

Rainy summer takes toll on migrant workers

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Uncooperative weather this summer has been a burden not only on farmers, but also on the many temporary workers they employ.

For farming communities in and around the Diocese of Rochester, where excessive rainfall has even forced some areas to declare states of emergency, thousands of migrant workers' lives have been disrupted.

"There are people who don't have food in their homes," said Mark VanDerwater of Rural Opportunities, Inc. "People who would normally be working 40 hours per week are now working a couple of days here and a couple of days there."

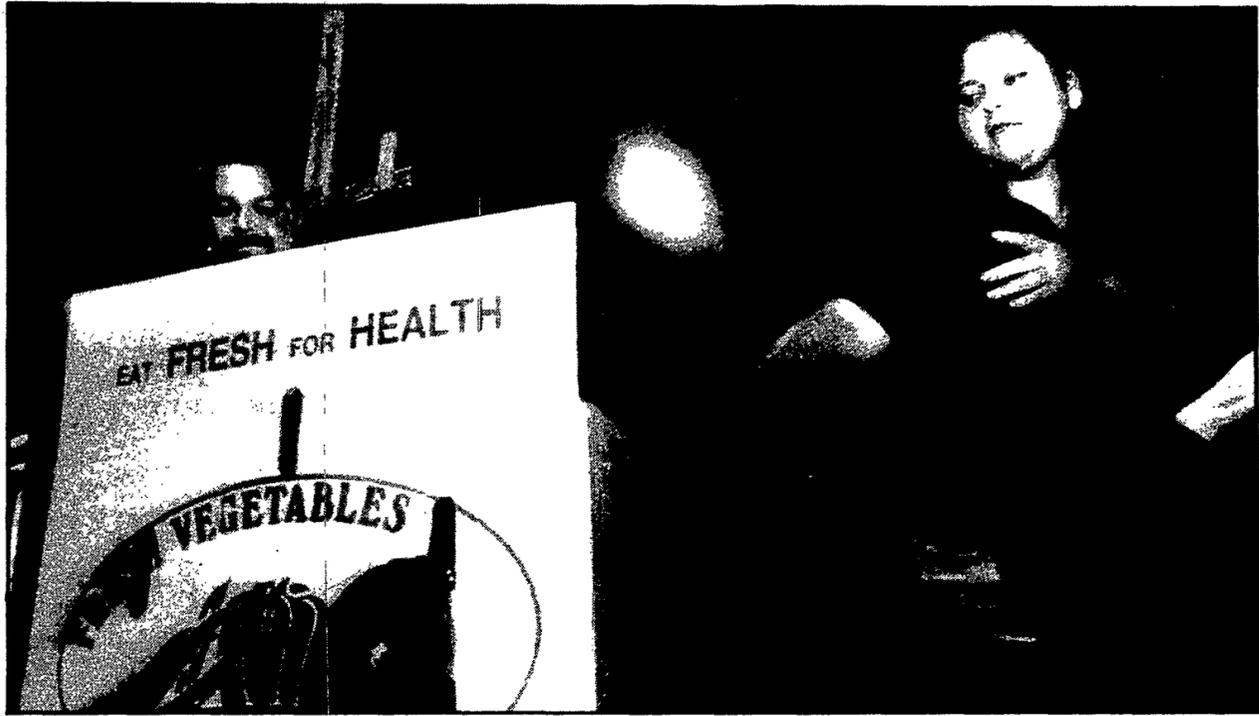
"The people I've talked to said (the lack of work) is the worst they've seen it," said Sister Mary Jane Mitchell, director of the Western Monroe-Orleans County Hispanic Ministry located in Brockport.

VanDerwater and Sister Mitchell noted that since migrant workers are not officially residents of the towns or states in which they work — many are not even U.S. citizens — their opportunities for receiving financial assistance are extremely limited.

"They don't have anything they can apply for," said Sister Mitchell, who provides sacramental programs in the migrant camps that she visits.

"At least farmers can get grants and emergency aid, but migrant workers don't," commented VanDerwater, an employment specialist with the Rural Opportunities field office located in Albion, Orleans County.

"They live month-to-month, and if they don't work today, they don't eat tomorrow," he added. "These people want to work very badly, but they're



At right, Leticia Zavala packs cucumbers alongside Roberto Zavala at the Sartwell Farm in Albion. Below, Ignacio Arellano and his family live and work on the Orleans County farm.

Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

the ones who fall through the cracks of society."

