

Hunger Week events show personal needs, system's failure

By Kevin Myers

Rochester's Hunger Awareness Week reached a fitting finale on Wednesday, Oct. 16, celebrating World Food Day with a local tour of food cupboards and soup kitchens.

A number of Rochester area businessmen and civic leaders participated in the day-long Hunger Awareness Tour, which revealed an efficient local food-delivery system. Those responsible for the operation of that system, however, appeared highly critical of it.

"We do what we do well," said Tom Ferraro, director of the Genesee Valley Foodbank, "and yet, we are saying this is not the way to do it."

Essentially, Ferraro and other organizers

of Hunger Awareness Week criticized current programs for treating the symptoms rather than the causes of hunger.

"Hunger is in our midst," said Alison Clarke, coordinator of Food For People Network, who added that the problem is too complex to be solved simply by handing out meals.

The immediate goal of Hunger Awareness Week, co-sponsored by more than 30 hunger awareness and service organizations, was to raise money for emergency food aid, long-term agricultural development and a program to fight childhood infectious diseases. The broader goal, however, was to make the public more aware of the causes of hunger.

William Bluhm, member of the Integral Development Committee of the Diocese of Rochester and professor of political science at the University of Rochester, voiced an opinion broadly agreed upon by those involved in the program. "We must deal with the 'systems process' of world hunger. Simply giving direct relief does not solve the problem, but striving to make countries self-sufficient will help."

"I'm sick of throwing Band-Aids at people who have more severe problems," Ferraro said. "There is no way to just wave a wand and solve the hunger problem."

Systemic and agricultural inefficiencies were cited as the main causes of world hunger. More efficient systems and agricultural processes would reduce world hunger as well as hunger at the local levels, participants said. The international practice of cash cropping — growing such products as coffee and tobacco for profit — was strongly criticized throughout the week and at the hunger tour reception in the Genesee Valley Foodbank building.

Presentations throughout Hunger Awareness Week concentrated on the causes of hunger. On the October 15 edition of WHAM's "Opinion" program, Ferraro and Walt Cooper discussed the need to make hungry countries more self-sufficient. Paul Baker hosted their presentation, "Band-Aids to Building: A Rational Construction of World Food Resources."

Performer Elliot Fintushel, of the MIMeworkshop, acted out a satirical mime presentation at the Hunger Awareness Tour reception. That presentation, "Don't Grow Food, Grow Money," helped to illustrate the damaging effect cash cropping has on the world's hungry people.

To have a lasting effect, even on local communities, agricultural reconstruction must take place in all nations, organizers said.

Local projects across the country like Rochester's Food for People Network will continue to advocate for a food delivery system that will not rely on local emergency programs or international benefit concerts.

And they will continue to cite flaws in the world agricultural and consumer systems as the main causes of world hunger.

People in the Rochester area have, however, at least begun to implement some of the proposed changes in agricultural practices.

Gleaning, the Judeo-Christian tradition of leaving part of the harvest in the field to provide food for the poor, has been used in local grape fields. Grape juice has been made from unharvested grapes left in the fields, and has been distributed to the hungry or sold for cash to buy other foodstuffs.

Attempts to attack the hunger problem at its roots level may have great impact in the future. But, today, concerned citizens are working to provide food to the local hungry through the best system now available.

In Rochester, foodstuffs are collected and stored in the Genesee Valley Foodbank, and then distributed to the food cupboards and soup kitchens that serve the area's hungry people.

On Wednesday, the Hunger Awareness Tour visited four of those feeding sites — St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, St. Peter's Kitchen and St. Martin's Community Soup Kitchen, all sponsored by Catholic organizations, as well as Christ Church's Meals with More program.

The hunger tour was organized "to focus attention to the fact that there is hunger in our community ... and to point out there is an emergency network in the community to channel resources into direct feeding," Ferraro said, adding that tour participants learned the no stereotypes fit the wide variety of people that use the facilities.

Clarke said the tour gave people an opportunity to see that our Rochester meal services try to provide a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere. The workers see themselves as hosts, not clinicians, and they appreciate seeing that their services are helping people.

"It is like gold," said Evelyn Price of the food she delivers to the hungry in Greece through the Ecumenical Center of the Greece Baptist Church.

And, to the hungry, food is much more valuable than any precious metal.



Here, Fintushel, who wrote the mime presentation, and cast himself as Pantalone, stresses the "importance" of growing money.



Left to right are Elliott Fintushel (Pantalone), Roy Wood (Brighella), and Tammi Vinci (Ariecchino) finishing the mime presentation "Don't Grow Food Grow Money," a satirical portrayal of growing cash crops like tobacco instead of foodstuffs.

Demonstration marks screening

By Tracy Early

New York (NC) — At least 2,500 Catholics from throughout the New York area converged on Lincoln Center Oct. 7 to protest the showing of French director Jean-Luc Godard's controversial film "Hail Mary" at the New York Film Festival.

A second screening of the movie the next day brought a similar demonstration though with fewer protesters.

On the first night, protesters, most with rosaries in hand, began arriving about 5 p.m. at Alice Tully Hall, where the film was shown at 9:30 p.m. The auditorium is in The Juilliard School of Music, a part of the Lincoln Center complex on Manhattan's West Side.

Throughout most of the evening, the demonstrators recited the rosary and sang hymns. Several people carried placards with pictures of Christ, Mary or the pope, or signs with messages such as "Blasphemy" or

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for Us Sinners."

The film, which Pope John Paul II last April said "deeply wounds the religious sentiments of believers," presents a modern-day version of the life of Mary in which the central character is the teen-age daughter of a gas station mechanic.

In the film, the actress portraying Mary appears nude in several scenes.

Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York did not attend the Oct. 7 demonstration but issued a statement saying he would be "spiritually present with all who do join in prayer for this purpose."

He said that while he was not attempting to have the movie censored by public officials, he wished to state "categorically" that church teaching "abhors any treatment of fundamental themes of our faith which, as our Holy Father says, 'distorts and scorns their spiritual significance and their historical value.'"



Myriem Roussel stars as Mary in Jean-Luc Godard's "Hail Mary," which made its American debut at the New York Film Festival earlier this month.

SSJ Assembly

"Journey in Grace: Creating the Future" will be the theme as the Sisters of St. Joseph gather for a congregational assembly Saturday, Oct. 26, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Sister Ann Marshall, CSJ, superior general

of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Hamilton, Ontario, will be the keynote speaker. Another expected highlight, the Sending Ceremony, is planned at 4:30 p.m.

Women's Club Lunch

Marie Porter will describe her recent trip to Egypt at a luncheon for the businesswomen's group of the Catholic Women's Club Saturday, Oct. 26, at the Century Club on East Avenue.