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Christmas Fund

GIVE GENEROUSLY

Situation 'Dire' for Poor

His staff had never known anything like it. In the waiting rooms and corridors outside his cluttered, minuscule office, the poor lined up, hundreds, more than had ever been seen there before, each of them patiently waiting for a moment of filing a name and address, all in the hope of getting some extra food just for Christmas.

"This is what it's come to," he said with a gesture that cut an edge between the sense of hope and the peril of despair, between a general economic condition and its particular sharpness in the bones of hungry people.

At 3 p.m. last Wednesday, James Maloney held his head in his hands and said, "Maybe we can shave off a buck or two from each allotment and help more of the others."

Maloney, executive director of the Catholic Family Center, is the man ultimately accountable for distributing most of the food vouchers to those helped by the Courier-Journal/Catholic Charities Christmas Fund.

But this year, unprecedented numbers of those pleading for help have forced him into the extraordinary corner of cutting off applications weeks early; and he had to call together his staffers on the project to suggest they trim the allotments to a point below 1980 levels.

"If we just shave off a dollar or two from each allotment, we could get an extra \$2,000, and that would mean — what? another 50 families? We could help another 50 families," he said,

his voice begging the staff to agree with him.

As it stands on paper, a family with 12 children gets \$36 in food at Christmas. "Well, it's \$36 they couldn't get anywhere else," he said, the hand falling again.

The facts of the case are these. The CFC, the major distributor of funds from the Courier-Journal Christmas appeal, is swamped. In only the third day of interviewing, CFC staffers committed the agency to more than \$29,000 worth of food vouchers. They used to interview right up to Christmas Eve morning, Marcia Fedyk said. This year they had to close off their firm promises for help before noon on the fourth day of interviews, Dec. 2.

"You know we have a

whole new 'layer' of poor this year," Maloney said. "We've got those whose unemployment benefits have run out and we've got those who used to be on unemployment and have just given up trying day after day for work."

And Maloney's eyes said he was most worried about the latter. Twice he said the word "despair" without the comfort of a surrounding sentence after he mentioned the group.

If this is happening in Rochester with nine percent unemployment, Maloney wondered, what is happening in the Southern Tier where the unemployment rate is 12-14 percent.

"It's a pretty dire situation," he said.

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Neediest Cases In the Diocese

41 C became seriously ill a few years ago and was forced into early retirement. His Social Security disability pays for his basic needs and covers his doctor bills. His required medication, however, is an extra expense, and to pay for it, he sometimes goes without regular meals.

42 L is a woman who, for all practical purposes, lives on the street, but frequently makes her way to a home for homeless women. She is not capable of working but is always cheerful and looks at the bright side of life.

43 The As have four children, the youngest of whom is five months. A lost his job recently because his factory went out of business. His compensation hasn't been processed yet and the family is finding it extremely difficult.

44 The Fs have seven children, the oldest 14 years. F is paid minimum wage, having seasonal work, and the family has had to move three times in the past three years. They are now living in inadequate housing and are often out of food.

45 E is a 60-year-old grandmother, an amputee, living in a dilapidated farmhouse with her terminally ill husband, a slightly retarded son and two teenage grandsons. The family's only income is her husband's small pension and the Social Security for the teens. She is a woman of great faith and often speaks of her gratitude for God's gifts to her and her family.

46 D is in her late 60s and lives in a mobile home in a rural area. She lives on a restricted income and finds it hard to purchase such basic necessities as warm winter clothing.

47 The Ms are a migrant family. M is now disabled and his wife must work part-time to supplement their disability income. They have seven children, one of whom is severely handicapped.

48 R receives public assistance for herself and four children. Her oldest entered college on a scholarship in September, but the added costs of that plus the transportation have put a real strain on the family budget. R considers the education to be so important she sacrifices herself to the cause.

49 The Ts are a teenage married couple with a very young baby and no car. They live in an extremely rural area. T has lost his job because he was dependent on others for transportation.

50 S, a single mother, and her three children, are on welfare, but their medical bills are high and not always covered. The youngest child has had two operations. The family has no means of transportation. The grandmother lives in an apartment nearby and has been hospitalized recently for several weeks.

51 The Ws, their two teenage sons, and Mrs. W's brother live in a trailer in an isolated area. W is a veteran with a heart condition and is often in a VA hospital. The family home burned down three years ago and they have been slowly rebuilding as they get the money to buy necessary materials.

