

## Foundation Donates To Heating Fund

The Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation, a supporter of programs in health care, youths, justice, senior citizens and women, all with special emphasis on services to the disadvantaged, has awarded the Community Heating Fund a grant of \$5,000 to assist families with emergency heating needs this winter.

The fund was established

### Troop 101 Receives Gift

Boy Scout Troop 101 of Holy Rosary School was presented with a new American flag, Thursday, Jan. 31 at an Award Night ceremony. The flag was blessed by Father Tim Horan, associate pastor of Holy Rosary.

The troop had lost most of its possessions, including its American flag, in the fire at the school several years ago. Since then an old flag had been used.

Barber B. Conable, Jr., while still in Congress, was informed of the troop's plight and donated a new flag, which had flown over the Capitol in Washington, D. C., July 4, 1984.

### Eye Center Dedication

St. Mary's Hospital is having the dedication and open house of the Samuel J. Ianacone Diagnostic and Treatment Center, Feb. 24 at 12:30 p.m. Refreshments will follow. Featured speaker will be The Honorable Fred J. Eckert, 30th Congressional District.

in 1983 by Rogester Gas and Electric Corp. and is administered by the Rochester-Monroe County Chapter of the American Red Cross. The program helps needy families who have no one to turn to with an emergency heating situation and are ineligible for help from existing programs. It is supported by voluntary, tax-deductible contributions, primarily from RG&E customers. RG&E matches from shareholder earnings 50 cents for every dollar contributed by the public, up to an annual maximum of \$200,000.

Pearl Rubin, foundation director, said, "This new program is a much-needed source of assistance for many families in our community who are having a hard time keeping their homes warm this winter."

"The Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation is pleased to support the Community Heating Fund and we hope that others in our community will contribute to the fund."

In 1984, 366 families were helped with heating assistance by the Red Cross with more than \$102,000 received in contributions. As of last week, some \$77,000 had been received this year.

RG&E customers can contribute by adding exactly \$1, \$5 or \$10 to their bill payment if they pay in full by mail or in person at an RG&E office. Those who pay elsewhere may send RG&E a check in any amount made payable to Community Heating Fund.



At the check presentation were, from left, C. Kyle Rodeman, manager of the Rochester-Monroe County Chapter American Red Cross; Pearl W. Rubin, director, Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation; Lloyd Van Hoover, chairperson of the Community Heating Fund Advisory committee, and John W. Oberlies, RG&E vice president, public affairs.

Anyone interested in applying for help should call the nearest Red Cross chapter office.

**Hicks**  
Home Heating Inc.  
HEATING-COOLING  
424-4848 271-4650

**Gerould's Pharmacies**  
S. Main St. and Church & Hoffman Elmira  
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733-6696

### Deadline

The deadline for submitting news for the Courier-Journal is noon on Thursday, preceding Wednesday publication. Items must be written. The Courier-Journal offices are at 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

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Father Bruce Ritter

## "Open Intake -- Our Cornerstone"

It's not the same now, as it once was. Covenant House has changed a whole lot over these past 15 years.

I mean, 15 years ago I cooked the meals and changed the beds and did my kids' laundry and cleaned their toilets. I had a thing about clean bathrooms. (I still do.)

I knew them all by name and since they didn't have any fathers, I was always glad to oblige.

They lived in my apartment on the Lower East Side on East 7th Street. Our neighbors were junkies and pimps and derelicts and lots of good and very poor families.

It wasn't exactly a garden spot but there were some great people living in my neighborhood. There was never a dull moment on East 7th Street.

Now, more than a thousand kids a month come into Covenant House, and I don't know any of them very well. I know a little about a lot of them, of course. I don't know any of them as well as I would like.

I'm not complaining. It's just not the same now. It can't be.

One thing is the same, though.

It's called "open intake." That's a phrase I invented 16 years ago because of my anger and frustration at the New York City child care system when I couldn't find a single agency that would take 10 homeless, abused and sexually exploited youngsters who fled a group of junkies who were pimping them, who fled some pornographers who defiled them.

