

Organizations ask donors to think before giving

by Rob Cullivan

In the Gospel of St. Matthew, Christ remarks that what one gives to the least of his brothers is what one gives to Christ. Lately, Christ — in the form of those served by homeless shelters and food cupboards throughout the diocese — has received wet and musty clothing, bags of trash and even dog food.

Shelter and food cupboard representatives are quick to point out that the vast majority of donated goods are useful, but observe that some donors need to be more thoughtful in choosing what they give. Calling a charity to inquire about its specific needs, for example, can save an organization time needed to sort the wheat from the chaff.

Larry Coleman has spent a good deal of time sorting clothes at the overnight shelter run by Blessed Sacrament Parish in Rochester. The coming of winter means homeless men and women need such winter clothing as jackets, coats, boots, socks and long underwear, according to Coleman, who coordinates the shelter's clothing distribution.

The shelter, which houses up to 14 men and four women from mid-November to March, sometimes receives less-than-appropriate garments for its clients. "Inevitably we get lots of donations of women's blouses and dresses that we have no use for," Coleman said. He also noted that the shelter often receives men's three-piece suits for which it has no use.

The house manager at St. Joseph House of Hospitality in Rochester has experienced another side of well-intentioned, but unthinking generosity. When Brother John Hart recently received a plastic bag full of wet clothing, he thanked the donor, but had to discard the gift afterward. "I can't use junk," Brother Hart said. "I wouldn't insult anyone by giving it to them."

Joan Smith, co-director of Bethany House of Hospitality in Rochester, said that the house receives some donations that can no longer be used. "There's some problems when people give us discarded items — blankets, sheets, bedspreads," she said. "After a washing or two, they fall apart."

When one gives can be as important as what one gives. Several shelters that distribute clothing receive an overabundance of summer wear just as winter is approaching. Eleanor Rugg coordinates the storehouse at 1010 East Ave. in Rochester which the Asbury First United Methodist Church operates for low-income families referred by neighbors, social workers and area pastors. The storehouse receives large amounts of out-of-season merchandise, and because they lack storage space, workers often give much of the clothing to the Salvation Army or sell it to a second-hand clothing store. The storage problem will be alleviated somewhat in January of 1989 when the store will move to a more spacious location at 1050 East Ave., Rugg said.

Untimely donations are an inevitable part of the business of soliciting charity, according to Janis Thomason-Mussen, executive director of the Come-Unity Center/Wayne County Rural Ministries, an interdenominational outreach program in Williamson. Mussen noted that as people clean out their summer wardrobes at the end of the season, they give



Linda Dow Hayes/Courier-Journal

Workers at Blessed Sacrament's overnight shelter are still wondering whether the person who "donated" this bag of dog food was making a statement about the type of meals homeless people deserve. Area shelter and food cupboard workers note, however, that most contributions are appropriate and of good quality.

their unwanted clothes to charities. Coleman observed that Blessed Sacrament shelter likewise receives a large number of summer items each fall.

Another problem in the timing of donations is that the flow of gifts tends to dry up after the holiday season. "If people could spread donations over time it would help us get through the dark days of winter," Brother Hart remarked about the lean days shelters and food cupboards sometimes experience from January through March.

In past years, diocesan parishes have participated in a Thanksgiving-time clothing drive for Catholic Relief Services which shipped the clothing overseas to developing countries. CRS suspended the drive this year because the textile industries of the recipient countries are expanding and their governments are restricting the imports of used clothing.

Instead of the CRS clothing drive, the diocesan Division of Social Ministry sent a letter to pastors advising parishes to send clothing donations to local charities. The memo also advised parishes to call ahead to determine what the charity needs, and cautioned donors

to make sure that items are in clean and usable condition. It also suggested that parishes find out if a late winter drive would be more helpful than the traditional holiday one.

At the Tioga County Open Door Mission, a non-denominational clothing and food distribution center in Owego, the worry isn't so much about excessive holiday donations as it is about stopping people from filling its drop-off boxes with plastic bags of trash. "It's so hard to try and discourage," said the Rev. Timothy Ward, superintendent. "I don't think some people think, but for whatever reason, they do it," he said, baffled by the trash dumpers' motives.

Similarly, Doris Cohen can't understand what someone was thinking when he or she donated a bag of dog food to the overnight shelter at Blessed Sacrament Parish. But Cohen suspects that some people in her parish might be trying to send a message that the homeless men and women the shelter serves are unworthy of assistance.

If that's the case, Cohen, who coordinates food distribution for the shelter, wishes the "donor" could spend at least a night at the

shelter. "They'd find out (the homeless) are really not a bad group of people," she said. "You have to see them and talk to them to appreciate them."

Other donors may have better intentions but don't realize the uselessness of their gifts. "We've gotten a lot of bent and broken cans ... outdated stuff," Smith said, also noting that Bethany House, which maintains an emergency food cupboard, can't give out unlabeled cans of food.

Smith said that donors should consider spreading out their donations among a number of agencies. Many times, donors, especially people who've just given dinner parties, will bring leftover food to just one food cupboard. "They'll bring us stuff that would last three weeks," she said. "If we don't have a place to store the food, it goes to waste." Like Bethany House, most food cupboards and shelters have limited freezer space and have no means to transport excess food to other organizations.

The following is a list of area organizations that collect food, clothing and other items for the needy and homeless. It's best to call first at all these agencies before making a donation. All of these organizations will gratefully accept any donations, but are in particular need of the items listed.

