

Rezoning costs force outreach center to close

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — St. Theresa's Center, a neighborhood outreach program located at 370 Chili Ave., is closing at the end of this month.

St. Augustine's Parish, which sponsors the center, announced that the year-old center would close because the parish could not afford building modifications needed to comply with a proposal to rezone the building according to standards for a commercial center.

Father William Leone, parish administrator, said that St. Augustine's, the center's main supporter, had a projected budget deficit of \$30,000 for 1989-90. Adding the cost of rezoning and operating the center would have driven the deficit to more than \$50,000, he said.

St. Theresa's projected budget for 1989-90 was more than \$18,000, according to Paula Dumont, director. In addition, rezoning the building would have cost between \$10-12,000, she said.

Dumont and Father William Trott, St. Augustine's pastor, who is currently on sabbatical, decided to open the center last June at its current site following a fruitless one-year search for an affordable storefront in the neighborhood, Dumont said.

The building, which at one time housed parish employees, is zoned as a residential structure and was originally built to house two families. It is currently covered by the parish's insurance policy.

Re-zoning the building has been the purpose of the St. Theresa's board of directors since it was first opened, Dumont said, but the center had expected to take a year and a

half to complete the rezoning effort. Eventually, St. Theresa's was supposed to have operated independently of the parish.

Dumont said that she had been assured by the parish council in April that the center would remain open through next year and said she was surprised that the decision to close it came only a month later.

But Father Leone remarked that continuing to operate the center in a residential building was "illegal."

"We were really taking an awful risk — conducting ministries that were quite a bit of a liability," he said.

St. Theresa's services have grown rapidly in the short time the center has existed, Dumont noted. About 500 people come to St. Theresa's each month for a variety of services, ranging from the distribution of food and clothing to prayer services and

academic tutoring. Dumont also noted that two-thirds of the center's clients also volunteer at the center to help it help others.

According to Dumont, St. Theresa's is also partially supported by 25 Catholic and Protestant churches; Mercy High School; such community organizations as the Knights of Columbus; and several private donors of various faiths.

But the bulk of the center's support comes from St. Augustine's, she said, and without its main sponsor, the center's future is unclear. Dumont said the center's board of directors is looking at continuing its services under the auspices of other churches, including Protestant ones. Possibly, the center's staff of volunteers may work on a consultative basis with parishes interested in setting up programs like those offered by St. Theresa's.

Such a role, however, is not enough for the center's clientele, Dumont commented. "We need to get a storefront," she said, "A place where those who don't feel comfortable in the normal church structure can come."

Obtaining a new building would now be almost impossible, she said, because the costs would include insurance, one full-time and one part-time salary, the center's normal operating expenses, and the building's purchase price.

Association to hold camp for blind, visually impaired

The Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired of Greater Rochester, Inc. (ABVI) will hold its annual summer computer camp for blind and visually impaired children, beginning in early July. The program will take place at the Margaret Rogers Computer Training Center, 465 S. Clinton Ave., Rochester.

The free camp, which will run in three, two-week sessions through the end of August, is open to blind and visually impaired children ages six to 18.

The objective of the camp is to introduce blind or visually impaired children to computers through the use of adaptive equipment, and to enhance to the skills of children who already have some computer experience. The adaptive equipment will enable both a totally blind child a visually impaired child to access the computers through voice input and output, large print screens and braille output. Equipment borrowed from BOCES I and II, and four units to be purchased by ABVI, will be used for the camp.

Ann Parsons, a certified visual teacher, and Alesia Hilliard, who is back for her second year as a teacher aide, will comprise the instructional team.

Call Marilyn Kuchmek, assistant director of rehabilitation services at ABVI, 716/232-1111 for information.

Renowned pro-life leader to deliver benefit lecture

Dr. John C. Willke, president of the National Right to Life Committee and the International Right to Life Federation will be the keynote speaker at a fund-raising benefit for the Crisis Pregnancy Center at 7 p.m. on Thursday, July 6.

The benefit, which is free and open to the public, will take place at Greece Assembly Church, 750 Long Pond Road, Rochester.

Desserts and refreshments will be available. Call the center at 716/235-8822 for information.

Please...
Tell them you
saw their ad
in the
Catholic Courier

Catholic Courier

Andrew's Center seeking foster home

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

Andrew's Center, which has provided a temporary home for more than 100 children over the years, is now searching for a new home of its own.

The foster care center has been located in the St. Andrew's Convent in Rochester for the entire 15 years of its existence. It is scheduled to move to a new location by August 15, but the two Sisters of Mercy who constitute the center's staff are not certain at this point what location that will be. Meanwhile, the parish is looking for a new tenant for the convent building.

Father Ronald Stacy, pastor, explains that economic pressures forced the parish to ask the center to move.

"It's just a part of the economic realities that a lot of parishes are facing," Father Stacy said. He cited the increasing cost of St. Andrew's School and a shrinking congregation as factors in the decision. The parish, he explained, simply had to find more income.

