

New location, services for outreach center

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — St. Theresa Center died last June, but has risen again under the name of the Theresa Friendship Center, located at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.

The TFC is the latest version of a neighborhood outreach program which began operating in June, 1988, out of a former parish employees' residence owned by St. Augustine's Church. Before the center at 370 Chili Avenue closed at the end of May, 1989, organizers estimated that they were serving 500 people each month with a variety of services, ranging from food and clothing distribution to prayer services and academic tutoring.

St. Augustine's parish council voted last May to close the center because the parish could not afford building modifications needed to rezone the building from residential to commercial status.

After learning of the parish council's proposal to close St. Theresa's, director Paula Dumont talked to representatives of several other Catholic parishes about housing the center. She decided to try St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, at 350 Chili Ave., because it was in the same neighborhood — just down the street from the original center.



Paula Dumont (fifth from left) prays with a group of parents and children during "quiet-time" on Thursday, Oct. 19. The time is meant as a transition from work and play to a more relaxed weekly dinner together at the Theresa Friendship Center.

Rev. Richard W. Comegys, pastor of St. Stephen's, agreed to house some of the St. Theresa's Center programs in his church. However, space limitations have forced the center to discontinue its clothing distribution program and its Monday-Friday daily hours, Dumont said. St. Stephen's is also the home of the South West Ecumenical Ministries Food Cupboard, which currently shares space with the TFC.

"We had to take our whole building and collapse it into one closet," said Dumont, who is now one of the center's three vol-

unteer co-directors.

Because of the limited space available, the TFC now concentrates on providing its clients with programming, which was one of several aspects of the St. Theresa Center's services. Since reopening at St. Stephen's in June, Dumont said, the TFC has attracted about 60 people to several small-group sessions on Thursdays from 4-9:30 p.m. Among the sessions are spiritual activities for children, meditation for members of dysfunctional families and tutoring for teenagers.

SWEM's food cupboard and TFC now combine resources to provide a weekly meal for clients, many of whom volunteer to cook and clean, Dumont said. In addition to the help provided by clients, 12 other volunteers help staff the center's programs.

Until the TFC's directors can find a small storefront to serve as headquarters, they will concentrate on spreading their programming through various local churches and organizations. For example, five lay volunteers are currently assisting Dumont in her duties as chaplain of Monroe Developmental Center. The volunteers help at Sunday services and work with the center's creative arts program, she explained.

Buoyed by receiving almost \$11,000 in donations over the summer, Dumont said, TFC's co-directors are working on creating a few salaried positions. Specific details for such an arrangement have yet to be worked out, she added.



Volunteer Christy Dumont (center) helps (from left) Nicole Rapley, Roshonda Tillison and John Walters make holiday decorations.

Diocesan relief effort continues for victims of Hurricane Hugo

ROCHESTER — The diocesan Disaster Relief Fund has raised more than \$6,700 to assist the hurricane-ravaged communities in the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and South Carolina.

As of Friday, Oct. 20, contributions totaling \$6,725.54 had been sent to the Office of the Propagation of the Faith, according to Father Robert C. Bradler. The director of the diocesan Missions Office said that those funds will be divided among the communities hardest hit by Hurricane Hugo in late September.

In addition, a number of parishes and groups throughout the diocese are raising money in separate relief efforts.

St. Ambrose Parish, Rochester, for example, sent \$4,697 to the Diocese of Charleston, S.C., on October 3. Also, the Knights of Columbus Elmira Council 229 is raising money to help repair Stella Maris Church, which is located on Sullivan's Island in South Carolina.

The diocesan effort comes in response to

a call from Archbishop John May, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, for dioceses around the country to aid communities devastated by the hurricane.

Current damage estimates from the storm are between four and five billion dollars. The hurricane caused 51 deaths, and left thousands homeless. Some sections of South Carolina are still without electricity nearly a month after the storm battered coastal regions of the state.

Father Bradler said that relief money will likely be divided evenly among the three regions affected by the storm. He added that each region will receive funds based in part on need, and on how much each community received from other relief efforts.

Contributions may still be sent to: Disaster Relief Fund, Office of the Propagation of the Faith, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y., 14624.

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