Tioga County Open Door Mission, Upper North Avenue, Owego — Infants' winter wear, snow suits for children ages one through seven, or any kind of outer winter wear. Call the Rev. Timothy Ward at (607)687-1121, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Asbury Storehouse, 1010 East Avenue, Rochester — Infants and children's wear, especially for boys; adult large sizes; all sizes men's and children's coats and jackets; maternity and layette; also bedding and cookware. Call Eleanor Rugg at (716)473-0950.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, 53 Ontario Street, Rochester — Infants' and children's wear; men's underwear, slacks, sweaters, shoes, coats; children's and adults' winter coats and boots. Call Sister Mary Regis at (716)262-3857.

St. Martin's Place, a soup kitchen located in the parish's apartment building and operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph, needs spaghetti and sauce; beans, peanut butter, and other high-protein foods; single envelopes of powdered milk; and infant foods. Call (716)325-6500 for information.

Come-Unity Center/Wayne County Rural Ministries, 4095 W. Main St., Williamson — bedding items, clothing, blankets of all sizes, towels, winter jackets and such up-to-date books as encyclopedias. Call Janis Thomason-Mussen at (315)589-8105.

Cayuga County Action Program Agency, 187 North St., Auburn — children's items. Call Joann Decker at (315)255-1703.

Bethany House of Hospitality, 169 St. Bridget's Dr., Rochester — children's toys, crib blankets and household items. The house also accepts food donations. Call (716)454-4197.

St. Joseph House of Hospitality, 402 South Ave., Rochester — single cot-size sheets, towels, dishwashing liquid, detergent, bleach. The house also needs vanilla flavoring for its powdered milk, and money to buy meat and milk. Call (716)232-3262.

Highland doctors to provide medical care at shelters throughout winter

Medical assistance for homeless people will be offered at all three parish shelters for the first time ever this winter.

Three Rochester parishes — Blessed Sacrament, St. Bridget's and Corpus Christi — will open their basements to the homeless for the seventh consecutive winter on Sunday, November 13.

The availability of medical attention and follow-up care for the homeless has been a major concern of directors and volunteer staff at the three parish shelters. In the past, only Corpus Christi has been able to provide medical aid through a full-time nurse who is employed at Dimitri House.

Linda Rosier, who is beginning her second year as director of the shelter at St. Bridget's Church, said she was approached this summer by doctors at Highland Hospital who wanted to volunteer their assistance outside hospital walls. At St. Bridget's, doctors will work together with full-time social workers as well as nurses specializing in the area of psychology. They will be available every Wednesday night throughout the winter.

At Blessed Sacrament, first-year co-directors Dick and Louise Sadowski also welcome the availability of medical supervision. Directors are still working on the days and times when medical assistance

will be available at the church shelter. This will also be the first winter that Blessed Sacrament's shelter — which can accommodate 14 men, four women and one full-time staff person — will have a social worker for the entire season.

According to Jim Dobbertin, who is co-director of Corpus Christi's seven-bed emergency shelter along with his wife Pauline, the need for volunteers at his parish shelter is more pressing than in previous years.

Dobbertin said that volunteers at Corpus Christi's emergency shelter would work once a month, from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.. Two people

are always on call together.

Rosier and Sadowski also called for volunteer assistance as they gear up for another cold winter of caring for the homeless.

Shifts at St. Bridget's shelter run from 9:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. and 2 a.m. to 7 a.m. Volunteers are needed for both shifts — 9 a.m. to 2 a.m. and 2 a.m. to 7 a.m. — at Blessed Sacrament, but Sadowski said there is a greater need for help on the second shift.

Those who would like to volunteer at the shelters should contact Linda Rosier at St. Bridget's, 716/454-4236; Dick or Louise Sadowski at Blessed Sacrament,

Two-day conference on AIDS planned for Canandaigua inn

Jackie Nudd, executive director of AIDS Rochester, Inc., and Dr. William Valenti of the University of Rochester School of Medicine, will be two of the presenters at a two-day conference entitled "Double Jeopardy: AIDS and Chemical Dependency," scheduled for November 17 and 18, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Sunrise Hill Inn, 6108 Loomis Rd., Canandaigua.

The conference, which is targeted to human service professionals who work with people who are chemically dependent and at risk for

AIDS, will present general information on AIDS and chemical dependency.

The cost of the conference is \$50 per day or \$90 for both. Call (716)473-6750.

Shelter seeks volunteers

St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, located on 402 South Ave., Rochester, is seeking volunteers for the night shelter program for homeless men from November 13 to April 1.

Contact Sister Marilyn Pray, SSI, at (716)232-3262 for more information.

(716)288-4780, or Jim and Pauline Dobbertin at Corpus Christi, 716/544-4822 or 325-1796 (Dimitri House).

Diocesan Appointments



Deacon Dominick N. Abballe from parish deacon at St. Christopher's Church in North Chili to parish deacon at St. Paul's Church in Webster, effective October 11, 1988.

Monsignor John F. Duffy from parochial vicar at the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Brockport, to temporary parochial vicar at St. Patrick's Church, Victor, effective October 31, 1988.

Deacon Joseph F. Federowicz from sacerdotal for study to parish deacon at St. Margaret Mary Church in Apalachin, effective October 20, 1988.

Father Bethuel N. Mwaura of the Diocese of Nakuru, Kenya, to temporary assistance at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Greece, effective September 27, 1988, through February of 1989.