

FLOSM seeks funds to keep program intact

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

GENEVA — Laura Schilling had nearly reached bottom by September, 1989.

Then 27, Schilling was going through a difficult divorce and a custody battle over her three children. She had just been in an automobile accident that broke a bone in her back. In constant pain from her injury, she couldn't work anymore.

At first Schilling relied on her savings and unemployment benefits, but she was unable to keep up with her bills. Her injury made it difficult to take care of her home and children.

"I was always depressed," Schilling recalled. "I was overwhelmed by the work I had to do."

That's when Dana Grosvenor contacted her.

Grosvenor, coordinator of the Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry's Maternity and Early Childhood Program in Wayne County, began to visit Schilling's house on a weekly basis. She helped Schilling get into physical therapy. She accompanied Schilling to custody hearings. She arranged for the injured woman to enter a Board of Cooperative Educational Services program for job training at Williamson — which in turn has led to her enrolling in college for the coming school year.

More importantly, Schilling said, Grosvenor was there to listen and to provide support.

"She gave me the feeling that she really cared about me," Schilling said. "Without her, I would have been living with no direction, no purpose. I would have been wasting my life, instead of doing something with it."

In 1990, Grosvenor, whose position is only part-time, helped 174 single parents and children like Schilling and her three children.

But on July 31, 1991, New York state eliminated all funding for Grosvenor's program.

The loss of funding — the result of the state budget deficit this year — is forcing FLOSM to search for the \$22,000 needed to keep the program alive.

The social ministry office also is seeking additional support for the other two sections of the Maternity and Early Childhood Program — one that served 171 clients in Ontario, Yates and Seneca counties in 1990, and one that served 310 clients Cayuga County. The state froze funding for these programs.

After first learning about impending budget cuts in July, and fearing that funding for the entire program might be cut, FLOSM's Board of Directors appealed to parishes and individuals for contributions for the first time in the history of the social ministry office. The goal was \$25,000.

"We couldn't just terminate these people," declared Giovina Caroscio, FLOSM's executive director.

As a result of that initial appeal, three parishes — St. Bridget/St. Joseph in East Bloomfield, St. Patrick in Macedon, and St. Isaac Jogues, Fleming — donated \$800. Several other parishes are considering donations, and individuals have contributed \$420.

Combined with earlier contributions and grants, these donations will support the program on a temporary basis. Setting December as a fundraising deadline, the FLOSM board said it will close the program's Wayne County branch if sufficient funds are not raised by that time.

The Maternity and Early Childhood Program began in Ontario County in 1983, then spread to the other counties served by FLOSM. Because services were already available to help single teen parents, the program was targeted at single adult parents — both men and women.

The program aims to give people the support they need to get on their feet, noted Alma Kunes, the program's overall coordinator.

"Our goal is to help them become independent and self-sufficient so that they

don't have to keep calling us to help them with problems they're facing," Kunes noted.

The program provides group workshops on such topics as parenting skills and self-esteem, individual counseling, advice about support groups, information about services available through other agencies and programs, and transportation to those services.

Grosvenor pointed out that many of her clients lack education. Some experienced abuse as children and adults. Very often they are separated or estranged from their families and friends. One-on-one contact often is required just to prepare a client to make use of and to continue in other programs.

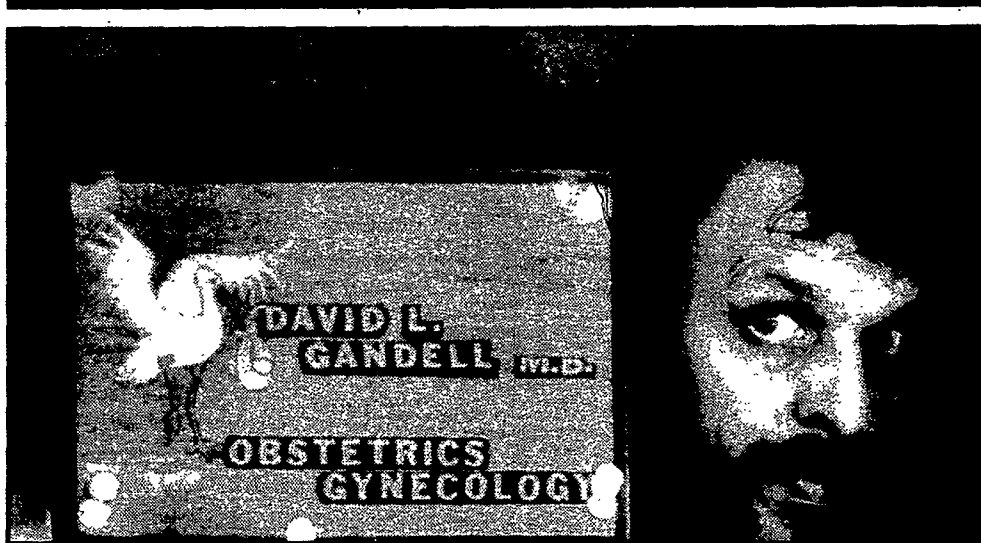
Caroscio said FLOSM had anticipated

some of the cuts and had already begun searching for such alternative funding sources as grants and the United Way. At this point, however, no monies from such sources will be available in the immediate future, leaving the program to rely on contributions.

