

Features

Thanks Giving Appeal '88

Cold, hard reality limits availability of diocesan subsidies

By Lee Strong

Workers at the House of Mercy received word this spring that their ministry would not be granted an urban subsidy from the Division of Urban Services of the Diocese of Rochester. The news surprised them.

The drop-in center, located at 105 Central Park, had received subsidies in 1987 and 1986. The center's most recent subsidy request would have provided money for a new staff worker to help neighborhood residents deal with social-service bureaucracy, get drug and alcohol counseling, furnish apartments, or simply pay the rent.

"People expect that we get help from the Catholic diocese," noted staff member Sister Rita Lewis, RSM, "and when we say no, they're kind of shocked by that."

The House of Mercy was one of seven programs rejected for urban subsidies this fiscal year. Nor were these programs alone in being turned down for diocesan support. Four programs that applied for Respect Life Fund monies from the Division of Social Ministry were denied funding. Of 695 students who applied for tuition subsidies from the Division of Education, 377 did not receive them.

Diocesan officials point out that in turning down these programs and individuals, the di-

ocese was in no way criticizing the programs or judging the individuals or groups undeserving of support. But a cold, hard reality limits how much can be given: the Diocese of Rochester has only so much money to spend.

The three subsidy programs are funded through money raised by the annual Thanks Giving Appeal. Appeal funds also support overall diocesan operations, and since 1985, increases in TGA receipts have gone to cover needed raises in salary and benefits for diocesan personnel. Out of necessity, therefore, allocations for subsidy programs have been frozen at approximately the same levels over those years: \$24,700 for respect life funds; \$80,000 for urban subsidies; and \$165,000 for tuition subsidies.

These funding limitations have also prevented the diocese from initiating new programs or resurrecting old ones — such as the family ministry office. According to Father John Mulligan, moderator of the pastoral office, if any diocesan division were to create a new program at this point, that division would have to take the money from another of its programs.

Meanwhile, divisions that administer subsidy programs are forced to make difficult choices.

In order to assist with such choices, each of

these divisions has created committees to review applications and to recommend which programs to fund.

The Division of Social Ministry, for example, has an allocation committee made up of representatives from the three regions of the diocese: Finger Lakes, Southern Tier and Genesee Valley. This committee assesses applications, then recommends to the division director which organizations should receive funding.

In deciding what programs to fund, the committee uses a set of criteria established by the committee itself. These criteria stipulate that the groups be not-for-profit; not perform, promote or make referrals for abortions; and demonstrate that the project for which they are requesting does not duplicate existing services. Even when programs meet the criteria, they might be rejected because the proposed project has weaknesses or does not have a reasonable chance of success.

The Division of Education also has committees to decide who receives tuition subsidies. The criteria for these decisions are based on size of family, family income and average tuition charges. The Diocesan Tuition Subsidy Committees — one for elementary schools and another for high schools — also use separate

figures to account for the differences between tuition at Monroe County schools and non-Monroe County schools.

Sister Virginia Steinwachs, SSI, assistant superintendent for urban education/public relations for the education division, acknowledged that the demand for tuition subsidies far exceeds the amount of money available. The number of subsidies must be limited, she noted, because the amount of the subsidies would otherwise become too small to significantly help students.

Sister Steinwachs noted that the tuition subsidy program could easily use \$500,000 a year. "We need help for the people who just miss the cut-off. The poor are being helped, and the wealthy can afford to pay the tuition. But we are losing people — the ones in between — who we are not helping."

She noted, however, that the diocese "can't take money from other ministries. They need to be supported, and they are needed."

Rebecca Gifford, director of the Division of Urban Services, said that her division is similarly limited in how much money it can disburse.

"We're not in the business of trying to pull the rug out on people," Gifford said, "(but) there isn't enough money to fund every program that submits an application. We have so many applications."

In the 1988-89 fiscal year, 20 programs shared in \$80,000 disbursed through the urban subsidy program. These recipients included the youth ministry program at Immaculate Conception Parish, the religious education program at St. Michael's, and the Hispanic ministry at Ss. Peter and Paul Parish.

As with the other subsidy programs, approval of funding for urban subsidy recipients is based on criteria developed by the review committee of the subsidy program. This committee, Gifford said, consists of priests, sisters and lay people "who are connected with urban parishes and people we feel are in touch with the needs of the poor and have a sense of Church among the poor."

Among the criteria used by the committee to make its decisions are that the proposals: do not duplicate already existing services; provide for leadership training and development; and reflect a sharing of resources through collaboration among parishes and/or between parishes and other agencies. Gifford noted that because of limited funds, the urban subsidy program focuses on parish ministries.

Lack of a strong parish connection was the explanation given for the diocese's rejection of the House of Mercy's subsidy application, according to Sister Lewis. She noted, however, that an effort had been made to increase contact with St. Francis Xavier Parish. She had begun to take children to the church for Mass, and St. Francis' pastor, Father William Leone, regularly comes to the house to celebrate Mass.

"They (the diocese) have their criteria and say we don't fit it, while we say, 'Yes we do,'" Sister Lewis remarked.

Gifford said that talking about specifics of why particular programs were rejected is not "productive," but noted that the Sisters of Mercy Congregation, which supports the House of Mercy, understood and accepted the diocesan

Continued on Page 14

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

AN EXPERIENCED LEADER

HE'S ONE OF OUR MOST EFFECTIVE CONGRESSMEN. FOR 26 YEARS HE HAS BUILT A SOLID RECORD OF SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS DISTRICT. HE HAS ACHIEVED A LEVEL OF SENIORITY IN



CONGRESS THAT GIVES OUR VOICE THE IMPACT WE NEED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

ON NOVEMBER 8th RE-ELECT CONGRESSMAN HORTON.

FOR YOU...FOR NEW YORK... FOR THE NATION.

Congressman
HORTON

LEADERSHIP THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Paid For by Congressman Horton Committee, Neil Norry, Treasurer

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

RE-ELECT



JUDGE
ANTHONY F.
BONADIO

Because in Family Court —

EXPERIENCE COUNTS!

That's why Judge Bonadio is recommended by the Monroe County Bar Association, and endorsed by the Monroe County Republican, Democratic, and Conservative Parties. Also endorsed by: Rochester and Vicinity Labor Council, AFL-CIO; G.M. Local 1097, U.A.W., Monroe Co. Federation of Social Workers Local 381, I.U.E. - A.F.L. - C.I.O.

On Election Day, Tuesday, November 8 vote for **JUDGE BONADIO**

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF FAMILY COURT ...

... EVERYDAY.

Paid for by families to Re-Elect Judge Bonadio

**COMPUTERS
& CARE**

Division of Z.I.P., Inc.



PC.
Service Center
Computers
Printers &
PC. Rentals

Piano Works Mall

586-8067

TRADING STAMPS

S&H Green, Top Value, Blue Chip, Plaid, Gold Bond, Red Holden, Big Bonus, Eagle, Quality, Family Discount, Big Dollar, LMC & BW coupons, Gold Strike and Shur-Value can help provide for the education of a needy Sioux Indian child. Please send yours to: St. Joseph's Indian School, Box 02F8, Chamberlain, SD 57326.