

Clinic plan strains United Way umbrella

Continued from page 1

continued allocating money to an organization that performs abortions.

"We felt that this (decision) would help best to serve the community," said William Fowble, vice-chairman of the United Way board and chairman of the 1992 United Way general campaign. "We felt it was necessary to protect our other agencies."

Thus, judging by statistics from the 1991 campaign, Planned Parenthood may be forced to seek additional funding sources to make ends meet.

In 1991, the family planning agency received \$459,100 from the United Way — the highest allocation of any community Rochester's size to its Planned Parenthood chapter, according to a fact sheet provided by the United Way of Greater Rochester.

But only about 39 per cent of that figure came from donor-option contributions. The balance came through the general-allocation process from which the agency would be excluded under the United Way decision.

Gregory Soehner, president of the Rochester Planned Parenthood, said he believed his organization could survive a drop in United Way funding. But he said the agency couldn't make up the difference "without the commitment of a lot of time and resources."

"The question is, why would we be having to do that in the first place?" he asked rhetorically.

United Way officials maintain that they are not taking a position on abortion. Instead, officials say, the funding organization faces a no-win situation: both action and inaction would be interpreted as a stand on the debate.

"If United Way did nothing, some people would say we were taking a stand (in favor of abortions)," Fowble pointed out.

Soehner agreed that the United Way did not set out to take a stand on the issue. "But that's the way it's turned out," he said. "Their actions are a little inconsistent with what they're saying."

Joseph Calabrese, president of United Way of Greater Rochester, doesn't see it that way.

"The main issue was not whether United Way would fund abortions. The question is, would people stop contributing to United Way? There was enough evidence that they would," Calabrese said.

Calabrese said the United Way had surveyed employee coordinators of major accounts and the executives of member agencies. The survey revealed that about 8 percent of potential contributors might withhold their money from this spring's United Way campaign if Planned Parenthood retained general-allocation status. That would translate into a loss of "16,000 donors and anywhere from two to three million dollars," he said.

"We think it's unfair that United Way has been thrown into the middle," he added.

Planned Parenthood claims it needs to open an abortion clinic because it is becoming increasingly difficult for pregnant women on Medicaid to obtain abortions locally.

Agency officials say area physicians are discouraged from performing abortions for low-income women by the disparity between the amount Medicaid will pay for the procedure and the substantially higher reimbursement

rate paid by other health-insurance providers.

Soehner said Planned Parenthood's only current option is to send such women elsewhere for abortions. He estimated that the Rochester agency sent 70 women to out-of-town clinics each month in 1991. Most of those referrals were to clinics in the Buffalo area.

"The situation with United Way is unfortunate because we feel that (a local abortion clinic) is a legal and needed service," Soehner said.

Planned Parenthood officials in Seattle, Wash., expressed a similar view back in 1988, when they likewise decided to sponsor an abortion clinic.

The announcement prompted the Seattle-area United Way to completely drop Planned Parenthood as a member agency if it went ahead with the clinic plans. At that time, Seattle's United Way agencies received all of their funding from the general-allocation process.

That decision fueled a backlash against the United Way, stemming in large part from the Archdiocese of Seattle's involvement in the decision. Archdiocesan officials had lobbied the United Way to drop Planned Parenthood in the event that the agency began offering abortions, and the media and citizens alike charged that United Way buckled under unwarranted church pressure.

"By far, King County (the Washington-state county surrounding Seattle) is the most liberal and pro-choice county in the state," remarked Kay Lagreid, archdiocesan news and information manager. "The Catholic Church out here is the bad guy."

United Way of King County's ensuing 1988 fund drive saw a severe decline in donations. Not until it established a donor-option policy late in the campaign (for Planned Parenthood as well as other agencies) — and extended its drive by three weeks — could the United Way even approach its original goal of \$36.7 million. The campaign's final tally was \$34.2 million — just over the \$33.4 million revised goal United Way issued amid the controversy.

Ironically, Seattle's Planned Parenthood received far more money through the 1988 donor-option program than it had through the previous year's general allocation. United Way donors earmarked \$705,000 for Planned Parenthood in 1988, whereas only \$433,000 had been allocated to the agency from the 1987 general fund.

"From a financial point of view, we're in better shape," said Lee Minto, president of Planned Parenthood of Seattle-King County. But she doesn't believe Planned Parenthood owes any thanks to the United Way.

Donor option "is a connection (with United Way), but it's not a relationship," said Minto, whose agency began offering abortion services in February, 1989, and now performs abortion at three clinics.

Will the Seattle scenario repeat itself in Rochester if Planned Parenthood opens an abortion clinic in 1993 and United Way follows through on changing the agency's status? Officials at both organizations express concern.

"Obviously, it would be silly to tell you I'm not concerned," said Fowble. "We made our decision because we were concerned of the effect on our overall campaign, and there still may be an effect."

Remarking that the \$460,000 Rochester's Planned Parenthood received through United Way in 1991 is a significant sum, Soehner observed: "I think it has implications for us if we lose our status as a member agency ... I think it becomes pretty clear that (United Way)

had concerns about the impact of the campaign, and we didn't share their conclusion about how it would be affected."

