



# CATHOLIC COURIER

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Health Care Supplement  
pull-out after page 8

## Debate over health care drags onward

Sherry Brown doesn't need to read a newspaper to recognize the shortcomings in our nation's current health-care system.

The 43-year-old Elmira resident has experienced many of those shortcomings because her family cannot afford health insurance.

Her husband, Terry, works for a local pizza shop. Although the business allows its employees to obtain lower rates by joining its health-insurance group, it doesn't contribute anything toward the premiums.

Two of Brown's three sons — 15-year-old Kerry and 12-year-old Aaron — temporarily had basic medical coverage through a program offered by Blue Cross and Blue Shield. But since funding for that program has been exhausted, she said, the coverage has stopped.

One of Brown's relatives has cancer. Although the relative does have some health insurance, the policy only covers services delivered to hospital inpatients, so the relative must pay for all outpatient services out of her own pocket.

The Brown family has seen their overall medical debts swell to a current total of \$22,000. As a result, the family is now preparing to file for bankruptcy.

"And that (\$22,000) isn't even for a major illness,"

Sherry Brown remarked. "I get migraine headaches, and every time I go to the hospital it costs me anywhere from \$300 to \$1,000. It's almost like you're scared to get sick. I was supposed to go to the doctor yesterday, but I cancelled the appointment because it would cost too much."

"I've given up on us ever having a house," added Brown, whose family — with the help of financial aid from the federal government — lives in half a house on Matthews Street in Elmira.

According to statistics provided by the Catholic Health Association of the United States, the Browns are among some 36 million Americans who lack health insurance.

And, according to the CHA's Jack Bresch, many more million are under-insured.

"Probably 40 percent of the American population is struggling to get enough, or any, health insurance," Bresch said during a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*. Bresch is a Washington, D.C., lobbyist who represents CHA on federal government issues relating to Catholic hospitals and nursing homes.

In New York state, nearly 2.5 million residents have no health

Continued on page 2



**LOCAL NEWS** — Delegates from the Diocese of Rochester return from the seventh National Black Catholic Congress in New Orleans.

# 3

**WORLD & NATION** — Doctors who removed a tumor from Pope John Paul II said they caught the growth before it could become cancerous.

# 4

**SPORTS** — A Silver Stadium usher marks a half-century of working at Red Wing baseball games.

# 13