

Thanks Giving Appeal '89

# Couple wants to initiate new view of families

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

Shari and Dennis Fischer believe that Catholicism should be a family affair.

After attending a family-life workers' training seminar sponsored by the Family Life Office of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, Pa., the duo was fairly gushing with enthusiasm about ministering to families.

"It was a dynamite workshop," Dennis Fischer said of the Oct. 26-29 gathering in Ebensburg, Pa. Shari hopes to apply some of the workshop's principles to her work as regional coordinator for diocesan Marriage Preparation and Family Ministry. Dennis assists his wife on a volunteer basis.

The diocese provides partial funding to the ministry's office with \$14,000 from

donations to the Thanks Giving Appeal.

The Fischers said they came away from the family-ministry seminar with a "new vision" of Christian families. Part of that vision, they said, was a realization that parishes must begin adjusting to the fact that traditional nuclear families — a working father, homemaker/mother and children — are now but a small minority of the families in their congregations.

Indeed, membership in the church is composed largely of single, divorced and widowed Catholics and members of extended and one-parent families or families with two wage-earners, the Fischers noted.

Rather than looking at the Catholic Church as comprising many individual members, parishes should consider their congregations as part of one large Catholic

family, they emphasized. Accordingly, all ministries should be geared to helping Catholics from the perspective of family.

Usually, the Fischers said, parish ministries concentrate on the needs of individual Catholics without seeing them in the context of their family lives.

For example, the Fischers said parishes should encourage candidates for the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults to include their families in RCIA sessions leading up to the candidates' entrances into the church. Such a process would lend additional support to the candidates' desire for church membership, they observed.

Dennis Fischer said lay Catholics who take the Eucharist to home-bound Catholics are an example of how parishes currently try to meet the needs of "family mem-

bers." But more could be done, he said.

For example, some dysfunctional families may need support they're not receiving from the parish, the Fischers noted, while the needs of other more stable families may be ignored by a parish simply because no apparent problems exist.

The couple said the words of the 1987 manual "A Family Perspective in Church and Society" call the church to expand its vision of family life.

The first chapter of the manual, which was issued by the Ad Hoc Committee on Marriage and Family Life of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, states: "Families in our nation differ greatly in their values, perceptions, styles, customs rituals, social norms, shared meanings, life

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## Lobbyists attempting to restrain legislators from trimming services

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Members of Rochester Area Children's Collaborative recently had several Monroe County legislative candidates for breakfast.

No, the collaborative didn't devour the politicians. On the contrary, RACC members asked the politicians not to put child-care funding on too lean a fiscal diet in the proposed 1990 county budget.

Eleven legislature candidates — both incumbents and challengers — heard the group's plea at a breakfast sponsored by St. Mary's Church on Tuesday, Oct. 31. The RACC consists of 70 organizations and individuals, including Catholic Family Center, Catholic Youth Organization, the diocesan Department of Youth Ministry and St. Mary's.

Of the Catholic organizations involved, Catholic Family Center and the CYO will be directly affected by any cuts made in child care programs in the county's 1990 budget. The family center, which oversees the CYO, received more than \$1.2 million in county monies this year to fund programs related to child care, according to Jama Dodson, the center's associate executive director of programs.

The children's collaborative has been watching developments in the county's budgeting process ever since the legislature announced a projected \$35 million deficit for 1990. The collaborative had experienced similar jitters when the county revised the original 1989 budget in May to meet an \$8 million deficit.

The revised 1989 budget, also known as the legislature's contingency plan, cut or stalled the implementation of several new and expanded child-care programs, according to Rona Dwyer, coordinator of the collaborative's "No Cuts for Kids" campaign.

The Catholic Family Center, for example, was one of the county's centers for the Project Fresh program, which has been on

hold for the last several months, Dodson said. Project Fresh, administered by the CYO, helps teenagers who were recently released from juvenile detention facilities get back on track with employment and housing assistance.

Dodson noted that Project Fresh's funding was cut in the contingency plan, and that its reinstatement is uncertain. She added that the CFC's programming was largely unaffected by the cuts contained in the contingency plan.

Facing the prospect of even more cuts in the 1990 budget, the children's collaborative took the offensive two months ago, collecting more than 11,000 signatures on petitions that asked the legislature to not make any more cuts in child-care programs. Dodson said that the family center also contacted about 200 people on its mailing lists, urging them to write their legislators about the proposed budget.

The legislature will begin reviewing the proposed budget on Thursday, Nov. 9, according to Denise Murphy, legislative assistant to county Legislator Nan Johnson (D-21st district). A budget vote is scheduled for Nov. 28.

Dwyer said the proposed budget contains "90 percent" of what the collaborative wanted, though the collaborative is urging the legislators to reinstate \$73,000 worth of child-care funding cut in the 1989 contingency budget. The group also asked that the legislature allocate additional funding of more than \$69,000 that had been cut from child-care programs in the proposed 1990 budget.

To drive the point home, the collabora-

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Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier

Sister Barbara Lum (right) works with Teresa Palmo on how to care for her one-week-old son, Keith Reed. Palmo is involved in the Corpus Christi Center Baby Love program, which prepares expectant mothers for child care. Baby Love is among the programs for which county funding is slated to be cut.

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