The parish hopes to rent the building for more than \$30,000 to help meet parish expenses. In contrast, Andrew's Center was allowed to use the convent for low rent — \$50 per child per month, plus rent for the sisters who lived there. "It doesn't really come to the amount needed to keep up the building," Father Stacy noted.

The decision to rent the building has been put off because of Andrew's Center, Father Stacy said, pointing out that the child-care facility "has been positive ministry for the parish." He said the decision was made with "a lot of regret."

Sister Rita Habecher, RSM, who has worked at the center as a foster parent for more than six years, said she and her co-director, Sister Kathleen Kolmer, RSM, feel regrets about having to leave the convent. "We do feel bad about it, but we understand why the parish has to rent the building," she said.

The two sisters have known for approximately a year that they would have to move eventually. During the last six months, they have explored several options, including moving to a different convent, renting private property, working with group homes or applying for grants.

Currently, the two are pinning their hopes on moving into the convent at St. James Parish in Irondequoit. They have met with the parish council and with the sisters who live in the convent there, and are putting together a proposal explaining what modifications would be needed to the building. They also are investigating the need for a zoning variance from the Irondequoit Town Board to allow the center to operate in the building.

Father Robert Bradler, pastor of St. James, said that no final decision will be made until he and the parish council see the proposal. He did say, however, that the initial contacts and proposals had been received positively.

"(The response) seems to be favorable," he said. "We brought it to the parish

council, and there was no negative feedback." He cautioned, however, that the proposal is still at the talking stage, and that a decision was not likely until at least July.

At stake in the midst of this search for the new home is the well-being of the children, Sisters Habecher and Kolmer note. Andrew's Center is licensed by the Monroe County Department of Social Services as a foster care center — a transitional home for children waiting to find more permanent foster families, to return to their own families or relatives, or to be placed in group homes. The center frequently accepts hard-to-place children, including siblings and those with disabilities.

The children have expressed concern about the move, Sister Habecher said. "They have a lot of questions," she reported. "Can I go back go my own school? Will we have our own rooms? Where will we keep our toys?"

Social ministry to receive share of charges on new credit card

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — About a year ago, Mark Greisberger had had enough of discussing proposals for new programs in the diocesan Division of Social Ministry only to see these proposals tabled due to lack of funds.

But now Greisberger, chairman of the division's finance committee, plans to take the division's case to diocesan parishes. The slogan of his new campaign might as well be *Charge it!*

Greisberger will tell parishioners that they can help social ministries simply by charging new purchases for their homes on the Affinity Visa Card. Every time a card owner uses his or her Affinity Visa Card, a percentage of the purchase price will be donated to diocesan social ministries. For every \$1,000 charged to the card, for example, diocesan social ministries will receive \$5.50.

In this manner, diocesan Catholics can support a cause without having to make a direct donation, which they might be unable to afford, according to Maurice Tierney, diocesan associate director social ministry for Catholic Charities.

"It's a non-competitive source of funds," Tierney said. "It's not taking away from the other needs of the diocese."

Affinity cards have been around for about five years and are currently being used by such organizations as the American Medical Association and the Sierra Club, according to Thomas Walsh, president of Corporate Connections, a consulting firm that is co-marketing the card with Chase Lincoln First Bank. Using a card to benefit social ministries was a concept developed about a year ago, he said.

Revenue from the cards is intended for programs for which there is no foreseeable funding, Greisberger said. For example, a

proposal to open a hospice for women with AIDS has been put on the back burner because the division has virtually no funds that aren't already allocated. Revenue from the affinity cards could turn such proposals into reality, he remarked.

In the coming months, Greisberger will be going to parishes throughout the diocese in an attempt to sell the idea. "We're hoping people will use this card in substitution for their extra cards," he said, noting that the affinity card will not be marketed in parishes that don't invite him to make a presentation. Ultimately, the social ministry division hopes that 20,000 cards will be issued throughout the diocese, Tierney said.

Three other dioceses in the United States have adopted the card for their social ministry programs, according to Walsh. The dioceses of Miami, Florida, Omaha, Nebraska, and Cleveland, Ohio, also are marketing the affinity card, Walsh said. He noted that since none of these dioceses has been promoting the cards for more than a few months, the card has not yet established a track record at the diocesan level.

Membership is free for the first year, and costs \$20 for every subsequent year. Card users have a grace period of 25 days on each purchase and pay an annual interest rate of 16.9 percent. Walsh noted that the affinity card's annual interest rate is lower than the nationwide average of 18.9 percent for a regular Visa card.

Walsh also noted that these new credit cards should not be confused with an affinity card currently being marketed by Catholic Charities, U.S.A. The Caritas card, as it is called, is intended to generate funds for Catholic Charities projects throughout the nation, he said, whereas funds generated by the division of social ministry card will be earmarked for the Rochester diocese only.