

SSJs and UR open health center

Facility to serve South Ave. area

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Even as visitors poured in for the Dec. 7 grand opening of St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center, 417 South Ave., staff members were fielding requests from people seeking assistance.

"During the open house we took several phone calls," said Sister Christine Wagner, SSJ, who coordinated the project to develop the center.

People had heard that the center was opening that day, Sister Wagner explained, and they were already looking for information concerning social services, health-care screenings, and where to get help paying utility bills.

When the center is fully operational in January, staff and volunteers will be handling more such requests. In addition, they will be busy providing primary health care and offering counseling, spirituality, mediation and tutoring services.

Housed in a building the congregation purchased last December and has been renovating ever since, the center is a collaborative project of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester and the University of Rochester's Community Nursing Center.

Sister Frances Sweeney, SSJ, will serve as the center's executive director, while Sister Maria Elena Mariani, SSJ, will be its administrative assistant. The center's nurses and counselors will work with volunteers — including Sisters of St. Joseph — who have backgrounds in nursing, counseling and education.

Sister Wagner said the idea for the center came after the order recognized that health care and other needs were not being met in the area around South Avenue — known as the South Wedge.

The Sisters of St. Joseph discovered this need, in part, through their work across



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center, 417 South Ave., Rochester, which will provide health care and other services, held an open house Dec. 7.

the street at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, 402 South Ave. The new center will have an informal relationship with the Catholic Worker house, as well as the house's work cooperative, Sister Wagner acknowledged.

Those needs were also made clear through a survey of the area conducted by a University of Rochester student last year, Sister Wagner noted.

"Her assessment confirmed what we suspected — the need for health care, the need for counseling, the need for conflict resolution," Sister Wagner said.

Sister Mariani, who began working at the center on Dec. 10, noted that the need for health care extends beyond people who have no health insurance to those who are under-insured.

"A lot of people have counseling as part of their insurance, but no way could they (afford) to co-pay," Sister Mariani explained. Other health insurance benefits sometimes include co-payment fees that people are unable to meet, she con-

tinued. Thus the center will help to fill gaps for these people.

The center will receive support through grants, donations, insurance payments and a nominal fee paid by patients, Sister Mariani said.

The fact that the center is a joint project of the congregation and the University of Rochester Community Nursing program will benefit both groups, Sister Wagner observed.

This means the center will have a ready supply of nurse practitioners from the Community Nursing Center, she explained. And the nursing program has been seeking opportunities to work in the community.

"It's like the two groups were looking for each other," Sister Wagner commented.

Ultimately, Sister Wagner said, the new St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center will help South Wedge residents achieve "some kind of consistency of health care."

PP changes United Way funding status

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Following two years of boycotts involving a coalition of pro-life groups, Planned Parenthood of Rochester and the Genesee Valley announced December 6 that it will stop receiving money from United Way of Greater Rochester's general fund.

Under this new agreement, Planned Parenthood will remain a member agency of the United Way, but it will be classified as "donor-designation" beginning with the United Way's 1994 campaign.

Therefore, only donations specifically earmarked for Planned Parenthood during the United Way's annual fundraising drive will be sent to the agency.

Citizens for United Way Responsibility, a coalition of Rochester-area pro-life groups and individuals, formed in 1992 to protest the United Way's annual campaign because coalition members feared general-fund donations would help to finance Planned Parenthood's abortion clinic. The clinic opened this summer.

Dorothy Hayes, a spokeswoman for the pro-life coalition, said members were pleased by Planned Parenthood's decision.

"It's recognizing that there are people in the community who will not contribute to United Way because of the relationship with Planned Parenthood,"

Hayes said.

However, Hayes added, coalition members will still need to study the agreement further before they officially end their efforts.

"One of our real concerns is, what are the guarantees that this is going to take place, and that it will keep United Way money away from the abortion clinic?" Hayes said.

Gregory Soehner, Planned Parenthood's executive director, said his agency has been trying to resolve the issue with United Way officials since the abortion clinic, located at Planned Parenthood's headquarters, 114 University Ave., opened for business.