Since both United Way and Planned Parenthood are leery of the consequences stemming from a change in Planned Parenthood's status, the organizations are exploring a mutually acceptable solution so that Planned Parenthood could alter its decision to open an abortion clinic.

"We're still meeting with local community leaders and Planned Parenthood, and are looking at a number of alternatives," Fowble said.

The leading alternative is to encourage hospitals and private practitioners to expand abortion access to women on Medicaid.

"If the situation changed dramatically a few months down the road, and there were resources locally, then our board would review its plan," Soehner acknowledged.

Calabrese concurred: "If the medical community were to step forward and provide local services, then we wouldn't have a problem," he said.

On the other hand, Father Anthony Mugavero, parochial vicar at St. Theodore's in Gates, expressed concern over the United Way's willingness to discuss the issue with Planned Parenthood.

"While we support United Way's decision (to re-designate Planned Parenthood's status), we also need to point out that such discussions are despicable," said Father Mugavero, who has participated in numerous anti-abortion demonstrations.

"It's actually immoral to be planning abortions. This is not a good thing for United Way to be getting into. There is a moral fiber within United Way, and that fiber is being eroded by having discussions like this."

Father Mugavero added that he would like the church to be included in the ongoing dialogue.

Diocesan spokesman Father George Norton said the Diocese of Rochester has no comment on the United Way-Planned Parenthood issue at this time. Yet diocesan Catholics clearly are participating in discussion of the issue.

In fact, Catholic response to the proposed clinic could be seen even before the United Way's December announcement that it would change Planned Parenthood's status. On Oct. 25, five Catholics — including nationally known activist Father Daniel Berrigan — staged a sit-in at Planned Parenthood's Rochester headquarters, 114 University Ave. The five face trial Jan. 30 on trespassing charges.

"Catholics must face reality," said pro-choice advocate Rachel Studer, co-convenor of Greater Rochester Catholics for Choice. "Without Planned Parenthood's comprehensive, balanced and affordable family planning services, the rate of abortion would soar."

Sister Campion Bush, SSJ, director of evangelization at St. Augustine's Church in Rochester, acknowledged that debate over the proposed abortion clinic has pushed into the background other important services Planned Parenthood offers.

"I admire them for some of the things they're trying to do," Sister Bush said. "But not anything connected with abortion."

A notice in St. Augustine's Dec. 22 bulletin implored parishioners to write to United Way in support of its decision.

"Let United Way know that we care about where our donations go, and we support and appreciate this decision for life," the notice said.

Statement

Continued from page 3

about control of the media by the military and the government, Monsignor Shannon observed. "We saw the clean bombs, but we did not see the children and the innocent civilians dying," he remarked.

Monsignor Shannon noted that the statement also raises concerns about the cost of the war in terms of social and economic programs due to military spending, the environmental impact of the war and the destruction of the Kuwaiti oil fields, and the issue of global responsibility for the welfare of

others and of the environment.

The document is intended to serve as a starting point for discussion of these and other war-related issues in parishes and schools, Monsignor Shannon remarked.

"What I hope will come of it is that these issues — and other moral issues that we face — will be given serious discussion in the Christian community," Monsignor Shannon concluded.

EDITORS' NOTE: On Jan. 16, at 7 p.m., Corpus Christi Church, 864 Main St. E., Rochester, will host a Mass marking the first anniversary of the gulf war. The event is being sponsored by the Faith and Resistance Community, which opposes both war and abortion.

Obituary

Fr. Orrin Feller; pastor, teacher

ROCHESTER — Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Father Orrin W. Feller at Holy Spirit Church in Rochester on Monday, Jan. 13, 1992.

Bishop Dennis W. Hickey was both celebrant and homilist for the Mass.

Father Feller died in his sleep on Friday, Jan. 10, 1992, at Hill Haven Nursing Home, where he had lived since 1974. He was 91.

Born April 1, 1901 in Milwaukee, Wis., Father Feller attended St. Monica's School, and St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's Seminaries in Rochester. He was ordained a priest June 10, 1933, in the former St. Patrick's Cathedral in Rochester.

Father Feller also earned a bachelor's degree from Fordham University in New York City, and a master's degree from Niagara University in Niagara Falls.

From 1933-42, Father Feller taught Greek and Latin at Aquinas Institute.

He was named assistant pastor of St. Mary's, Dansville, in 1942. He served as pastor of St. Patrick's, Moravia, and St. Ann's, Owasco, from 1950 to 1956.

Due to ill health, Father Feller became the assistant pastor of St. Mary's in 1956. He served in Dansville until 1958, when he was appointed assistant pastor at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Rochester.

After leaving Our Lady of Perpetual Help in 1966 due to ill health, Father Feller served at several other parishes over the next four years. He retired from active ministry in 1970.

Father Feller is survived by a sister, Margaret Zak, of Union City, Calif.; two nephews, Dewain Feller of Rochester and Raymond Lang of Canandaigua; and several nieces and nephews.

Interment was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.