

'Clean Sweep' janitorial service provides neighborhood jobs

By Richard A. Kiley

James McGee, 24, would have a hard time finding employment in the conventional job market. A black high school drop-out, McGee moved from his native New Jersey five years ago to be nearer to his godfather.

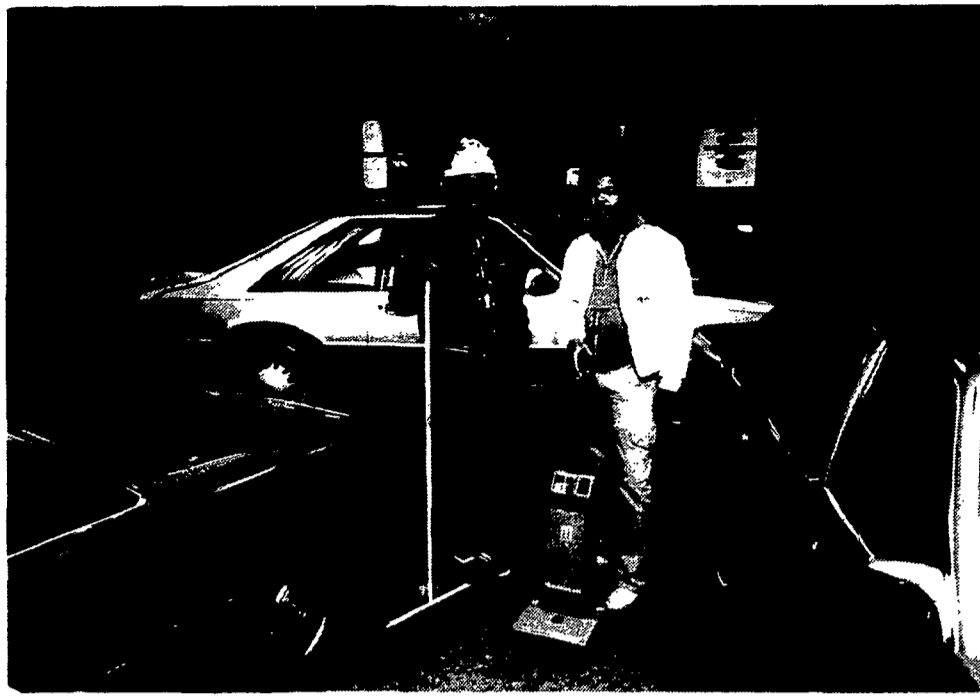
Warren Tisdale, 17, a student at East High School, sounds like any teenager when he says he works after school because he needs the money. Yet unlike many teenagers, Tisdale is willing to work graveyard shifts to earn that cash.

Both workers are integral parts of Clean Sweep, a community-owned and operated janitorial service, one of several 1985-86 funded projects of the Campaign for Human Development (CHD) within the diocese of Rochester.

Clean Sweep is the culmination of a 14-month effort among neighborhood residents and the North East Block Club Alliance (NEBCA). NEBCA encourages low-income residents in Rochester's northeast quadrant to identify the problems and issues within their community, and provides a forum for residents to derive, advocate and participate in solutions.

Through NEBCA, Clean Sweep obtained a \$3,000 grant from the local arm of CHD to create jobs and initiate learning opportunities for low-income workers. CHD is a Catholic education and action program established 15 years ago to counter domestic poverty. It is the largest funding program in the United States for self-help projects aimed at social change for poor and low-income groups.

The establishment of Clean Sweep is the product of a year's research on means of providing employment for neighborhood residents. According to NEBCA's Linda LeFever, more than 20 types of business services were investigated in an effort to select a service that was most appropriate for



Cristo Ford is one of seven contracts acquired by the Clean Sweep Janitorial Service. James McGee (right) and Warren Tisdale clean the large car dealership during off-business hours.

unemployed workers in the neighborhood.

LeFever said that community residents were becoming frustrated with grants that didn't fulfill the long-term needs of the neighborhood. The need for Clean Sweep became apparent when area residents employed by another community-owned business — a summer land maintenance program called "Adopt-A-Lot" — lost their jobs once winter began.

McGee was one of those seasonally unemployed residents.

"Every summer I'd be laid off," said McGee, who headed the land maintenance program. "Then I heard Linda LeFever needed someone to help her with this project (Clean Sweep), so here I am."

With the formation of Clean Sweep, NEBCA can now offer year-round employment opportunities for community residents.

According to LeFever, minority residents of the neighborhood submitted a business plan to NEBCA officials last November.

Since then, a volunteer board has been playing "a parent role" to Clean Sweep during its initial rough times. Although the janitorial service was established more than a year ago, it wasn't until the last few months that working contracts with local businesses have begun to materialize.

LeFever attributes the success of Clean Sweep to both McGee and Billy Johnson. McGee has been working long hours to solidify the new organization's reputation, and Johnson has been busy landing the contracts.

"James has turned into a model employee. Nobody had ever given him the opportunity to grow or show responsibility," LeFever said. "Last year he was honored as employee of the year (1985)."

According to LeFever, Johnson is responsible for scheduling workers for the janitorial service, and has been doing a pretty good job.

Currently, Clean Sweep has seven cleaning contracts and employs four people. Strict screening processes are necessary because crews frequently work during the off-hours of the companies they serve.

"We get a lot of applications, but because of stuff in people's background, we can't use them," McGee said. "We're still interviewing, a couple of people are waiting for calls."

With the recent flurry of contracts, McGee hopes to see seven or eight more employees hired.

He further hopes the janitorial service will stabilize now that the nice weather is approaching, so he again can concentrate his efforts on Adopt-A-Lot.

