

Students brave frigid weather for homeless

Fraternity raises \$1,250 for shuttle

ROCHESTER — BRITTTTT! That's how anybody stuck outside in this weather would feel. Worse yet, for the homeless, it's not a feeling that they can flee unless they can find shelter.

For 31 members of the University of Rochester's Delta Upsilon fraternity, that feeling became real last weekend as the brothers spent two-hour shifts in a large cardboard packing box outside Wilson Commons. Teams of two brothers lived in the box from noon on Thursday, Feb. 18 to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 20.

No, the brothers weren't engaged in some kind of cruel mid-winter hazing practice, or acting silly in public as some fraternities sometimes do. They were actually trying to get sympathetic passers-by to drop a few bucks in a shoe box to help the city's homeless.

"Instead of having a party to raise money, it's getting closer to the experience," said Marco Beltran, a U of R senior and a fraternity member.

Beltran noted that fraternity brothers have taken part in "Homeless for the Homeless" the last two years, raising about \$2,000 for Francis Hospitality Center, 547 Joseph Ave., a year-round shelter for men operated by Catholic Family Center.

According to Mary McGuire, director of CFC's Homeless and Housing Services, the estimated \$1,250 raised in this year's effort by Delta Upsilon will benefit the Shelter Shuttle.

The shuttle operates every day from 3:30-11:30 p.m., transporting riders to

shelters, homes for battered women and a variety of other agencies. In 1992, 2,800 people used the Shelter Shuttle, she reported.

A \$50,000 federal grant administered by the city government funded the shuttle's operation during its first two years, but the grant will be reduced by one-half in 1993, she said.

The grant covers payments on the leased van; gas, upkeep and insurance; salaries for one full-time and two part-time drivers; pay for two relief drivers on call; and bus tokens for riders who need them for transportation not covered by the shuttle.

McGuire noted that the program could use more funding, and that the CFC will hold several fundraisers throughout this year to make up for the reduction in funding.

Senior John Johnston, also an Epsilon brother, noted that his fraternity members were asking friends and faculty members for donations to help the shuttle program.

And Beltran has found that sitting outside in a cardboard box has changed his own perspective on those who are homeless.

"I can't just walk by them anymore," he said. "I take a little more consideration. I stop and ask them a question."

"Maybe we're taking things to extremes," Johnston added. "But it's working."

EDITORS' NOTE: To donate to the shelter program, send a check to the "Save Our Shuttle" program, c/o Catholic Family Center, 25 Franklin St., Rochester, 14604-1007.

— Rob Cullivan



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor
Ryan Carlson (left) and John Johnston, members of the Delta Upsilon fraternity at the University of Rochester, attempt to stay warm during one of their two-hour shifts inside a cardboard refrigerator box Feb. 18. The fraternity's third annual 'Homeless for the Homeless Marathon' netted approximately \$1,250 for Catholic Family Center's Shelter Shuttle.

Diocese joins effort to add religious network to cable

Customer survey will decide issue

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The Diocese of Rochester has joined efforts to add the Vision Interfaith Satellite Network — or VISN, as it is better known — to the list of channels offered by Greater Rochester Cablevision.

The diocese, along with the Greater Rochester Community of Churches, is asking GRC to add the 24-hour religious network when the cable system expands the number of channels it offers later this summer.

GRC officials plan to add one religious station to their offerings at that time. But GRC will decide which religious network to add based solely on the results of a customer survey to be conducted during the next few months, noted Greg Hunt, GRC's vice president for programming and operations.

Hunt told the *Catholic Courier* that VISN will be competing against three other religious networks: Mother Angelica's Catholic Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN); the evangelical programming of Trinity Broadcasting Network; and the Inspirational Network, which he described as "Southern-Baptist-based."

"We are not taking a stand on which service we're going to take," Hunt said. "Our customers will vote which service to take."

In a Feb. 2, 1993, letter to parishes, Father George R. Norton, media spokesperson for the Diocese of Rochester, urged that parishioners write to GRC as soon as possible in support of VISN, a cable network produced by a consortium of faith groups representing Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Jewish communities.

In the past, the diocese has supported efforts to bring EWTN to the cable service, Father Norton acknowledged during an interview with the *Catholic Courier*. But this time, he said, VISN asked the diocese to support its efforts to be added to GRC, while supporters of EWTN had not.

Father Norton noted that VISN carries some of the same programs found on EWTN. In addition, he said, VISN includes Bishop Anthony Bosco of Greensburg, Pa., and Paulist Father John Geaney on its board of directors.

"I think VISN is more inclusive," Father Norton said. "It's more interfaith. I think it just has a broader perspective."

The Rev. Lawrence Witmer, executive director of the Greater Rochester Community of Churches, said in an interview with the *Courier* that his organization supports VISN because it not only presents a cross section of religious programming, but because the network prohibits those producing its programs from soliciting for money, proselytizing or showing disrespect for other religions.

Instead, VISN offers a variety of talk shows, news programs, situation comedies and children's shows that emphasize faith and values. "We feel there is a dearth of positive programs on television these days," the Rev. Witmer said.

As part of efforts by the community of churches to encourage GRC to add VISN, the organization organized a forum on religious programs Feb. 11 at Brighton Reformed Church, 805 Blossom Road.

The forum was intended not only to talk with cable officials, but also to bring attention to the fact that the cable system is considering adding a religious channel.

The Rev. Witmer said the letters and the forum are part of an education effort.

"What we're trying to do is to make people aware of what VISN is so when it is time to vote it will be on people's minds," he explained. "I think we need to do some basic education to make people aware of what the survey is all about."

"We wish that (GRC) would make more channels available than just one," Rev. Witmer added, "but this being the case, we feel VISN is the one with broader appeal."

Likewise, Father Norton commented, "I would rather see some kind of Judeo-Christian broadcasting network on cable than nothing at all."

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