"I think it's going to be a long, hard road to hoe just to come up with the money," Caroscio said.

Schilling said she hoped the program would find the money it needs, so that women in her former situation will have somewhere to turn.

"I really don't know what I would have done if this (program) hadn't been here," Schilling said. "I thought about that once. It scared me to think about it."



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
Pro-life activist Bob Dorscheid peered through the window of Dr. David Gandell's office during a Dec. 28, 1989, rescue mission. Dorscheid and a number of others area protesters were to travel to Wichita, Kansas, Aug. 21 to participate in abortion demonstrations there.

Local pro-lifers joining action at Wichita clinics

PENFIELD — Ten to 12 area pro-life activists planned to travel Aug. 21 from Robert Dorscheid's Aspen Drive home to Wichita, Kansas, to participate in an Aug. 26 anti-abortion rally.

That rally will be part of one of the most dramatic and long-term attempts in the history of the "rescue movement," which is designed to stop abortions from being performed at doctors' offices.

Operation Rescue, a non-denominational organization based in Binghamton, orchestrated demonstrations at three Wichita clinics on July 15. Since that time, police have made more than 2,000 arrests — including repeated arrests of some individuals.

Operation Rescue targeted Wichita because Dr. George Tiller owns an office

there that performs late-term abortions — many on women referred to the office from across the country.

The demonstrators have won the verbal support of Kansas Governor Joan Finney and from Wichita Bishop Eugene J. Gerber. Several priests and religious have been among the protesters arrested, according to reports from the Catholic News Service.

Dorscheid, a parishioner at St. Joseph's Church, 43 Gebhardt Road, said his group will travel to Wichita by van, and will include both Catholic and Protestant pro-life activists from the area. The group plans to return to Rochester on Tuesday, Aug. 28, he said.

— Rob Cullivan

Parish ends daily meal program; drop-in center to increase effort

ROCHESTER — Violence among guests and against volunteers was a leading factor in Corpus Christi Parish's recent decision to end its 10-year-old free supper program, organizers said.

Lillian Piersante, director of Dimitri House, the parish's drop-in center and shelter where the meals were served, said volunteers were leaving the program because of the verbal and physical abuse they received from dinner guests.

Volunteers also became increasingly frustrated with what they perceived as the program's short-term approach of solving deeply rooted problems among clients, she said.

The program run out of Dimitri House, 102 N. Union St., served approximately 25 guests, seven days a week, according to Piersante.

The director noted that the program's clientele had changed since the program's early years more than 10 years ago. At that time, she said, most of the supper guests were older men who were respectful of the staff. In recent years, the program's clientele has become younger and more violent, she said, adding that volunteers suspected some of the guests did not really need free meals.

"The people that were coming here were abusive," she said. "Unfortunately, some were coming to us because they were misusing their funds on drugs and alcohol."

Indeed, many recent clients of the program were addicted to such drugs as crack and cocaine — a situation not as prevalent years ago, according to Sister Marjory Henninger, SSJ, coordinator of Dimitri

House's transitional housing program.

When the supper program began, many of the guests were alcoholics who weren't as violent as today's cocaine and crack addicts seem to be, she said. Cocaine and crack tend to make their users "hyper," Sister Henninger said.


After suspending the supper program's operations at the beginning of July, staff of the Dimitri House surveyed a number of regular guests in an attempt to assess long-term needs, Piersante remarked. The returned questionnaires revealed that many of the guests wanted assistance with finding drug rehabilitation services and transitional housing, she said.

"A lot of people need more than a physical meal," she said. "People need help."

In light of the surveys' findings, the staff of the Dimitri House decided to end the supper program. Organizers now plan to focus their efforts on expanding the drop-in center's daytime hours, she said. Currently, Dimitri House's drop-in center is open from 2-5 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, she added.

The Dimitri House staff will work on finding more transitional housing for clients, many of whom have become homeless after completing treatment at Rochester-area drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers, Sister Henninger said. These homeless people need a place such as Dimitri House, where they can live temporarily until they find permanent housing. Otherwise, rehabilitated addicts often wind up back out on the streets, she said.

EDITORS' NOTE — Dimitri House needs volunteers to staff its drop-in center. For information, call 716/325-1796.



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