"We're going to go a little further outside the neighborhood," McGee said. "They look like mini-parks when we're done with them."

Shelter successes

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"We didn't expect to be moving guests in that soon, but this person seems to fit the requirements," Garrison said.

In addition to live-in volunteers, Corpus Christi's home will eventually accept a maximum of five other guests "as they come along."

In January, Elizabeth Quinlan, Corpus Christi's health care advocate for the homeless, also succeeded in opening a weekly health clinic for street people at the Volunteers of America, 95 W. Main St. Within a short time, she hopes to offer the same service at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, 402 South Avenue. Although she is seeking more volunteers — particularly nurses — Quinlan and a volunteer doctor are already treating between eight and 10 people each week.

Coordinators from all three churches intend to reopen their emergency shelters next winter. Corpus Christi will continue to provide some emergency beds either in their transitional shelter on North Union Street or in the church basement, according to Garrison.

Through the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry, the diocese is willing to provide the same service to the shelters next year, according to Privett.

"Absolutely yes — we see the need to continue at the same level of support as this year," he said. "The cooperative relationship between the church shelters was something really good to see."

Nazareth Alumnae banquet

The Nazareth Academy Alumnae Association is holding its annual Alumnae Banquet on Friday, May 2, at 6 p.m. at the Mapledale Party House, 1020 Maple St., Rochester. To complete the gala weekend, Homecoming will be held on Saturday, May 4 at Nazareth Academy Auditorium. The Liturgy of the Eucharist will be offered at 10 a.m., followed by a breakfast and a tour of the school. The families of the Alumnae are invited to the homecoming. For more information, call (716)254-3219 or (716)458-8583.

Inner healing retreat

The Cenacle Center for Spiritual Renewal welcomes back Sr. Joan Kellenberg, r.c. and her team for another retreat of Charismatic Inner Healing, May 23-25. The weekend includes Eucharistic Liturgy and prayer for inner healing. The offering is \$55.

Sr. Joan and her team will also offer an evening of Charismatic Inner Healing on Wednesday, May 21 at 7:30 p.m. For reservations or information, please contact the Cenacle Ministry Office, 693 East Ave., Rochester or call (716)271-8755.

"I want to express my strong appreciation to the 275 volunteers that have very quietly filled a Christian role in a way that's a tremendous example to the rest of the community," Privett added.

But because of the low-key way in which the shelters operate, he noted, the community may have the false sense that the problem of homelessness is being resolved.

"This shouldn't just be a project of the Catholic Church," said Ann Byrne. Coordinators have already begun to move in an ecumenical direction, enlisting both financial and volunteer support from other area churches.

"John (Byrne) made a presentation to Genesee Ecumenical Ministries and got some good feedback from that. There was defi-

nitely interest there," she said.

Coordinators at both Blessed Sacrament and St. Bridget's would like to call next winter their last in the shelter business.

"We are hoping that between the Mental Health Association, the City of Rochester, the County of Monroe and the Catholic diocese, there can be something put together by the winter of 1987," said Father Bob Werth of St. Bridget's.

Queen of the shelter kitchen feeds homeless with pasta and love

It takes a lot of people to run a shelter. Each contribution — whether it's laundering sheets, staffing a shift or donating bread — is equally necessary to the overall operation.

But no volunteer would deny that Doris Williams' efforts in the last two-and-a-half years transcend the ordinary.

Since mid-November, Williams has bought, begged for and prepared close to 4,000 meals for guests at St. Bridget's and Blessed Sacrament shelters. In the process, she's spent only \$1.40 per week per person on average.

She's quick to credit her cost effectiveness to others. Parishes from across Monroe County and beyond donate food. Williams also claims important "connections" — a sister who's a devoted coupon-clubber, a brother who owns a Park Avenue deli, and the Cenacle Center for Spiritual Renewal, which donates much of its leftover food.

Shelter coordinators protest that this "queen of the money-back offer," is too modest — that her dedication is overwhelming.

It's been a rare winter night during the past two-and-a-half years when Williams and her daughter, Ann Marie, didn't arrive at Blessed Sacrament promptly at 9 p.m. with dinner for between 15 and 20 hungry people.

This year, the number nearly doubled with the addition of meals for ten guests at St. Bridget's shelter.

Casseroles, spaghetti, soups and stews of unimaginable variety are their stock in trade. And rheumatoid arthritis or not, nobody can turn a pile of dented cans and bags of groceries into a meal faster than Doris can.

Experience has taught her to anticipate the guests' sometimes unpredictable tastes. "They love pasta with meat sauce — any kind of pasta, any kind of meat sauce," she said. They won't eat jello without whipped cream, fruit, baked goods or cheese.

But they still surprise her. Last year, tuna casserole and rice were unqualified bombs. This year both have vanished



Blessed Sacrament volunteer Doris Williams prepared more than 4,000 meals this past winter. She claims she couldn't have done it without right-hand man Roosevelt Rice.

without a whimper. "They haven't turned down much this year," Doris said.

Depending largely on donations, Williams has had her creative powers taxed at times by cans of yams, sardines and pickled beets. Last year, she recalled, someone even sent in a jar of caviar. "We gave it away," she said.

Then there have been nights when 10 extra hungry guests turn up unexpectedly. Somehow, she nearly always

comes up with enough for everyone. The combinations get a little bit weird, but she claims never to serve anything she wouldn't eat herself.

One of her strangest successes was an accident. After using bouillon cubes to make beef broth, Williams discovered it was too salty. She racked her brain, finally adding several cans of baked beans to sweeten the soup. "You should have seen them go for that," she said.