

Volunteers Said 'Life-Blood' Of Homeless Shelter Program

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By a few minutes after 10 on any one of the recent 20 degree nights, cots in the basement of Blessed Sacrament Church are being fluffed out, coffee is perking in an urn and the aroma of soup is drifting through the air.

And anywhere from 10 to 15 homeless people are being sheltered from the rigors of a winter night.

Such shelter couldn't be possible, however, without

dedicated individuals who give a few hours of their time to overseeing the program.

The presence of volunteers at Blessed Sacrament, and at other parishes such as Corpus Christi, St. Boniface, St. Bridget's and St. Francis Xavier, "says a lot of the desire to serve the needy," Sister Marie Brown, SSJ, said last week. Sister Marie is pastoral assistant at Blessed Sacrament.

Indeed, "Volunteers are the life-blood of the program," parishioner Bill Wynne said last week.

At Blessed Sacrament, volunteer coordinator Lorraine D'Angelo can call on 50 to 60 people on a given night to watch over the sleeping people housed in the church.

The volunteers, Sister Marie said, open up the shelter each night, set the coffee pot on, heat up the donated soup (donated from Edward's Pub one night last week) and lay out the sandwich stuffings.

The volunteers sit up through the night in two shifts of two people each. The first team starts at 10

p.m. and leaves at 3 a.m. when the next shift comes in to work until 7 a.m.

The volunteers also, she said, undertake the shopping for the shelter, the laundry, telephone coordination and general housekeeping.

Blessed Sacrament opened its doors, Sister Marie said, a few weeks after Bishop Matthew H. Clark issued his call to shelter the homeless this winter. The bishop made his request after it was learned that homeless and transient persons would have even less of an opportunity to escape the cold

winter nights this year than last — the housing shortage is that acute in Rochester.

Blessed Sacrament's volunteers are truly wide-ranging in their backgrounds. That was made evident last week when Ursula Reiners of the Downtown Presbyterian Church teamed for the first shift with Blessed Sacrament parish council president Peter Hahn.

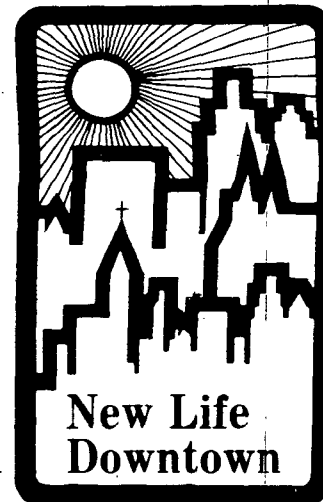
Asked why, Ms. Reiners said simply, "Because I'm needed. It appears I'm needed."

And Hahn said he volunteers (and he is at the shelter frequently, Sister Marie said) "because it needs to be done."

And coordinator Ms. D'Angelo chimed in, "It's a need. Somebody's got to do it. I like to organize. And so I volunteer."

Ms. D'Angelo said the volunteers come from as far away as St. Louis Parish, and generally are well out of their teens.

Everyone on staff at Blessed Sacrament last



Wednesday said that there is a great need throughout the shelter network for more volunteers; and Ms. D'Angelo said that the number coming forth to help is "just fantastic."

"Volunteers are the big thing," she said. "It's a rewarding job. We need your time to serve these people in our community..."

"It's interesting. It's a basic ministry. It brings religion into the lives of our guests. It brings out what we say we should do: shelter the homeless."

'Total' Parish Effort Shows Auburn's True Giving Spirit

Auburn — At the bottom of the brown paper sack beneath the cans of peas, fruit cocktail and creamed corn was a crumpled \$1 Food Stamp.

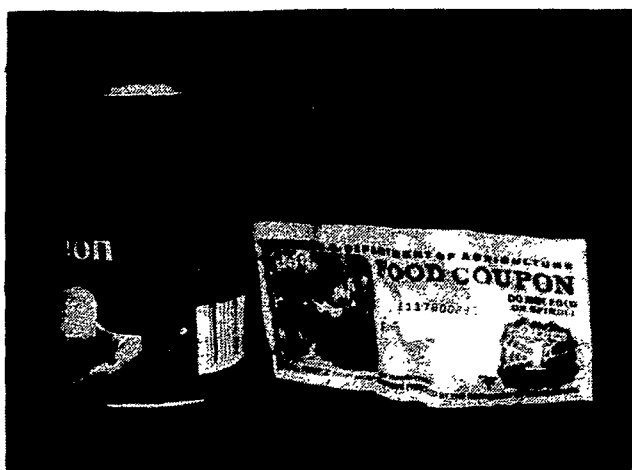
Pressed by the weight of the sack's contents, it was obvious the coupon had accidentally found its way there instead of placed there purposely.

"Look at this," said one of the Human Development Committee workers as he sorted through the bags and boxes of foodstuffs donated for Christmas dinners by the parishioners of St. Alphonsus Church.

"This is a perfect example of the spirit of giving and sharing in these tough times," he said.

"Here, someone with not too much for himself has done what he can for those worse off than he is. Amazing!"

It was that spirit that permeated holiday food and gift drives at the East Genesee Street church. Father Clarence Gardner said. Father



Gardner is pastor of St. Alphonsus.

"Our parishioners have always responded in times of need in the true spirit of Christ," he said. "What's more, this tradition of giving and sharing has come from all segments of our parish, not just from those who work on our various committees to organize such things, but from the general congregation as well."

He cited, as an example, the church's Giving Sunday, a

program in which parishioners purchase gifts for those who otherwise would not receive them.

Father Gardner noted that parish response to the program was 100 per cent.

Some 300 presents were distributed to individual families and residents in area health facilities.

In addition to Giving Sunday, St. Alphonsus provided 31 Thanksgiving dinners, complete with 18-

pound turkeys and all the trimmings, and 45 similar Christmas dinners.

According to parish spokesman Robert A. Fasce Sr., workers on the projects included Human Development Committee members, members of the Altar-Rosary Society, of the Legion of Mary, Boy Scouts and general volunteers.

Charlie King, coordinator for this year's holiday projects, said parish response was nothing short of "overwhelming."

"I can't remember ever seeing so many give so much of themselves to others. It certainly keeps alive our belief in the basic goodness of all people and gives us confidence we can weather any storm, economic or otherwise."

Collections were also up, it was noted — nearly \$13,000 for both Christmas and Sunday, Dec. 26. Some 724 parishioners pledged themselves to the annual Thanks Giving Appeal.



Lorraine D'Angelo, volunteer coordinator.