

Features

Genesee Valley social ministry seeks recruits for AIDS Volunteer Project

Hospitals are places where it's easy to feel alone while surrounded by hundreds of people. For many AIDS patients, the natural isolation of a hospital environment is compounded by barriers of ignorance, fear and anger that may have separated them from family and friends.

To combat the isolation and loneliness often imposed by AIDS, the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry, the diocesan Urban Ministries Division and AIDS Rochester are joining forces to launch a new program known as the AIDS Volunteer Project.

The project seeks to recruit and train volunteers willing to visit AIDS patients in the hospital. No specific time commitment, experience or expertise is required. "What we're looking for is someone to sit and talk with them, and just spend some time," explained Lucy Dechaine, coordinator of the project and a staff member at the Genesee Valley office.

To date, 10 men and women, including several priests and religious, have expressed interest in the new program. Dechaine hopes to enlist twice as many by January, when the Genesee Valley office and AIDS Rochester are planning to offer an orientation session for volunteers.

During the day-long program, representatives from AIDS Rochester will provide volunteers with a basic outline of how the AIDS virus is transmitted and who is at risk. The pro-

gram will also present basic listening skills and issues surrounding death and dying.

The AIDS Volunteer Project was prompted by a statement on AIDS passed by the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry's Board of Directors in September, 1986. In addition to calling for a broad range of educational and advocacy efforts, the statement specifically proposed that the Genesee Valley office recruit and train volunteers to visit AIDS patients in hospitals and homes.

Organizers initially envisioned the program as one in which individual volunteers would be matched with AIDS patients to provide long-term, intensive support. But rather than duplicating a similar service already provided by AIDS Rochester, organizers decided to focus on a unmet need for hospital visitors.

"Sometimes when people are in the hospital, our volunteers are the only ones there for them," said Jackie Nudd, executive director of AIDS Rochester. "I don't know how many people out there have ever been in the hospital for any length of time without any visitors, but

it makes for an awfully long day."

Nudd described the ideal hospital visitor as "anyone who is loving and caring about other people, who is compassionate, and who wants

to make a difference in someone's life."

For information on the AIDS Volunteer Project, contact Lucy Dechaine at (716) 546-4894.

Candlelight vigil to celebrate U.S.-Soviet summit, arms treaty

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will be among the featured speakers at a summit-eve vigil on Sunday, Dec. 6, at 5:30 p.m.

A community-wide committee of secular and religious leaders has planned the vigil to celebrate current arms-reduction negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States. When President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev meet in Washington, D.C., next week, they are expected to sign a treaty eliminating medium-range nuclear weapons.

Participants in the vigil will gather at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121

N. Fitzhugh St., at 5:30 p.m. for a silent, 20-minute walk through downtown Rochester. They will then return to the church to listen to remarks by community leaders, including Bishop Clark and Congresswoman Louise Slaughter. The Rochester Peace Child Chorus will provide music for the gathering.

Organizers of the "Celebrating the Summit" vigil ask that participants bring candles along for the walk, but that they not carry signs or banners.

For information about the vigil, contact Dr. John Heister, (716) 272-1990.

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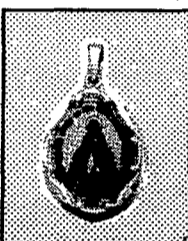
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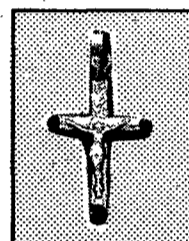
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