

FROM PAGE 1
FEATURE

Service ministries battle wrath of winter

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

The heating system had broken down at her office on a recent bone-chilling day, but Giovina Caroscio knew that her plight could have been much, much worse.

As director of the Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry, Caroscio knows all too well that lack of heat is an everyday, not temporary, worry for the homeless people served by FLOSM, located at 110 Exchange St. in Geneva.

"We were complaining about not being able to take our coats off, but what about the people out on the street?" Caroscio remarked. "In rural areas, people are living in cars and barns in this kind of weather."

Shelters, as well as other services for the impoverished such as soup kitchens, have been considerably challenged by the winter's record-cold temperatures.

Dana Ciamprone-Grosvenor, who serves as FLOSM's emergency-service specialist, said that her office has received "just a barrage of calls" from people unable to pay their higher-than-normal heating bills.

"There are a lot of calls for shut-offs, or fear of shut-offs," she said.

Ciamprone-Grosvenor added that lengthier visits have been the trend for those utilizing a community lunch program located at the United Methodist Church on Geneva's Main Street.

"People come in and stay for as long as they can stay. They either don't have heat at all at their homes, or not enough heat," Ciamprone-Grosvenor acknowledged.

In the Southern Tier, Kathy Dubel recalled a snow-laden afternoon when the Elmira Free Community Kitchen, located at 160 High St., managed to serve lunch just before a state of emergency was declared in the city.

"For the families and individuals who come to the kitchen, having to go through the snow is a real hardship," commented Dubel, who serves as volunteer kitchen coordinator. She is also the Southern Tier office of Social Ministry's justice and peace director.

Dubel noted that on extremely bad days, the weather has forced a drop-off in the number of those coming for lunch. "You have to wonder how they are doing; if they were able to eat that day," she said.

On the other hand, Rochester homeless shelters appear to be overcoming the elements.

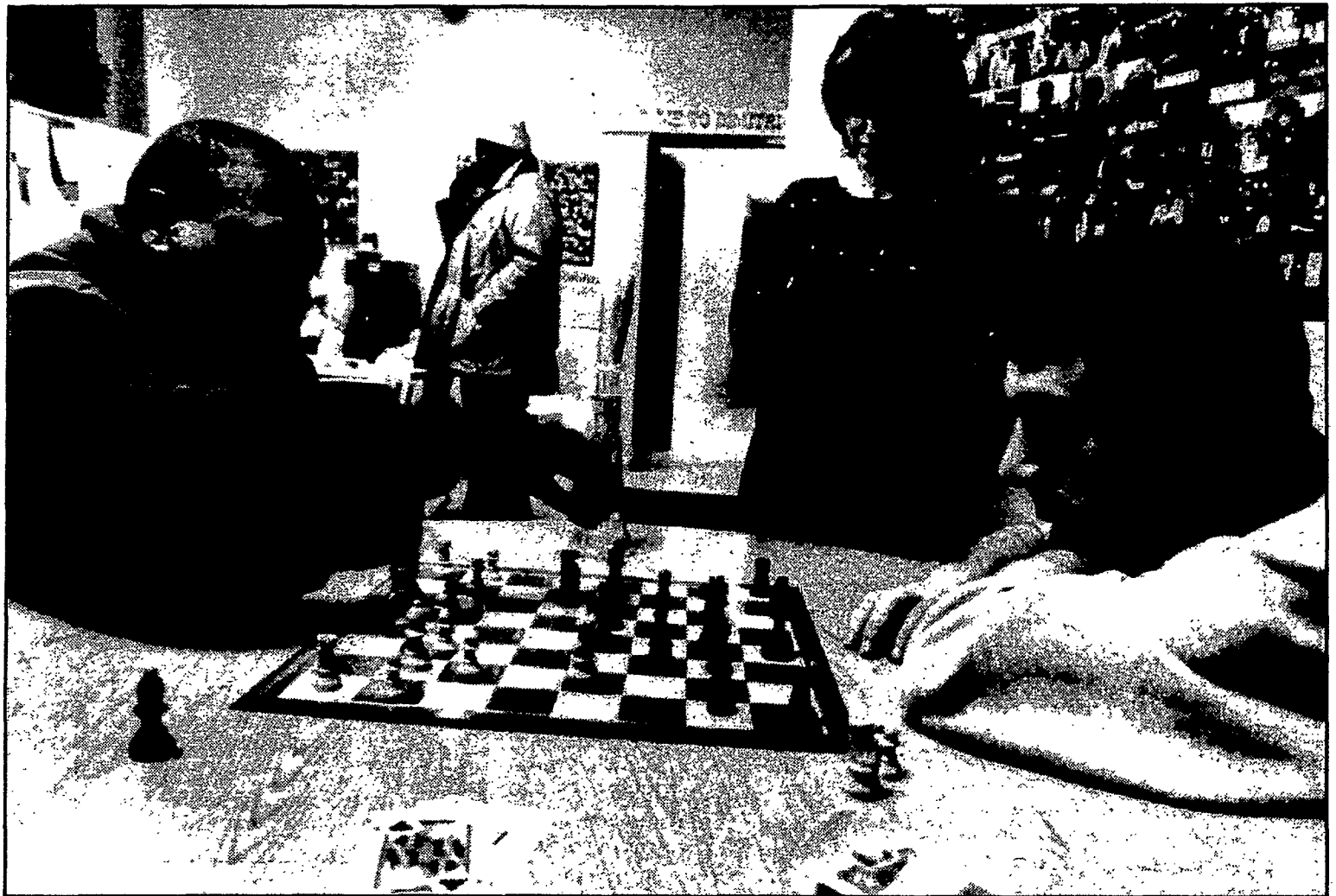
Mary McGuire, director of the Catholic Family Center's Homeless and Housing Services, said that "there is more of an immediacy than if it's 80 degrees" in accommodating the homeless at this time of year. Yet she said that collaboration among shelters has proven successful thus far.