Rural Opportunities is a non-profit organization. It assists migrant workers who set up camps at the farms on which they work, and also provides services for seasonal farm workers who live in the area year-round and commute to work. The group makes emergency provisions of food and clothing, and attempts to find educational and employment opportunities for those who do not wish to remain farm workers.

VanDerwater, whose office assisted



Workers in Orleans, Genesee, Niagara and western Monroe counties have been predominately hurt by the heavy loss of cabbage, potato and cucumber crops, said Sister Mitchell.

Clarke observed that a dismal cherry season has been especially harmful in his region. Potato, onion and corn crops have also suffered.

"It's resulted in many, many, many (work) hours being lost," said Clarke.

Clarke said migrant workers generally arrive in Wayne County in two waves: in July for the cherry harvest, and around Labor Day for the apple harvest.

He noted that the apple harvest may save this year from being a total washout.

"The one good thing so far is that the rain has created growth in apple trees, requiring more trimming work," said Clarke. "And if we have a normal harvest, then we'll be able to say we just had some bumps along the way."

Despite the work shortages, Clarke said his office has not been inundated with requests for assistance. He speculated that many migrant workers have been warned to avoid western New York this summer.

"We keep thinking there's going to be a parking lot full of people every day, but that's not happening," said Clarke.

African-American deacon to head personnel office

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Deacon John Holmes of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Hamlin has been appointed director of diocesan deacon personnel. The appointment became effective Aug. 24.

Ordained in 1988, Deacon Holmes was the second African-American to become a permanent deacon in the diocese. As director of deacon personnel, he is the first black to hold that position.

In his new position, Deacon Holmes replaces Deacon Steve Graff, who is currently serving as diocesan coordinator of certification for designated ministry.

Deacon Holmes was one of six candidates the diocese interviewed for the position, according to Mary Kessler, director of the diocesan Department of Human Resources. Eleven people applied for the position, she said.

The deacon joins Jacquelyn Dobson as one of two African-Americans in administrative positions at the diocesan Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Road. Dobson directs the diocesan Office of Black Ministries.

In the past, Deacon Holmes has been an outspoken critic of the diocese's record on hiring minorities. In particular, he confronted Bishop Matthew H. Clark about the issue in December of 1991 at the Black Catholic Day of Reflection in St. Monica's Church, 831

Genesee St.

At that time, Deacon Holmes noted that he had twice applied for diocesan positions and had not been hired. He charged that black Catholics in the diocese had become disillusioned by a disparity between diocesan statements on minority issues and the diocese's own hiring record.

When interviewed by the *Catholic Courier* on Aug. 24, Deacon Holmes said he was pleased that his appointment placed another African-American in the Pastoral Center. But he added that "I would hate to think the only reason I was hired was because I am a minority."

While acknowledging that the diocese wants to employ more minorities, Kessler emphasized that "we hired John because he was the best candidate."

Deacon Holmes echoed Kessler's comments, noting that he had served the Catholic Church in a variety of capacities for almost 20 years. He added that being black was merely a "bonus" in his new position.

In addition to his new duties, Deacon Holmes currently coordinates communications in most of New York state for the African-American Permanent Diaconate Association. He is also active in the National Black Clergy Caucus.

The deacon will also continue his ministry at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, he said.

approximately 1,200 people in 1991, said migrant workers in his area are predominately Mexican, Mexican-American and Central American.

In Wayne County's farming communities, workers also migrate north from Florida and Haiti, according to Glen Clarke, program office director of the Rural Opportunities branch in Alton. Clarke estimated that his office will aid nearly 1,000 people this year.

1st Fall Shipment of Mohair Coats and Jackets has arrived

Stop in today for your best selection.

The Gaelic Shop
Quality Gifts with a Gaelic Flair
39 S. Main St.
(in the village of Pittsford)
(716) 248-8346
Mon.-Sat. 10am-5pm

★ HOTELS ★ CAR RENTAL

FOR SALE \$448.00
Round Trip Air

Rochester to...
LONDON
FRANKFURT
ROME
ZURICH

Subject to availability for travel between Nov. 1, 1992-Mar. 31, 1993.

BOOK NOW FOR FALL TRAVEL!
Fare Increase August 31st

(716) 889-9090
3220 Chili Ave. **Jean Brown Travel**
Hours: Mon., Wed. & Fri 9-5, Tues. & Thurs. 9-6
ALSO BY APPOINTMENT

★ CRUISES ★ WEEKEND SPECIAL