**"It's a condition of employment for our staff that they never turn a kid away."**

My first 10 kids were either too old -- or too young. Too sick -- or not sick enough. They were from out of State... They were not eligible for care... They were not, er, "reimbursable," which means nobody would pay for them.

I promised myself that I would never turn a kid away -- that if other agencies closed out kids, Covenant House would always be open to any kid who came wanting help. I broke this promise once and I bitterly regret it. I turned two kids away one night. I can still see their faces...

"Open intake" has become the cornerstone, the hallmark -- the only absolute -- of our program.

I became disgustingly self-righteous about it!

Yesterday, more than 60 new kids came to our Centers and asked for help. Not one was refused shelter.

It's a condition of employment for our staff that they

Father Bruce Ritter, OFM Conv., is the founder and President of Covenant House, which operates crisis centers for homeless and runaway boys and girls all over the country.

never turn a kid away. I won't let them make the same mistake I made.

Open intake (24 hours a day, 7 days a week, no questions asked) is brutally hard on my staff.

They never know what kind of hurting kids will come through our doors, or when, or how many.

Some are young innocents experiencing their first brush with depravity.

Some are cool, wary street kids that have seen it all and that, seemingly, nothing bothers.

Still others are running for their lives -- victims of the American Sex Industry. They are the used up commodities, the bartered merchandise, the bought and sold objects of a commercial traffic in young lives.

Some are burned-out, hopeless drifters before they are 18. Only the Resurrection on the Last Day could restore life to them.

Some, many -- most -- are desperately good kids, wanting to make it, wanting to survive, wanting to be loved.

Whatever they are, whoever they are, they have some fundamental rights at Covenant House.

The most important thing is to get in!

And then, to hear: hey, we're glad you're here. Stay around. Don't go away. Let us help you; we can.

Open intake in Times Square may sound romantic, even sentimental. It is, in fact, brutally hard, impossibly difficult to achieve. And yet we do it.

Because we really do have a great, hard working, risk-taking, compassionate staff who never count the cost. They are smart, tough-minded professionals who are really good at letting the kids know they love them.

It's not hard.

You see, what our kids have in common is how good they are and how brave they are. It's not hard to love them. It's almost impossible not to.

If I'm proud of anything, it's open intake.

Sometimes I get letters telling me what a great person I am for doing this work. I know they mean well but the truth is, of course, that Covenant House owes more to my vices than to my virtues.

You see, when I had to face up to those 10 kids sleeping on my floor on East 7th Street who would not go away? When I decided to keep them? I wish I could tell you that my motives were honorable, that I was motivated by zeal and charity and compassion.

My motives were not that noble. I had just been driven off campus by my students who told me to practice what I preached. My assignment from my Superiors was to be useful to the poor. I didn't have the guts to kick these great kids out in the snow, so I kept them.

My motives, for the record, were anger, stubbornness, pride, vanity. I am a very competitive person. I hate to lose

-- and I didn't want to lose a second encounter with a bunch of kids!

I have to admit that I had also begun to love them.

That bothered me even more. I knew I was going to get trapped and I kept right on walking into the quicksand. I was the moth flying into the flame -- and I knew it.

For the record, I am not all those extravagant things people sometimes say about me. I am a very ordinary person who is still arrogant and stubborn and vain and competitive and given to self-righteous assessments of other people's faults.

I think that's why I find it so easy to like my kids. We have a lot of faults and vices in common.

And, maybe, when I praise and excuse them, maybe I'm hoping God won't be inclined to distinguish one sinner from another.

Sometimes, when I'm writing these letters it gets very personal for me. I want you to understand why I do things. If you really asked me why I do what I do, the answer I would give is that I do what I do for God. I think that's a true answer. I hope it is.

But sometimes, God has a kid's face...

Thanks for reading this far. Sometimes I can get pretty long-winded.

Thanks most for loving and helping our kids so consistently, for sharing our covenant with them, for making the same promise to them: "I bound myself by oath. I made a covenant with you. And you became mine..."

Pray for us. We pray for you all the time.

Yes, I agree, kids should not have to be turned away anymore. Enclosed is my gift of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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