

# Catholic tries to save city pregnancy center

By Richard A. Kiley  
News Editor

ROCHESTER — A group of Catholic churches in the Rochester area is trying to help a city pregnancy center continue to serve young women in trouble.

Due to a shortage of money and volunteers, the Problem Pregnancy Center, 3254 Lake Ave., closed last fall and has recently been open only part-time. The center still offers a 24-hour hotline, however.

Earlier this month, Ray Buonemani — a member of Holy Cross Parish in Charlotte — began an effort to revitalize the PPC on Lake Avenue. The pro-life activist has been trying to get local Catholic churches to make a commitment to the center on the city's north side.

Both the PPC on Lake Avenue and another facility in Brockport offer free pregnancy testing, counseling and emotional support for young women who think they might be pregnant. If a client finds out that she is pregnant, the agency continues to provide free assistance in the months afterward and also makes referrals to adoption agencies.

"We're trying to get six to eight parishes involved in opening up the center on Lake Avenue to its full potential," said Buonemani, who has worked with the center in the past. "Unless churches come forward, we'll have to close it."

Buonemani believes that the community will lose a vital contact with the city's young women if the center cannot continue to operate.

"(The center) is really providing a lot of important services down there," Buonemani said. "Counselors are helping women who are dealing with crisis situa-

tions."

According to Buonemani, the Lake Avenue PPC averaged about 35 to 40 clients per month when it was open four days a week. He added that twice as many appointments were made. Nearly half of the teenage women who come into the center have positive pregnancy tests, he said.

"Of the 50 percent who test positive, most women were abortion-minded," Buonemani said. "Out of that number, about 70 to 75 percent did change their mind and followed through with the pregnancy. Counselors do follow up on these girls, and they help them find a home, a place to stay if necessary."

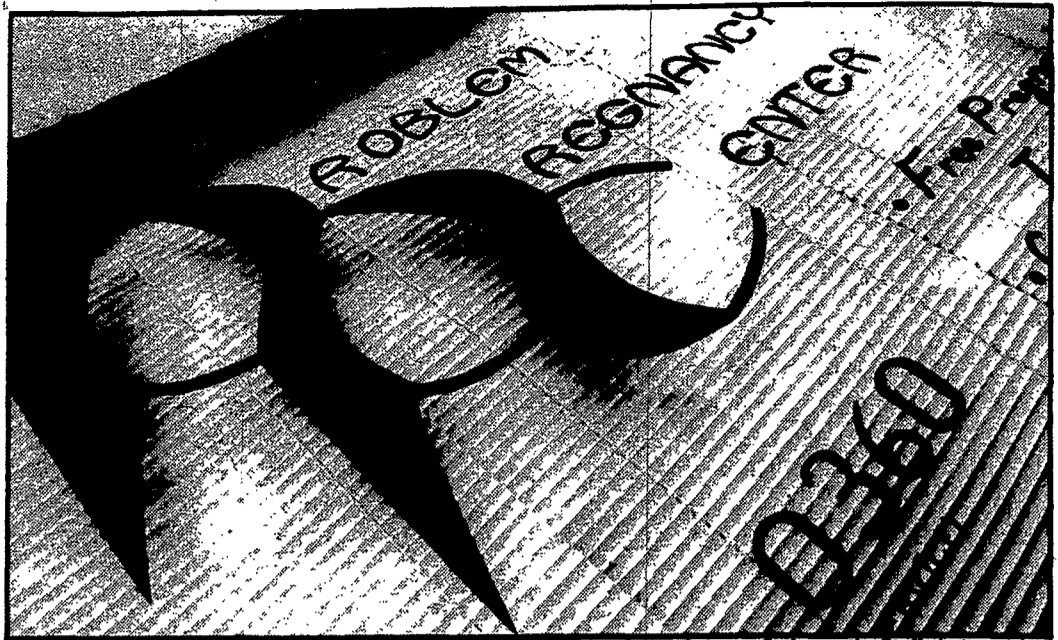
When clients are found not to be pregnant, Buonemani said, volunteers counsel them about chastity.

The pro-life activist attributes the success of the PPC to the dedication of the volunteers who have run the agency since it opened in September, 1986.

Two of those volunteers, Ramon and Molly Sanchez, are currently running the center two days a week. As worshippers at New Testament Christian Church in Greece, they believe it is their duty to reach out to young women in need.

"We're trying to provide access to many needs ... Essentially we're trying to meet their needs any way we can," Molly Sanchez said.

