

Local News

Study concludes TGA story must be more effectively told

By Lee Strong

The Diocese of Rochester must find ways to better communicate the message that the Thanks Giving Appeal is "vital to the future growth of the diocese"

This is one conclusion of a study conducted this spring by Foley Associates, Inc. The report says that failure to communicate the TGA story is the major weakness of the appeal. It further notes that efforts must be made to explain to lay people, pastors and diocesan employees how appeal money is spent, how parishes benefit directly from TGA funds and how contributions are managed by Pastoral Center administrators.

The 18-page report also contains recommendations on means of improving support to parishes on TGA leaders, methods to increase the average amount of gifts, and a long-term plan to coordinate TGA efforts with the new diocesan development office and the recommendations of the Diocesan Oversight Task Force. The Task Force presented its findings to Bishop Matthew H. Clark June 29.

According to Father James M. Moynihan, diocesan appeal coordinator, the report confirmed what TGA officials had already suspected. Its value, he said, was that it "documented what we felt."

Joan Ryan, general chairwoman of the appeal, added that the report had generated a great deal of discussion among TGA leaders, whose efforts now will be directed at improving the educational and communication aspects of the appeal.

The report's findings and the resulting discussions accomplished what diocesan officials had intended the report to do, noted Patrick



Joan Ryan



Charles Hetterich

Sullivan, director of the appeal.

"The major purpose of the Foley (study) was to give our leadership an outside observer's interpretation of the things we are presently doing right and things we are doing wrong," Sullivan said. TGA leaders are still discussing the report's recommendations and considering the best way to implement them, he noted.

The 1988 appeal already incorporates several of the short-term suggestions contained in the report. A TGA videotape is now being prepared for presentation to parish groups and to parish appeal leaders in the fall. According to Father Moynihan, the videotape will show

TGA donations at work, focusing on people working in and affected by diocesan programs, rather than showing diocesan staff explaining the appeal's importance to their work.

A second communications change is that the appeal will use one full-color brochure to replace the three separate regional pamphlets used last year. "We're trying to keep our literature (focusing on) one Church in our presentation - rather than regionally," Sullivan observed.

An immediate result of the report was that the annual June meetings with clergy were cancelled this year because pastors indicated that they thought the meetings were unnecessary.

"I think we have to be more sensitive to the pastors - they are the backbone of the appeal," explained Charles Hetterich, the appeal's vice chairman. He said that the Foley report made clear the need to listen to the pastors. "We need to find a way to communicate (with them) on an ongoing basis through their normal formats like their regional meetings, so that we're not imposing on pastors' times."

These changes coincide with a number of attempts during the last several years to streamline the appeal process, and to promote continuity and greater input from the community.

The first step in creating continuity was the hiring last year of Sullivan as the first full-time, paid director of the appeal.

Father Moynihan, who has been involved with the appeal for three years, said Sullivan's hiring came out of a recognition that running the appeal has become a year-round job requiring a person in charge on a day-to-day basis. Previously, he noted, various pastors had directed the program, but their parish duties prevented them from devoting enough time and energy to the appeal.

A second change introduced last year was the establishment of the vice chairmanship. The vice chairman works with the TGA leadership for one year, becoming familiar with the process, and then becomes chairman the following year. Ryan, who was the first vice chairwoman appointed through this system, said the year's experience prepared her to assume the role of chairwoman. "You can't possibly assimilate it all in one year," she noted. "I'm still learning."

Sullivan noted that, in an effort to provide input from different parts of the diocese, the appeal's vice chairman and the chairman are being chosen on an alternating-region basis - from Monroe County one year, outside Monroe County the next. Last year's chairman, Thomas C. McAvoy, is from Corning. Ryan lives in Rochester, while Hetterich resides in Naples.

"I think (the alternating selection system) is saying that it's a diocesan appeal for diocesan ministries - it's more than Rochester," said Father Daniel F. Holland, the appeal's assistant coordinator and pastor of Elmira's St. Patrick's Parish.

Like the lay chairmen, Father Holland and the priest coordinators who succeed him will be selected on an alternating-region basis. The Elmira pastor will assume duties of coordinator next year, replacing Father Moynihan, pastor of St. Joseph's, Penfield.

Father Holland emphasized that diocesan support services are provided throughout the diocese, although these services are often not immediately obvious or understood. He noted, for example, that the assistance and support given to schools in the Elmira region comes to \$50,000 to \$70,000. "That's what the people in the outlying areas need to sense," he commented.

"A lot of people outside Monroe County believe they send money to Rochester and it gets spent in Rochester," the priest observed. "That's just not true."

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New diocesan development director aims to match people with principles

By Lee Strong

Mark Seeberg, the Diocese of Rochester's new director of development, brings to his job the perspective of a former high school basketball coach.

"A coach comes in with a game plan for how he wants to run the team," Seeberg explained. "But first, he has to get to know his players and then adapt the plan to fit their abilities."

Seeberg's goal for his first three months in Rochester is to get to know the players - pastors, parishioners, civic leaders, Catholic lay people and diocesan personnel.

"There are certain development principles I bring here, but I need to get to know the culture and the people so I can match the principles to the people," Seeberg said. "You don't just come in and install a program; you have to get a feel for how the place runs."

Learning about the diocesan culture, people and operations is especially important for the new director, who moved to Rochester from Illinois to take the job. Since 1972, he worked as an English teacher, an associate director of development, and finally as director of development at Loyola Academy in Wilmette, Illinois - from which he himself had graduated before attending Notre Dame University and earning a master's degree in English teaching from Brown University.

Seeberg made the switch from teaching to development in 1982 because he was ready for a challenge. During his time in the academy's development office, the school completed a \$5

million endowment campaign and began a major gifts campaign that netted \$1.3 million last year.

Although raising funds for a diocese is a much larger task than raising money for a school, Seeberg sees some similarities.

"There has to be some sense of ownership and involvement before people give," Seeberg said. "An alumnus won't give unless he feels ownership of the school. The challenge for the diocese is to help people establish ownership of diocesan programs."

One way to help establish that sense of ownership is to get people involved and develop a sense of commitment to the diocese, he said, noting that in his first few weeks in Rochester he's already seen evidence that people here feel such a bond to their local churches.

"There's a strong concern for parish," he said. "When I ask people where they're from they say, 'I live in such and such a parish!'"

Parishes are easy for people to relate to because the donors are involved in parish activities and know the people parish programs serve, Seeberg noted. "People give to people," he said. "They don't give to wish lists or to institutions."

Seeberg said that one of his challenges is to convey the message that diocesan programs are aimed at serving people, not the structure of the diocesan administration. "What counts is that the people's needs get funded," he said. "If the perception in the community is that the

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