

State Commissioner Lauds Sheen Housing Foundation

By John Dash

It's the small, private groups, not government agencies, which solve social problems, the state housing commissioner told the Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation last week.

Richard A. Berman, the commissioner, told members of the 14-year-old foundation, "My message is that where the real action is — the innovation is, the difference is

— is right here," his hand sweeping over the heads of the more than 50 gathered for the foundation's annual meeting.

The event for the joint Roman Catholic and Episcopal group was at St. Peter's Episcopal Church and featured, besides Berman, Bishop Matthew H. Clark, Bishop Robert Spears, Episcopal bishop of Rochester, Father Charles Mulligan and Rev. Marilyle Sweet Page, pastor of St. Peter's.

The foundation works to provide housing for those in need and acts as advocate on related issues.

Berman reminded the group that "housing for the poor was not started by government, but was started by non-profit, usually religious groups."

He said that it is in such groups one finds championship of "basic values, neighborhoods and philanthropy."

And, he said, neighborhoods in which such groups operate usually show "a sense of compassion, with physical integrity, in a framework in which there's a difference between right and wrong."

He encouraged the foundation to work for a "return to the basics, especially a sense of compassion, fellowship and purpose." He also urged the group to challenge government, particularly in the present economic climate.

"What I'm counting on in all our little programs that make a difference to people, is that all of you will stand up and be counted."

"No financial problem is that big that we have to say 'no' to our neighbors," he said.

At present, "the federal government could destroy the housing industry in the state — a crisis that's not just in the cities but in the rural areas," he said.

He described the federal

government as without true leadership, lost, without a sense of the difference between right and wrong, substituting rhetoric and glamorous characters for solutions to social problems.

But, he said, "What we will be judged by will be how those who are least able to fit into society are dealt with by us — not by an institution."

Berman's call to values was echoed by both prelates following the talk. Bishop Spears said that for the foundation members to learn the intricacies of housing law and programs was to evince "faith community."

Housing, he said, is a symbol of hope; "And we're in the symbol business." He urged the foundation to deliver such symbols because they enrich others as they enrich the givers.

Bishop Clark cited the "beautiful complementarity" in Berman's address between his call for values and "the value-laden spirits we have here."

This year's board for the foundation includes Robert W. Bates, Tom Carey, Lewis Childs Jr., Victor Hadeed, Karen Hansen, Elston Hernandez, Rosemarie Horvath, Nancy Newton, Keith Scholes, Lee Schwartz, Edward Short, Gilbert Veconi, Edward Wallin, Doreen Roth Wilson and Sister Mary Wintish.

Childs, president for the past two years, also announced officers for the coming year. Sister Mary Wintish was elected president; Gilbert Veconi, vice president; Edward Short, treasurer; and Rosemarie Horvath, secretary.

CRS Increases Aid to Lebanon

New York — Catholic Relief Services (CRS) increased its emergency program for Lebanon recently by beginning a massive food distribution effort focused on the children and the aged.

The food program, valued initially at \$3 million, is in addition to the \$200,000 recovery program announced by CRS Executive Director Bishop Edwin B. Broderick and a \$300,000 grant from the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance.

"Now that the situation in Lebanon is stabilizing, we can fully assess the areas of greatest need and begin our response," Bishop Broderick said. "Our staff has regrouped in Lebanon and we will be sending more people to the area within the next few weeks."

The CRS staff in war-torn Lebanon is under the

direction of Joseph S. Curtin Jr., who led the services' emergency effort in Thailand which brought aid to thousands of refugees from Kampuchea, Laos and Vietnam.

Since 1976, CRS has operated a reconstruction scheme in Lebanon. The main focus of this \$10 million project has been on the repair and rehabilitation of war-damaged institutions which served the aged and the young. Also, in rural areas, CRS has supported agricultural development projects. The current program will provide aid throughout the country on the basis of need, rather than creed.

Contributions to the CRS Lebanon War Recovery Fund may be sent to: Catholic Relief Services, LEBANON WAR RECOVERY FUND, 123 East Ave., Rochester, N.Y. 14604.



Kiwanis Scholars

Kevin Merkel of Bishop Kearney High School, Ann Battaglia, also of Kearney; Mark Oweleen of McQuaid Jesuit High School and Cheryl Johnson of Irondequoit High School, are all recipients of scholarship awards from the Kiwanis Club of Irondequoit. The four, their parents and counselors, were honored late last month at a special awards banquet.

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