Meeting those needs calls for more people to get involved, added Ramon Sanchez, who is currently serving as interim-executive director of the Lake Avenue center. "We need to give these ministries back to the churches. These counselors are on the front lines. By getting involved, members of local churches maintain some



Babette G. Augustin-Staff photographer

The Problem Pregnancy Center on Lake Avenue has been open since 1986.

control and accountability for their pro-life activities."

The two churches that have provided much of the support for the agency in the past — Bethel Full Gospel and Cornerstone Christian Fellowship — would like to open a center in downtown Rochester.

That means that other churches will need to come forward, Buonemani said. "Hopefully the center will be supported by Catholics," he said. "I've received some positive feedback from parishes, so we're optimistic. A lot of Catholics had a problem with the PPC in the past because most of the counselors were evangelical Christians."

Buonemani is hoping things will change once the center becomes more "Catholic-oriented." Although the agency only recently started to deal with such Catholic agencies as the Catholic Family Center, Buonemani said he's hoping the PPC will have regular contact with the CFC and such other agencies as Birthright, Melita House and the Crisis Pregnancy Center.

The center would still be run under the auspices of Divine Nature Ministries, Inc.,

of which the Rev. David E. Long is chairman of the board. Long recently stepped down as executive director of Project Life of Rochester to become head of Christians In Action — an organization dedicated to involving local churches in social-justice issues.

At least one member from each parish supporting the PPC would serve on an advisory committee to Divine Nature Ministries, Inc.

Buonemani has already garnered support from his parish, Holy Cross. Six fellow parishioners have expressed interest in volunteering as counselors. One woman from Sacred Heart Church in Rochester and three more parishioners from as far away as St. Joseph's in Livonia have expressed interest in working as volunteers. Buonemani is hoping to get 15-20 volunteers by April.

The activist said that he has been speaking to social ministry committees at several parishes in Rochester, looking for financial support for the PPC. Those parishes that cannot support the endeavor financially are being asked to run announcements in bulletins asking for parishioners to consider becoming volunteers at the agency.

Buonemani said he also has mailed letters to approximately 250 Catholics who have been involved in pro-life activities in the past, encouraging them to make monthly pledges to the center or contact their parishes about the effort.

The center needs \$600-700 per month to operate. Bethel Full Gospel and Cornerstone Christian Fellowship churches are still providing some of that money, but the donations from those two churches will eventually be used for the downtown center.

Buonemani said he'll initially need about \$500 per month to run the PPC. Any additional funds would go toward paying a part-time paid director.

He said he will meet with Long on March 1 to discuss how the project is progressing.

Parishes or individuals wishing to help the PPC, can make checks payable to Problem Pregnancy Center, c/o Ray Buonemani, 38 Holcroft Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14612, or call 716/621-3906.

# Fisher offers church workers' discount

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — St. John Fisher College is now offering a 33-percent tuition discount on undergraduate courses to full-time diocesan and parish employees.

The offer, which went into effect Jan. 16 of this year, is designed to give employees of the Diocese of Rochester an opportunity to further their educations or to take refresher courses to help them in their ministries noted Judy Kollar, director of the diocesan Department of Continuing Education.

The program will be especially helpful to employees who wish to pursue graduate studies, Kollar said. "A lot of people who work in our parishes want to get (graduate) degrees," she noted. "This offer from St. John Fisher enables people to get the basic requirements they need."

The offer grew out of discussions by the Development of Ministers and Employees

Committee of the diocesan Personnel Commission. As part of its discussions, that committee assessed the educational needs of people who work for the church, and how those needs might be met in the Rochester community.

One member of that committee was Mary Pat Seurkamp, who was then director of continuing education at St. John Fisher College and currently serves as the college's director of Student Academic Services. Following the committee discussions, she suggested to Dr. William Pickett, Fisher president, that the college offer some sort of a discount program.

The college's board of trustees agreed to the idea in the fall of 1989, and it was officially begun for the spring semester of this year. One diocesan employee is already taking advantage of the program.

John Conners, the current director of continuing education at St. John Fisher, observed that the arrangement between the diocese and the college was a natural one.

"We have a tradition of very close ties with the diocese, so it made sense for us to work with the diocese," Conners said.

St. John Fisher has already been involved with providing continuing education for diocesan employees through an in-service computer course for teachers offered at the college and at Sacred Heart School.

Kollar pointed out that in addition to programs being offered through St. John Fisher, the office of continuing education will be sponsoring a conference on art techniques, projects and activities for elementary school teachers. That conference will be held March 3 at the Nazareth College Arts Center, and is being offered in conjunction with the college's Center for In-Service Education.

Kollar said her office is seeking to develop other educational opportunities for diocesan and parish employees. "That's the business that we're in — trying to keep an educated populace," she said.

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