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Sectional blitz

Diocesan girls' soccer teams were amazingly successful this past week, with three clubs — Elmira Notre Dame, Our Lady of Mercy and Bishop Kearney — earning sectional titles. Also, McQuaid Jesuit won its third straight cross-country championship. Pages 8 and 9.



Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Images of impoverished guests lining up for daily meals at soup kitchens have become an accepted part of the nation's consciousness for many years now.

And from the Ethiopian famine of the early 1980s to the Somali famine in the 1990s, hungry citizens of other nations have regularly appeared on U.S. television screens and newspapers

in a seemingly endless parade of stark, skeletal imagery.

Such images seem even more poignant at this time of year, as families look forward to bountiful Thanksgiving feasts. Unfortunately, the world's hunger situation has only grown worse in the past year — both here in the United States, where it is a true crisis, and abroad, where it borders on the apocalyptic.

"It's kind of disheartening in a way," commented Prudy Georgia, community director of the Southern Tier Community Food Bank, which operates under the auspices of the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry. "Our vision is to eradicate hunger. The fact is that hunger is with us."

Many activists point out that hunger's reach eventually touches even the well-fed. The affluent can not escape the fallout of societies undermined and destroyed by the social instability, human retardation and political unrest that hunger creates, the experts warn.

"Worldwide, 1.3 billion people are too poor to afford enough food to keep them fully productive," according to *Hunger 1994* — *Transforming the Politics of Hunger*, a report issued by Bread for the World Institute in October. "Massive hunger around the world also affects the United States through the violence, forced migrations, and environmental destruction it spawns."

The BFTW report explained that, despite herculean food-distribution efforts of 150,000 private organizations in this country, "the number of hungry people in the United States has grown even faster than the feeding movement.

"At any given time," the report continued, "twenty million to thirty million people in the United States face hunger ... (which) is more widespread in the United States now than it was ten or fifteen years ago."

The report laid much of the blame for these conditions at the feet of the federal government. Although the government's efforts to feed the hungry include \$39 billion each year in federal food programs, the government also has curtailed social spending, cut taxes and tolerated high levels of unemployment that

Report highlights hunger, calls for new efforts

lead to hunger, the report argued.

Additional information released by BFTW Institute noted some tragic setbacks for hungry people in 1993.

War and starvation in the African nations of Somalia and Angola displaced millions, and killed hundreds of thousands, many of them children.

Economic and ethnic strife endangered millions in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, including 1.6 million people now at risk of hunger in Bosnia-Herce-

govina.

And a weak world economy has created rising unemployment, hunger and poverty throughout the globe, including the United States, where one in four children is defined as poor and 36.9 million citizens — more than at any time since 1962 — currently live below the poverty level.

But the report did not merely bang the drum slowly for hunger's victims. *Hunger 1994* praised efforts to fight hunger and outlined a seven-point plan to combat it. The report urged the following steps:

- More effort by individuals and agencies to influence government policies.
- Recognition on the part of religious communities that social concern must be linked to a relationship with God to motivate "effective political action."
- Strengthening low-income people's organizations, especially in their ability to influence government policy.
- Getting "people of color" into decision-making positions in organizations that help low-income people.
- Movement on the part of the media away from "stories of pity and charity" and toward stories outlining the causes of hunger.
- The expansion and strengthening of anti-hunger advocacy groups.
- More effective coordination among people and groups in the anti-hunger movement.

The Maryland-based institute's report apparently derives its activist slant from its affiliation with Bread for the World, which the document calls "a Christian citizen's movement of 44,000 members, who advocate specific policy changes to help overcome hunger in the United States and overseas."

The institute's report was co-sponsored by several organizations including Catholic Relief Services, and CODEL (Coordination in Development) a Christian interfaith group founded in 1969 by four Catholic priests and a layman.

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