

Neighbors

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privacy. Idalise and Jose now have their own apartment downstairs. So far, he said, the building is much quieter than their former home.

"I feel proud of my wife for fighting for this apartment, for keeping the faith. For me, it is a dream come true," Ray said.

The dream was born when Bartolotta, Linda Berger of Housing Opportunities Inc., a branch of the Housing Council, and Lou Childs, an architect with I.M.S. Engineers, put their heads together to figure out what to do with the school building, which had been

largely vacant since 1976.

Together, they wrote a proposal for funds from the state's Homeless Housing Assistance Program and submitted it in 1984. Nearly a year later, they learned they had been granted \$350,000. With additional money from the City of Rochester and a low-interest loan from the Martin Luther King Foundation, the project was finished with a mortgage of only \$64,000 out of a total cost of \$465,000.

High mortgage costs are what most often makes new housing beyond the reach of the truly poor. Mount Carmel's costs were so low because the parish essentially donated the building to the Housing Council. The council will make payments on the mortgage, and will lease the building to the parish for 15 years at a time.

Religious education

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Despite their financial woes, religious education administrators have not raised CERT fees and hope to avoid doing so, at least for the next year. Individuals are now charged \$7.50 for Level I CERT courses (the cost includes book); \$5 for level II; and \$10 for Level III. "We would prefer not to add an additional burden onto people. They're already being assessed," Mancini said.

Instead, courses without 10 pre-registered participants in Monroe County or seven in the Southern Tier or Finger Lakes regions were canceled.

"The cuts have meant offering more regional programs. We can't serve individual parish needs as completely as we did," Mancini said. "Offering one course per region means traveling is part of what we have to do. When you're offering one in the whole Southern Tier, that's not many CERTs."

Funding cuts have also hurt CERT indirectly. There's no money for advertising, and centralized mail, which was introduced to cut back on the volume of mail to parishes as well as to save money, will require some adjustments.

"Centralized mail raises some serious

challenges for us as to how to publicize our programs effectively," Mancini said.

Roughly two dozen people throughout the diocese teach CERT courses regularly. Those who teach courses in doctrine are required to have earned master's degrees in theology, religious education or divinity. For basic level courses, teachers must have a combination of a bachelor's degree and religious education experience.

On the average, CERT teachers spend 10 hours actually teaching each course, and at least 10 more in preparation and travel time, Mancini said.

Even though stipends for teaching CERT haven't been raised in five years, many teachers depend on them as part of their income.

Some have had as many as three courses cancelled this fall because of low registrations. Not only does that represent a loss of income, but it's also disappointing.

"I think it (the cut) has hurt teachers quite a lot," Mancini said. "Adult education is exciting. Most people who teach adult faith enrichment, for instance, love it. A whole lot of what they're doing is helping people uncover their experience of God... People do a lot of faith sharing and story telling, and that's exciting."

Sister Anne Marie Fehrenbach, SSJ, is one

who teaches purely for the joy of it. In addition to her full-time job teaching theology at Cardinal Mooney High School, Sister Anne Marie has offered CERT courses on scripture for the past four years.

As a result, rent can be based on the shelter allowance each tenant receives from the Department of Social Services.

Renovation on the school began last February and was completed on schedule this summer. From now on, repairs and building maintenance will be handled by a management company.

During the next five years, Housing Council staff will continue to work with residents on living skills, such as housekeeping, and on the concept of mutual housing, which attempts to combine the best aspects of renting and ownership.

"We will train and work with tenants with the idea of eventually having them participate on the board of directors that will ultimately run the building," Berger said.

"The training will focus on things like what

happens if they don't pay their rent — trying to get them to see that it has to come from somewhere. It's hard for people to understand when they've been renters all their lives."

In addition to tenants, Mount Carmel parishioners and staff members will be represented on the Tenants Association.

In the end, Bartolotta pointed out, everyone came out ahead. Before it was renovated, the building was worth only \$20,000 to \$30,000. Now its value has increased to \$1.25 million. Meanwhile, the parish has helped to provide decent housing for its neighbors, and the Housing Council has thus far established the only low-income, mutual housing project in the city.

And the Sanchez family has their dream home at last.

families."

In spite of its financial limitations, the religious education department plans to offer three new CERT programs this spring. Single session classes will be offered on Church, what Catholics believe about the Bible, and the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on Catholic social teaching and the economy. Single-day workshops will also be offered on teaching methods and between 10 and 12 new adult faith enrichment courses will be introduced throughout the diocese.

In September, religious education administrators also submitted a proposal to revise the process of catechist formation used by the diocese. "That's still under consideration," said Sister Mary Ann Binsack, director of religious education. "Based on that proposal, we may be looking at different catechist formation next year."

Don't tell Sister Mary Amnesia, but if you're planning to attend a performance of Downstairs Cabaret's musical comedy "Nonsense" between now and Christmas, please remember to bring along a donation. Non-perishable canned food items and new toys will be collected in a specially designated area located at the theater, 151 St. Paul Place. The general public may participate by bringing donations to the theater Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., and Saturday and Sundays, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

The Catholic Family Center plans to distribute any donated goods to homeless and needy

inner-city families and individuals, through the center's network of charitable efforts.

Joining in the spirit of the Downstairs Cabaret's campaign are three area Catholic high schools: Nazareth Academy, Cardinal Mooney High School and McQuaid Jesuit High School. A committee of student volunteers and faculty members will be conducting similar efforts within each school.

For further information, contact Sue Sheldon, theater drive coordinator, (716)461-1142, or Bill Privett, director of the Catholic Charity department, (716)546-4894.

'Nonsense' inspires holiday canned food and toy drive

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