

CFC expands services to homeless

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Christmas came twice to the Catholic Family Center over the last two weeks. In addition to securing a long-awaited contract with the state, the agency — with the help of the City of Rochester — began operating a shuttle service for the homeless.

The New York State Department of Social Services Dec. 20 awarded an additional \$47,000 in construction funding for the Francis Center, an outreach program of Catholic Family Center.

That ended a long delay in contract approval for the Francis Hospitality Center — a year-round, 24-hour homeless shelter which will be located on Joseph Avenue.

During the fall of 1988, the state DSS approved a \$570,000 grant to convert the building to a shelter. According to William Privett, director of resource development for the CFC, the agency submitted a request for additional monies following a re-estimation by the architect in charge of the building modification. Privett noted that — among other items — the cost of electrical work in the building was re-evaluated.

In addition to state funding, the City of Rochester has

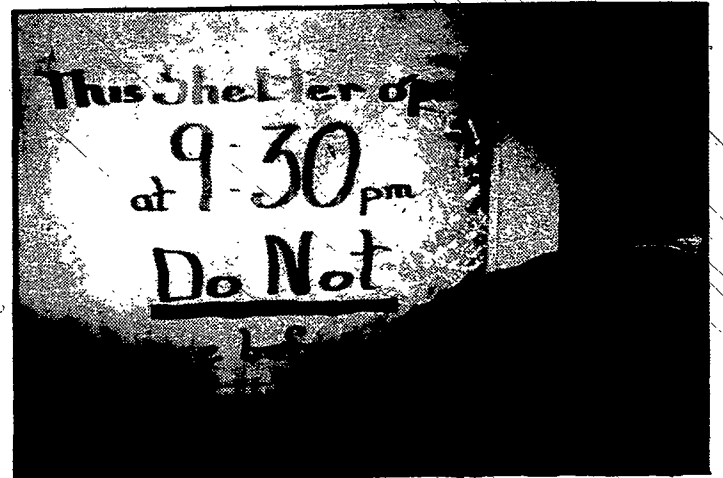
approved \$50,000 for the project. Monroe County has earmarked an additional \$27,000.

Privett said that the State Attorney General's Office is currently processing the revised contract, which will be signed at the end of this month. The building could be operational some time in 1991, he said.

The Catholic Family Center has also contracted with the City of Rochester to run a shelter shuttle service for Rochester's homeless. The city obtained \$50,000 from the federal Community Development Block Grant to run the service.

CFC began the service on Dec. 24, replacing a similar service that Blessed Sacrament Overnight Shelter had for the past several winters operated from the parish at the corner of Monroe Avenue and Oxford Street. One full-time and four part-time employees are coordinating the service, which is available during the late afternoon and late evening.

Privett said the van service was established in response to the 1988 report, *Beyond Bed and Breakfast: Final Recommendations from the Mental Health Association's Task Force on the Homeless*, which was issued through the Mental Health Association by a task force made up of city,



Rochester's nine emergency shelters operate primarily during the evening, leaving the homeless few daytime options.

county and several private human service agencies.

He noted that the report observed that occasionally some shelters in the city faced overcrowding while others were empty. The van will be used to transport homeless people to shelters that are not full to capacity, he said.

According to Tyrone Southerland, senior van driver, about seven to eight people a night have been using the service.

Southerland noted that he has transported a few people from local shelters to the DSS office on Westfall Road and has taken several people from overcrowded shelters to less-crowded facilities. Riders are referred to the service by the DSS or one of the city shelters, he said.

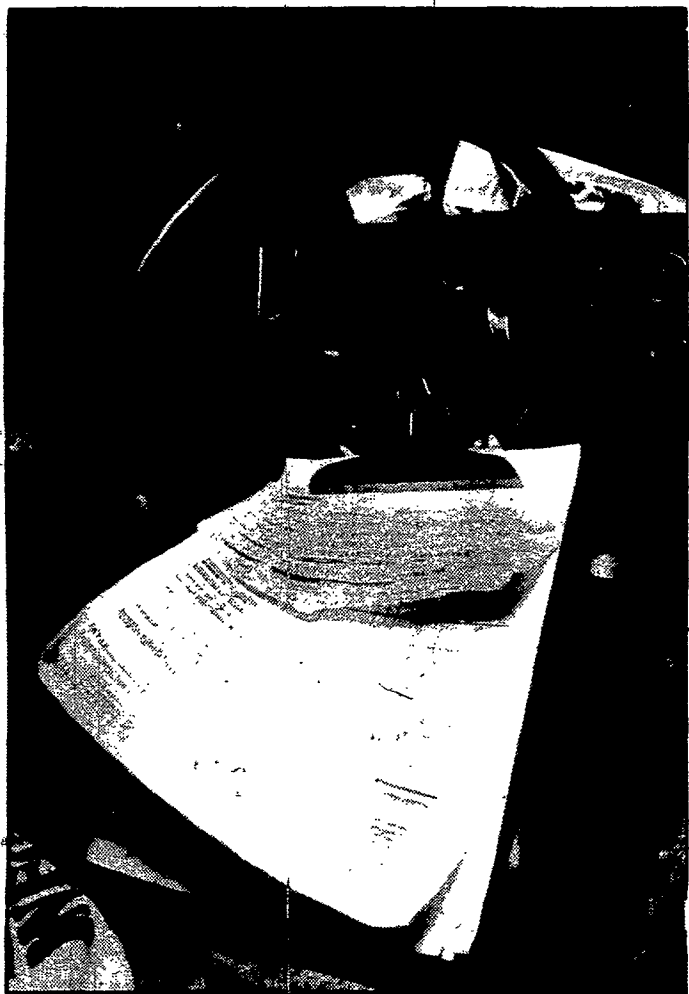
Southerland said that many of Rochester's homeless are not yet aware of the van service, but he hoped that it would become more well-known in the next few months.



According to a 1988 study by the Mental Health Association, approximately 300 to 325 people in the community are homeless at any given time. The study showed the homeless population may range from as few as 200-225 people at some times to as many as 375-425 during peak periods.



Shuttle driver Michael Merle (left) opens door for a late-night shuttle client at the Salvation Army's Men's Annex on West Avenue.



Southerland maintains detailed passenger logs, listing on-demand transports from shelters, soup kitchens, health or other support systems, in addition to client information provided by referring shelters during the scheduled evening stops.



Tyrone Southerland (right), senior driver and coordinator of the Shelter Shuttle, concentrates on positive hopes for the future as he talks with clients. In addition to directing the day-to-day shuttle operation, Southerland also schedules and supervises the part-time drivers who accompany him, and acts as a liaison among the shuttle program, shelters and the Monroe County Department of Social Services.

Catholic Courier photos by Babette G. Augustin