



Anniversary affair

The Sisters of Mercy plan an open house to celebrate their infirmary's 10th year and to thank their diocesan family for helping to make it a reality. See page 7.



Discourse on drugs

Body builder Paul D'Accusio, a former math teacher and wrestling coach at Cardinal Mooney High School, is trying to get to students before drugs do. See page 13.

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Protestors demand municipal shelter for homeless

By Lee Strong

Claiming that the City of Rochester has neglected to provide adequate care for the homeless, 60 local shelter workers and supporters gathered on the Broad Street Bridge, Friday, Nov. 27, to protest the lack of a city-supported shelter facility. The protest ended with the arrest of three of the demonstrators — including a homeless man — who knelt in the street and obstructed traffic. The three were later charged with disorderly conduct.

Arrested were Michael Affleck, director of St. Joseph's House of Hospitality; David Van Waes, a homeless man now staying at St. Joseph's; and Deacon Michael Krupiarz, pastoral assistant at St. Mary's Church, Rochester. On November 28, City Court Judge John Manning Regan ordered the charges against the three men dropped on the condition that they are not arrested again within the next six months.

The act of civil disobedience began a campaign to draw attention to "an awful, dirty secret," Affleck explained. "Right in the heart of our city, people are homeless and are dying."

The campaign's goal is to persuade city officials to support a comprehensive shelter program. The city's responsibility in such a program, Affleck explained, would include providing buildings as well as funding for renovations and such operating expenses as social workers to help the homeless find housing and cope with alcoholism, mental disabilities and other problems. "We want to work with the city," he said. "If it provides the building and renovations, we'll provide the staff and services."

The demonstration was also organized to protest the October death of Eric Eiger, a homeless man who frequently stayed at St. Joseph's House. Eiger died after falling in an attempt to climb into the abandoned subway bed beneath the Broad Street Bridge. At that time, Affleck pointed out, several of Rochester's emergency shelters had not opened for the year, and in the absence of a permanent facility, Eiger had no other place to sleep.

Before the demonstration, Father Laurence Tracy celebrated Mass with protestors in the abandoned subway bed, which Affleck noted houses up to 150 homeless people a night. During the Mass, Van Waes, who slept in the subway off and on for a year, described his experiences there.

"There were nights when 200-300 people were down here," the homeless man recounted. "Sometimes whole families showed up, but they didn't stay long. Men were fighting over booze and blankets. I saw women raped."

In the subway, the homeless sleep in cardboard boxes, on mattresses, on the damp, littered ground or on Rochester Gas and Electric steam pipes. "There are rats down here, too," Van Waes continued. He recalled waking up one morning to find a rat sitting on his chest. The rats sometimes attack the sleeping men, he said. "People have died down here that you don't hear about."

Van Waes said he chose to be arrested to "open up the (city leaders') eyes that there are people suffering who need a place that cares."



Michael Necdet Aydogan

Father Laurence Tracy and 60 protestors celebrate Mass in the abandoned subway bed beneath the Broad Street Bridge. As many as 150 homeless people seek shelter in the subway each night.



In the cold air of the subway, Father Tracy pauses in silent prayer for Rochester's homeless.

He noted that he had stayed in shelters in others cities, and that Rochester was the only large city he'd been in that didn't have one. "Syracuse has one — why can't Rochester?"



Three protestors. (from left) Deacon Michael Krupiarz, David Van Waes and Michael Affleck, kneel on the Broad Street Bridge to protest lack of a municipal shelter.

he asked.

The answer to Van Waes' question is not a simple one. Affleck and the organizers of the protest claim that the city has neglected its responsibility to the poor. In fact, they say that city policies have aggravated the situation.

"The city declared a cultural district, and the poor got pushed out," Affleck said. The creation of the district and other urban renewal projects have brought the closing or demolition of places like the former YMCA and the Edison Hotel that once offered low-cost housing.

Instead of funding low-cost housing, city officials have financed the Convention Center, the Hyatt Regency and housing for the well-to-do, Affleck said. "Housing projects for the rich get subsidized, but not housing for the poor," he said.

City Councilman John Erb agreed with Affleck's assessment of city policies. "The city, through its development programs, created the bulk of the problems, and is continuing the problem by not developing programs for low- and moderate-income housing," he said.

Rochester has used federal and state funds to create condominiums, houses and apartments for upper-income people, noted Erb, a former member of the city council's Housing and Community Development Committee. The Hyatt Regency Hotel, he pointed out, received \$16 million in loans and grants.

Erb said he was surprised by the protest, however. During his time on the city council and as a member of the housing committee, he said, no one had proposed creating a permanent city shelter. Although he agreed in

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