

Holy Father calls for 'World Day of the Sick'



AP/Wide World Photos

Pope John Paul II shakes hands with a well-wisher upon his arrival at Agostino Gemelli Hospital in Rome July 12. He has asked the church to remember the sick with an annual celebration Feb. 11, 1992.

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II has asked that the church throughout the world remember the sick and focus on its obligation to care for them with an annual celebration Feb. 11, 1992, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

The pope, speaking to the sick at his weekly general audience May 13, announced his institution of the "World Day of the Sick."

A papal letter formally establishing the annual event was released at the Vatican the same day.

In the letter to Cardinal Fiorenzo Angelini, president of the Pontifical

Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, the pope said the church has always been aware of "the duty to serve the sick and the suffering as an integral part of her mission."

The annual celebration, the pope said, has several aims:

- To make Catholics and the rest of society sensitive to the need for ensuring the sick receive the best care possible.
- To help the sick value their suffering "both on the natural and supernatural levels."
- To involve the diocese, Christian communities and religious in pastoral

care for the sick.

- To support volunteer activity.
- To affirm the importance of the moral and spiritual formation of health-care workers.
- To help priests, religious and all those who work with the sick understand even better how important it is to care for the spiritual needs of the sick.

The pope said he chose the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes because the shrine where Mary appeared in France is a place that "symbolizes the hope and the grace" of those who accept suffering and make it an offering for salvation.

He prayed for the World Day of the Sick's success and for the intercession of the saints to strengthen the health-care industry, "an apostolate of love which our contemporary world needs so much."

Eye-care program for city youths enters next phase

ROCHESTER — A new eye-care program is now available for low-income, inner-city school children.

In March of this year, Rochester New Futures Initiative, Inc., 55 St. Paul St., implemented Vision Care for Kids — Phase I. The program is designed for children who could not otherwise receive eye care due to the lack of insurance or unavailability of vendors willing to accept Medicaid.

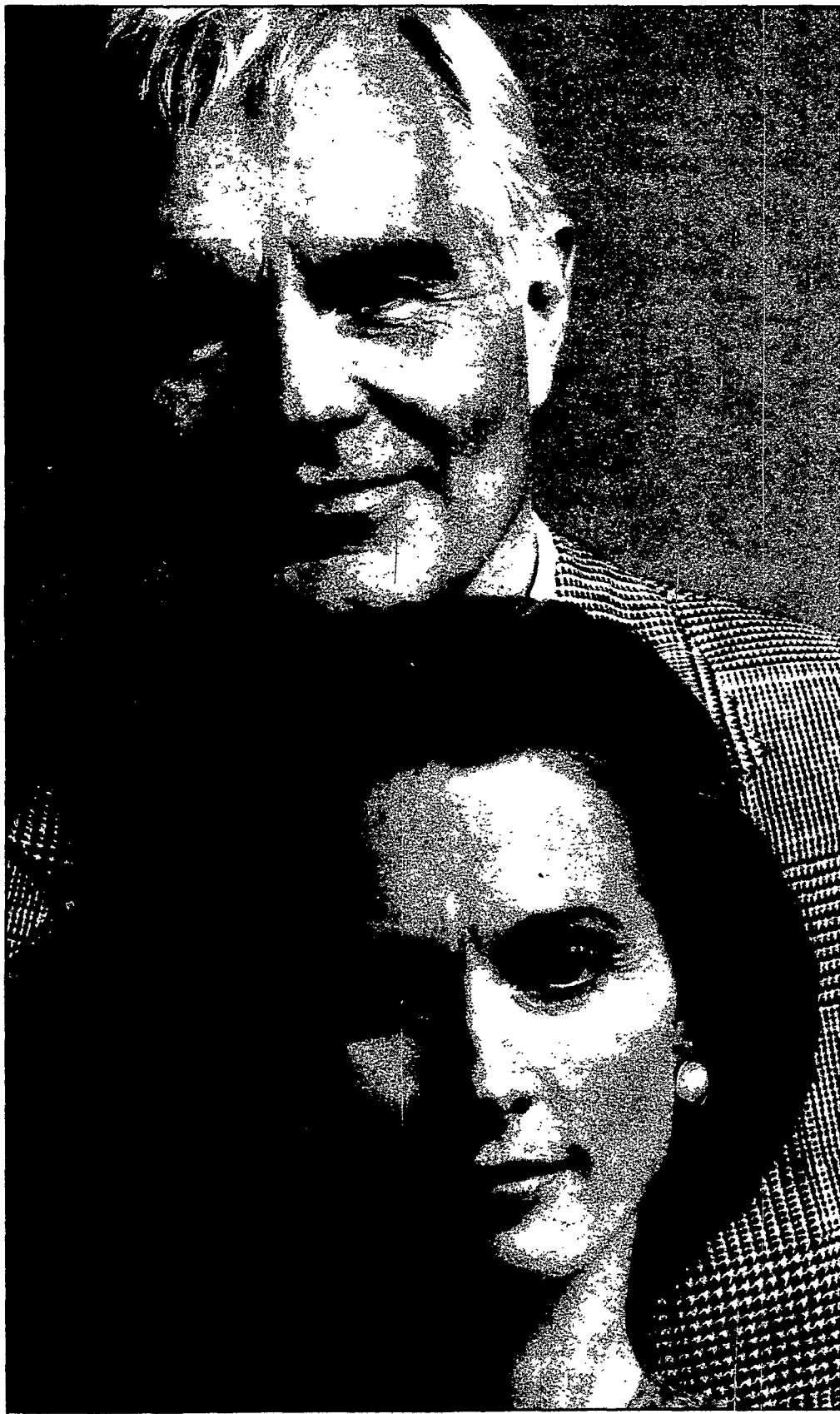
According to Rita Augustine, president of Rochester New Futures Initiative, Phase I has dealt with the immediate need of obtaining eye examina-

tions and eye wear. All goods and services have been provided by volunteer organizations and professionals.

Phase II, which went into effect earlier this month, focuses on continuing this service on a long-term basis. The 13-person Phase II task force committee is headed by Catherine Spoto, former president of the Rochester City School District Board of Education.

"We have an interim solution. We need, though, to find the long-term one and have turned our sights toward that end," Spoto said.

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