"We felt the decision would lessen the controversy," he said. The agreement, he added, will allow Planned Parenthood to maintain "reasonable separation" of funds and services, "much as we do for the federal government."

In 1993, Soehner reported, Planned Parenthood received approximately \$375,000 through donor-designation contributions, and about \$65,000 from general-fund contributions.

But that money was received under an agreement in which Planned Parenthood promised that all United Way monies would be kept separate from funding for the abortion clinic. The newly announced arrangement eliminates the need for this previous agreement.

The controversy dates back to 1991

when Planned Parenthood informed United Way that it was planning to offer abortion services at the new clinic. United Way's board of directors changed Planned Parenthood's status to that of a non-member agency, but the board's executive committee overruled that decision.

Pro-life groups, upset over the proposed clinic and the possibility that donations might be used to support abortion, urged a boycott of the United Way's 1992 campaign.

United Way fell approximately \$3.1 million short of its \$38.5 million goal that year. United Way officials attributed the shortfall to the poor economy and layoffs in Rochester, not to the boycott.

In 1993, however, United Way lowered its goal to \$35.5 million. It also worked out the arrangement with Planned Parenthood that no United Way monies would be used for the abortion clinic.

The United Way surpassed its 1993 goal.

Hayes said the protest's aim was never to harm United Way or other member agencies.

"We wanted to be a voice to say this will affect the the general fund," Hayes said.

If its members are satisfied with the new arrangement, the coalition may dissolve and focus its attention on the abortion clinic itself, Hayes said.

"I think the clinic has been forgotten in all this," Hayes said.

No paper Dec. 30

As is our custom, the *Catholic Courier* will not publish an issue on Dec. 30, the last Thursday in December. In addition, the paper's editorial and business offices will be closed the week of Dec. 27-31. Happy holidays!

Retreat set for Dec. 18-19 at Southern Tier parish

BATH — A retreat commemorating the spirituality of the late Anthony De Mello, SJ, will be conducted over a two-day period at St. Mary's Church, 32 E. Morris St.

The retreat will run from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 18; and from 1-4 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 19. There is no admission fee.

De Mello, who died in 1987, was a well-known author as well as retreat and workshop director in several parts of the world.

The retreat in Bath will be conducted by Father James R. Dolan, SJ, who currently serves as director of the Christ the King Retreat Center in Syracuse. The Syracuse priest studied with De Mello in India in 1985-86 and attended several workshops he presented in Syracuse.

Relief supplies needed by Midwest flood victims

Relief supplies are still being collected by an Alexandria, Mo., shelter providing assistance for the victims of the floods that swept through the Midwest this summer.

Necessary items include usable clothing — especially winter clothing — coats and boots.

Packages may be sent to: Mayor Bob Davis, Alexandria Community Center, Alexandria, Mo. 63430.

Irish Children's Program needs summer sponsors

The Irish Children's Program of Rochester is seeking sponsors.

This program brings children living in war-torn sections of Northern Ireland to Rochester for six-week visits during the summer.

Those interested in sponsoring a child from July 1-Aug. 10, 1994, should call Ronald Cocquyt at 716/464-9400, ext. 323, or Pat Cocquyt at 924-3611.

St. Joseph's Villa seeks Christmas gift donations

GREECE — St. Joseph's Villa, 3300 Dewey Ave., is seeking "St. Nicks" to donate Christmas gifts for teenagers served by the agency.

These "St. Nicks" will provide the teens with new items such as clothing, music-related merchandise or sports-related items.

In addition, food baskets are needed for families in the Villa's Preventive Services program.

Call 716/865-1550, ext. 284.

ARC needs volunteers to assist with programs

ROCHESTER — Association for Retarded Citizens, 1000 Elmwood Ave., is seeking volunteers to help with its swim and bowling programs.

Short- and long-term commitments are needed for the swim program. Bowling scorekeepers are needed for two hours every other Saturday from January-April 1994.

For information, call Diane Bailey at 716/325-8025.