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Will Drinking Age Be Hiked Again?

By Joan M. Smith

For the first time since prohibition New York State has changed its drinking laws. At 12:01 a.m. last Saturday the minimum drinking age went from 18 to 19 years old. Legislation proposing the change was signed into law last May by Governor Hugh L. Carey. According to Dr. Sheila Blume, director of the New York State Division of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse, it was through the governor's initiative and efforts by senators like Frank Padavan (R-C, 11 District) along with work by the governor's Task Force on Alcohol and Highway Safety that the law was made possible.

However, now that the law is in effect doesn't mean the matter of a higher drinking age limit is to be forgotten. There will be an in-depth study by state agencies of the law's impact and although Dr. Blume told the Courier-Journal she doesn't like, to second guess what the study will show, expects the scientific data to be significant enough to support another proposed raise in the drinking age.

Twenty-one is the age the

federal government is asking for, and wants uniform age restrictions throughout the 50 states. This month, the Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving a meeting in Washington and urged states to raise their drinking ages to 21 and to impose mandatory 48-hour jail sentences on drunken drivers. To motivate the states to comply with the proposals, initial legislation introduced by James J. Howard (Rep. D-NJ), Chairman of the Public Works and Transportation Committee, and Michael D. Barnes (Rep. D-Maryland), and subsequent senate legislation, the government was authorized to offer states federal incentive grants if they meet proposed criteria concerning their drinking laws.

At last count, said Ernest Kitchen, New York State Office of Alcohol and Highway Safety, only three states meet the federal criteria which requires prompt suspension (on first offense) of a license for 90 days when arrested for driving with a .10 or higher blood alcohol; a one-year prompt suspension of a license for any subsequent incident within a 5-year period (a requirement not met by New York State); enforcement of laws through educational programs, a requirement which the Office of Highway Safety says New York State does meet; and a provision requiring a mandatory 48-hour jail stay or 10 days of community service work which is another requirement that the Empire State doesn't meet.

"The State of New York is looking at this requirement," said Kitchen, "to see what the costs and problems are of administering the community service aspect and the cost of incarceration."

"There's a real question whether having mandatory imprisonment would work," he said.

Kitchen went on to explain that both stiffer laws and improved education about the laws and alcohol will make the public aware of the problem of drinking and driving. "It's a systems approach," he said. "When the level of enforcement is increased there has to be complementary improvement in information to the public. Education in the long run," he said, "but in the short run people need to know we're serious. Drinking while driving is not going to be tolerated."

DWI is a leading killer among teenagers, and state

borders pose a problem, said Dr. Blume. She explained that when states with different drinking age limits border one another, teenagers will drive across state lines to take advantage of the lower age limit.

At present five states — Hawaii, Louisiana, Vermont, West Virginia and Wisconsin — still have an age 18 drinking limit. Fifteen states have it at 19; six at 20; 15 at 21, and the rest have either an 18/21, or 19/21 — the age breakdown depending on whether the alcohol is a 3.2 beer, wine, or hard liquor.

Father Heffron Named Provincial

Father William J. Heffron, the Sacred Hearts missionary who has overseen the development of several highly successful ministries at St. Peter and Paul Parish, was elected last week provincial of the East Coast United States Province of his order.

The province, Father Heffron said last week, has foundations from Fall River, Mass., to Brownsville, Tex., and missions in Japan, India, and the Bahamas.

The priest was born in 1933 in Malden, Mass., and attended public schools and North Eastern University. The veteran of the Korean war then entered the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, an international congregation headquartered in Rome, and was ordained a priest in 1968.

He has been pastor at the West Main Street church for the past two years, during which time the highly considered St. Peter and Paul Soup Kitchen has opened and flourished.

According to Sister



FATHER HEFFRON

Muriel Curran, SSND, vicar for religious, the Rochester religious community will sorely miss Father Heffron. But, she said, the skills he has evidenced here will be of great benefit to his order.

"The fruit of his prayer," she said, "is lived out on the street." She said that he shows reverence for every person he meets, and that is a reciprocal attitude.

Father Heffron will officially take the provincial's post Jan. 13.

Special Pullout Section

COURIER-JOURNAL

CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE

This week the Courier-Journal publishes a special 12-page pullout section to help readers with Christmas gift shopping. Pages 1A-12A.