

## Ministry

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confirmed Smith's suspicion. "When I had my illness, I came back in before the doctor told me to because there was a need," she said.

New parents may also feel compelled to return to work prematurely for financial reasons. Women are eligible to collect six to eight weeks' partial disability pay from New York state. Lengthier parental leaves and those taken by fathers or adoptive parents are generally unpaid. Few employees can afford to forgo a salary for as long as Bender did, the St. Francis de Sales teacher conceded.

### Caring at capacity

Help with child care has not been among the issues diocesan employees cite as pressing. Yet the experience of St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester indicates that once the quality of a program is demonstrated, response can quickly outpace expectations. Opened in January, 1989, the Sister Ann William Bradley Child Care Center was, according to organizers, the first center in Monroe County to offer on-site day care for employees' children.

The center quickly reached its capacity enrollment of 45-50 children per day, and now boasts a waiting list for every age group. "The program has grown well beyond our wildest expectations," said William Olsen, the hospital's director of human resources.

Not only are parents pleased with the center's program, but they claim the presence of children has changed St. Mary's for the better by integrating family into the workplace. "The nurses I work with say the elderly love (to see children)," said Marianne Coleman, a secretary in the department of social services. "My other coworkers love to see little groups (of children) come by."

Familiarity with their parents' workplace has helped some children overcome common fears. "My son feels very comfortable with old people. He calls them 'the papas and the mamas,'" said Dr. Mary Dombovy, medical director of the hospital's brain-injury center. "He has seen people with tracheostomies and with severe facial injuries, and he takes that all in stride. It's a real plus for the institution."

In part because St. Mary's already provided many services that met child care center requirements — ranging from dietary planning to liability insurance coverage — the program has been funded through parent fees that are comparable to rates elsewhere in the Rochester area.

Yet the difficulty of obtaining affordable liability insurance keeps many other employers from even considering on-site day care.

### Health care at a premium

The skyrocketing cost of health insurance, meanwhile, is threatening another diocesan benefit regarded as a strong

recruiting tool — full payment of health-insurance premiums. Those premiums have risen more than 20 percent during the last three years, according to Robert Mason, diocesan director of personnel, staffing and development.

To deal with such increases, the diocese last July changed its policy for employees hired after that date. New employees must pay half of the difference between an individual and a family premium — roughly \$500-600 per year, according to Mary Kessler, head of the diocesan department of personnel services.

A further measure to meet rising insurance costs may require all employees to pay at least a portion of increases in the cost of family coverage. Although Mason does not envision such a move as imminent in the diocese, he observed that a large number of employers — even in the non-profit sector — have adopted some kind of cost-sharing.

"We're really at the mercy of health insurers," Mason said. "I think we're in the last stages of being a very small minority that pays for full coverage."

Of all diocesan personnel policies, salaries remain the most critical concern to most employees. "I'm willing to work for whatever, but right now I can't and I can't expect my brothers and sisters to do that,"



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer  
Alyssa Farrugia patiently awaits the arrival of her lunch.

said religious educator De King. "Are we saying that only married people with spouses with good jobs need apply?"

During the past five years, the Rochester diocese has adopted "a much more aggressive push to work on compensation issues," according to Kessler. Over the last two years, she explained, priests, religious and lay employees all received the same percentage recommended salary increase.

Using a working paper on compensation systems published by the National Associa-

tion of Church Personnel Administrators, Kessler said, the diocese is working toward equitable compensation for all employees, and may pilot some efforts in parishes soon.

"The problem," Kessler acknowledged, "has been that we don't educate people in the pews to what it really costs to run a parish."

### Gulf in giving

Catholic giving patterns remain stuck in the 1960s, while expenses — ranging from the cost of maintaining aging religious and the buildings in which they served to burgeoning diocesan and parish programs — can't avoid 21st century costs.

Given what income the church has to work with, even many of those who acknowledge the inadequacy of church salaries concede that their employers do what they can.

"I don't think anyone would argue that it would be helpful in attracting and keeping bright people to pay more," said Father McCaffrey. "(But) you are trying to plan for needs and realities in the midst of a sea-change in an institution."

"The church in the past 20 years has undergone enormous changes — they're still going on — and nobody knows where they're going ... so you're making your best guess," he said.

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