

Features

Christmas fund finances emergency needs year-round

By Lee Strong

Christmas 1986 hasn't completely ended at the Catholic Family Center (CFC), at least not for some of the needy. Twenty-eight families enjoyed the benefits of the 1986 Courier-Journal/Catholic Charities Christmas Fund — in October.

The CFC, which shares the proceeds of the Christmas Fund with the Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry, the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry and the Division of Urban Services, uses donations from the fund not only at Christmas time, but throughout the year. This continuing aid supplements assistance provided through the center's services and its regular financial sources, according to Marcia Fedyk of the Catholic Family Center.

Last year, for example, CFC's allocation from the fund amounted to \$43,050. Of this amount, the center's case workers distributed approximately \$22,000 in food vouchers to 1,800 families during the 1986 Christmas season. The rest of the money has been distributed as needed since that time. The October disbursement, for example, was \$4,000, Fedyk said.

That money, she explained, has helped to meet the emergency needs of poor people who come to CFC with needs that can't be met through such regular funding sources as the United Way. Sometimes these sources fail because the clients' needs are not covered by regular services, because all the regularly available funds have already been used, or because the problems are too immediate to wait for paper work to be processed or funding to be approved. Frequently, emergency disbursements are made to resolve rent problems, travel crises involving sick children, food and clothing emergencies, utility bills, medical needs, even emergency auto repairs.

Catholic Family Center is also careful about who gets the assistance, Fedyk pointed out. "We research each case to make sure there is a genuine need," she explained. "All the cases are being worked with (by case workers)."

The case workers, in fact, choose the recipients from among their case loads. The caseworkers submit lists of potential recipients to their supervisors, who then select the neediest cases. Because of the number of clients the center works with, 57 of the 100 Neediest Cases on the Christmas Fund list are CFC clients.

"The needs of the poor continue throughout the year," Fedyk noted, explaining the use of Christmas Fund monies during the year for the Family Center's ongoing services. Since 1917, the Catholic Family Center has served the Rochester community by providing adoption and foster care; assistance to unwed mothers; child-abuse prevention services; refugee programs; drug-abuse prevention programs; and counseling services to youths and the elderly. Funding for these services comes from a variety of sources, including United Way contributions and state and federal funds.

This year, Christmas fund money has been particularly helpful because of allocation cutbacks stemming from a United Way campaign shortfall, according to Joanne Adams, director of the STAR program, a CFC service for the elderly. Although the demand for CFC services has increased, many of the programs have had to be held at old budgetary levels, Adams explained.

With demands for services expected to increase even more — and with funding increases uncertain — the need for a successful 1987 Christmas Fund campaign grows, Fedyk observed. How much the CFC can do in the coming year depends on how much is collected, she concluded.

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26 Mrs. W. was raising three young children on a minimum-wage income after she and her husband separated, but because of a severe accident, she recently had to go on disability. The family is now months behind in rent, their utilities have been cut off, and they have hardly any food to eat.

27 Mrs. S. W., recently separated from her abusive husband, is trying to raise two young children, ages 5 and 9. She is finding it difficult and very stressful to be on her own. Mrs. S. W. is presently employed, but her minimum-wage income doesn't adequately meet the family's needs.

28 Mrs. B. became the sole support of her family after her husband deserted her. She has two children, a 3-year-old boy and a 6-year-old girl. After exhausting her savings, she is applying for public assistance. Mrs. B. has employable skills, but cannot find work. This family needs some special help this Christmas.

29 Mrs. O. is the mother of three children. Her husband is crippled; their only income is social security. Mrs. O. cannot find work because she has developed few employ-

able skills. She says after paying rent and some bills, and buying food, there's not even bus fare left. Mrs. O. would be glad to get something extra for Christmas.

30 Bill and Cheryl are in their 60s. Bill owned a successful business, and the couple expected to spend their later years enjoying their lovely home and perhaps traveling a bit. Their retirement dreams were shattered when Bill suffered a severe stroke. The hospital and home care bills have depleted their savings, and they had to sell their car to pay last month's mortgage. Bill and Cheryl realize that they might lose their home, but they're not asking anyone to bail them out. All they want are rides to the doctor now and then and regular help with the shopping. They would enjoy someone who would even just listen.

31 Daisy is a 70-year-old woman whose husband just died. In addition to sudden widowhood, she's had to deal with another tragedy: a daughter who took her own life. Daisy has multiple medical problems including high blood pressure and diabetes. She also has problems with the muscles in her hands.

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