"We have not had to turn people away. There is a very good network among the shelter providers," said McGuire. "The bottom line is that the services truly care about the people they're serving. If it's bad out, people are not going to shut the door and say, 'We're full.'"

Ministries offered through the CFC's Homeless and Housing Services include the Francis Center, a men's shelter on Rochester's east side; Women's Place, a facility for women on the city's west side; and Shelter Shuttle, a service which transports those in need to shelters or hotels within Monroe County — "where-

If it wasn't for this, I'd probably be inside a bus shelter somewhere.

Eric Zwetsch
Shelter guest



S. John Wilkin/Staff Photographer

Guests of the Dimitri House, 102 N. Union St., play chess during an overnight stay, while volunteer Anne Kelderhouse of Rochester's St. Cecilia's Parish looks on.



Tyrell braves the cold to smoke a cigarette outside the entrance to Dimitri House.



Bill relaxes to play his harmonica on one of seven beds the house offers to guests November through April.

ever there's any kind of opening," said McGuire.

Dimitri House, located at 102 N. Union St. in Rochester, offers a seven-bed shelter for men. According to Bill Camp, emergency services coordinator for Dimitri House, there have not been any unusual overloads this winter.

"We have a policy that we don't allow anyone to sleep on the floor, but we

were ready to allow that when it was very, very cold," said Camp. "But actually, it hasn't been as busy as we thought it would. It might be because we don't open up until 9:30 at night, and some of the other shelters open earlier. So the people who didn't want to stay out in the cold may have just gone to those places instead."

Dimitri House is an outreach ministry

of Corpus Christi Church, 864 Main St. E., Rochester.

Eric Zwetsch, who has been a frequent guest at Dimitri House since it opened at its Union Street location in 1986, attested to the value of having a warm bed to sleep in during the winter months.

"This place is a miracle," said Zwetsch. "If it wasn't for this, I'd probably be inside a bus shelter somewhere."

Mother nature

Continued from page 1

Catholics were urged by Baltimore Archbishop William H. Keeler, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, to respond with material assistance and prayers for the quake victims.

The earthquake "touched everyone in this land" not only by scenes of its devastation, but by revealing the "wonderful spirit of people reaching out to help others despite their own pain," said Archbishop Keeler in a Jan. 19 statement released in Washington.

The U.S. bishops were encouraging "continued generosity on the part of our people, which is being channeled through Catholic Charities USA," he said, adding that the needs of quake victims should be "brought to people's attention through parishes wherever possible."

Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston, Bishops Thomas V. Daily of Brooklyn, N.Y., and R. Pierre DuMaine of San Jose, Calif., were among bishops asking their dioceses to take up special collections for the quake victims during weekend Masses.

On the East Coast, diocesan officials thought primarily about keeping others out of danger — and themselves warm.

The closing of Catholic schools in dioceses hit by the Arctic blast was the most common reaction to cold weather, according to diocesan newspaper editors called by Catholic News Service.

At the installation of the new bishop for the Diocese of Ogdensburg, Bishop Paul Loverde, temperatures hovered around 25 below. The weather prevented some prelates from attending, but Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York flew into Ottawa, Ontario, then drove 50 miles south.

The former auxiliary bishop of Hart-

ford, Conn., which itself was pummeled with snow, Bishop Loverde said, "They've said God arranged all of the snow to prepare me. I have friends who like to joke there are two seasons in Ogdensburg — winter and July 20. But I know it's not true."

In Nashville, Tenn., the mercury recently reached 7 below zero. "Workers can't get in. People are scrambling to get to work," said Anthony Spence, editor of the *Tennessee Register*, Nashville's diocesan paper. "You hitch rides, form car pools, find out who has 4-wheel-drive, hitch rides, walk, hike."

Spence told Catholic News Service that Nashville is hit by ice storms virtually every winter. But the ice, he said, will melt, "and life as we know it will return to normal." Compared to the Southern California earthquake, he said, ice is "an inconvenience for us," but the situation there is "a real disaster for them."