, and she has been concentrating on the need for an increase in the public assistance grant in New York State, Father Miller reported. In addition to the Office of Human Development responsibilities, she also works on the Campaign for Human Development, the Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation, the International Justice and Peace Commission and the Human Life Commission.

Father Miller also said that the staff has taken the time to pray together to "develop ourselves and keep a sense of what we're about," at two day-long sessions at Mount Saviour Monastery. The first was conducted by Father Charles Mulligan, diocesan Social Ministry director; the second by Father Martin Boler, monastery prior.

St. James Makes Yule Plans

Hornell — Plans are under way at St. James Mercy Hospital for an "International Christmas Festival" in conjunction with the second annual Christmas decorating contest.

According to Edith McGuckin, public relations director, starting Dec. 12 and running through Dec. 25, each day a different country will be featured. In the cafeteria a dish of the "country of the day" will be served, and brochures will be placed on the trays of patients and of Meals on Wheels recipients noting the customs of the country featured each day.

The Christmas decorating contest with the theme "Christmas Around the World" is open to the hospital's patient units, offices, departments and schools. Two members from each of the Women's Board and MacDonald Guild will judge the decorations. Winners will be announced Christmas Eve.

On Dec. 19, the Salvation Army will visit patients during the afternoon. In the evening, the DiVinney School of Dance will entertain patients with "Christmas with the Moppets." On Dec. 23, Santa Claus, in the person of Charles Bertram of the Aquinas Center, will visit patients.

The hospital's annual Christmas dinner-dance will be Saturday Dec. 20. Because a hospital cannot close down, those working the evening shift will be served the same dinner in the hospital cafeteria.



Angels pay their respects to the Infant Jesus during the Christmas pageant.

Ithaca Parents Enjoy Christmas Concert, Pageant

Ithaca — The annual Immaculate Conception School Christmas concert and pageant attracted a full house of delighted parents to the school the evening of Dec. 9.

The program began with a concert by the school children, with each grade and then groups of junior high students presenting two selections. The students were prepared for their performance by students in the

music department of Ithaca College, an annual cooperative effort. The Christmas music performed consisted of some of the lesser-known songs.

The younger students presented wholly choral selections, and they were the ones who sang most fearlessly. Their parents probably didn't notice any off-key notes anyway; in fact, parents whose children were per-

forming could be easily spotted by their beaming faces.

Although the older students were more tentative, they showed greater versatility, even providing some of their own accompaniment.

Following the musical presentations, a pageant playing out that first Christmas was presented. Joseph and Mary prepared for



An "angel" carries the "Baby Jesus" to the grotto where Mary and Joseph wait during the Immaculate Conception School pageant.

the night in a grotto, and an angel brought the baby Jesus to them. Angels then paid their respects to the infant, followed by the shepherds and the wisemen.

Playing the role of Joseph was Ralph Luisi; Mary was Leigh Ann Kozma. The infant Jesus was Chad Murphy, whose older brother Robert is in the kindergarten.

The kindergarten class delighted the audience with its portrayal of a flock of sheep.

To conclude the program, the audience joined the students in singing some of the more familiar Christmas carols.

Alcoholism Seminar Scheduled

Elmira — J. Frank Stark, STARS Program Coordinator, will speak on "Alcohol and Assertiveness" at the monthly alcoholism seminar Thursday, Dec. 18, at 12:15 p.m. in the Doctors Meeting Room of St. Joseph's Hospital. Further information can be obtained

by contacting the STARS office at 733-5519.

Needy Deadline

Time is getting short for our annual Christmas collection. Please don't forget the Courier-Journal Christmas Fund.

Correction

In a story in last week's Courier-Journal, Sister Judith Reger was identified as a member of the Sisters of Mercy. Sister Judith is a Sister of St. Joseph. And it was the Sisters of St. Joseph order which sponsored her work in the Southern Tier.

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