

# CFC program offers assistance for workers

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Not long ago, St. Mary's Hospital on Genesee Street was in danger of losing a valued employee.

That employee — whose identity will remain anonymous — was trying to care for an elderly parent. As a result of the demands of that care, however, the employee found it increasingly difficult to continue working full-time at the hospital.

Instead of quitting, however, the employee contacted the Catholic Family Center's Employee Assistance Program of Rochester. As a result, noted William Olsen, St. Mary's vice president for human resources, the employee "was able to deal with the situation and consequently was able to remain a full-time employee."

The St. Mary's employee is among thousands of people who have been assisted by the Employee Assistance Program in the past decade. In 1991 alone, nearly 900 people used the service.

Meanwhile, EAP has grown from a department of the Catholic Family Center's Restart Substance Abuse Program in 1981 to one of the three largest private employee assistance programs in Rochester, noted Judith Azoff, associate executive director for clinical services at the CFC, and the program's director until Dec. 31, 1991.

The program currently provides employee assistance services to approximately 38 companies — including St. Mary's Hospital, the County of Monroe and St. Joseph's Villa, Azoff noted. In addition, EAP has consulting agreements with such companies as Eastman Kodak Company and Wegmans Food Markets.

Azoff explained that employee assistance programs date back to the 1940s. Originally intended to provide services for alcoholic workers, the programs have evolved into mental health services assisting employees and their families with personal, emotional, family and substance abuse problems.

The bulk of the cases that come to the EAP, noted Wendy Strauss, the program's current co-director, "have to do with family and marriage problems."

Large companies provide their own employee assistance services, Azoff said. Smaller companies, however, lack the resources to do so, and thus contract with such agencies as EAP. Those contracts entitle each employee — and each of the employee's family members — to a set number of free sessions with an EAP staff person or a counselor arranged through the program.

EAP's support comes entirely through these contracts, Azoff reported. That the program is growing and



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

Judith Azoff (right), associate executive director for clinical services at the Catholic Family Center, headed the center's Employee Assistance Program until December of 1991. Currently, Wendy Strauss (left) serves as co-director of the program, which was designed to provide mental-health services to families and employees suffering personal, emotional and substance-abuse problems.

adding new client companies is a tribute to the quality of the services it offers, she claimed.

Olsen, for one, had only praise for the program.

St. Mary's opted to go with EAP in January, 1986, he explained, because the program "gives us some extremely qualified counseling services for our employees on a variety of issues."

In addition, Olsen said, EAP's availability has helped employees with problems perform their jobs better. "We have seen improvements," he declared.

One advantage that EAP has over other such programs, Azoff said, is that it is affiliated with the Catholic Family Center and is linked with CFC's counseling services.

"We were created within a large, multi-purpose human service agency," Azoff said. "We can direct people within (CFC) to the services they need."

Strauss pointed out that if the individual's needs can not be dealt within the span of free visits provided

through the program, the individual can then receive CFC services by using the agency's sliding scale.

This last feature is one of the reasons why Eastman Kodak Company has had a consulting relationship with EAP for six years, noted John Gallagher, manager of Kodak's employee assistance program.

"There are some family and marital matters not covered by insurance," Gallagher said. Thus EAP helps to provide services for Kodak employees that they might not otherwise have readily and inexpensively available, he observed.

In fact, the photo company has been so pleased with EAP's services that when Kodak's most recent early retirement program resulted in the loss of a number of the company's own employee assistance personnel, EAP was contracted to provide services as new staff is being hired, Gallagher noted. That contract is in effect until the end of March, 1992, he said.

Employees at Kodak and other companies EAP serves are comfortable

seeking assistance, Strauss observed, because unless individuals indicate their names can be revealed, all those who seek help in the program are treated with complete confidentiality.

"Confidentiality is the cornerstone of EAP's business," Strauss said. Only if the employee signs a form granting permission can his or her name be released, she noted. And reports to companies about how many employees made use of the program list just numbers, not names, she added.

Meanwhile, Azoff said, companies find employee assistance programs such as the Catholic Family Center's cost effective, reducing long-term disability by heading off problems before they grow.

"Having an (employee assistance program) actually saves a company money," Azoff added. "It reduces absenteeism and on the job absenteeism in which employees are on the job but are not as productive as they might be because of their problems."

"It's a good investment for an employer," Azoff declared.

## WINTER SIDEWALK SALE

at

## Greece Towne Mall

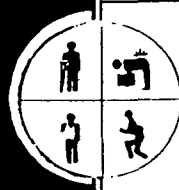
Thurs., Feb. 6 — Sun., Feb. 9



### OTHER MALL EVENTS:

- Monday, Feb. 17: Doug & Gary
- Sat., Feb. 22: REEBOK Step Promotion with WCMF
- Thurs., Feb. 27-Sun, March 1: Heiken Puppets
- Sat., Feb 29: Boy Scout Show

Mall Hours: Monday-Saturday 10a.m.-9:30, Sunday 12-5



Southview Physical Therapy  
and Sports Rehabilitation

Feel The  
Difference!

- Prompt Scheduling
- Private treatment rooms
- Early morning and evening appointments
- FREE, convenient parking

at Westfall Professional Park  
880 Westfall Road, Suite D  
CALL FOR INFORMATION  
716-271-3380

Please patronize  
our advertisers

## RON BUTTARAZZI

Attorney At Law

Full and comprehensive  
legal services for all  
your personal, family  
and business needs.



"Counsel and support when you need it most."

CALL: 232-4640

Wisdom, Justice, Judgement, Equity  
Prov. 1:3