

## Social Action Network sets sights on new goals

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

The Social Action Network, which consists of 20 Catholic parishes and organizations, plans to solidify its structure over the next year and shift the emphasis of its public advocacy, according to Maryann Carroll, a member of SAN's leadership team.

Over the next several months, SAN members will attempt to build parish-based leadership teams that will be able to focus on social issues relevant to each individual parish. These teams will in turn be able to communicate those concerns to SAN, she noted. This would contrast with SAN's previous emphasis on county-wide issues, she said.

For example, the social ministry committee at her own parish, St. John the Evangelist in Spencerport, has members who have worked with migrant workers and the elderly. Carroll, who chairs the committee, pointed out that the committee wants to increase its ability to publicly advocate for such groups while continuing to serve them through such actions as charitable fundraising.

Similarly, each parish involved in SAN plans to assess what it wants to do and how it will then organize its SAN leadership team to meet its needs, Carroll explained.

"We don't want to be a one-issue network," she said.

SAN first came on the diocesan scene in February, 1993, when the idea for a network was presented at a gathering of Monroe County parishes. Since then, it has distinguished itself in the social arena through its advocacy of publicly funded drug and alcohol abuse treatment as a method of striking at one of the root causes of criminal violence — substance abuse.

The annual Thanks Giving Appeal benefits SAN through its funding of Catholic Family Center's social policy and research office, which provides advocacy training, organizing and support for SAN's volunteer members.

In addition to building up its grassroots leadership, SAN members plan to



hold a general meeting Nov. 16 to discuss formation of an executive structure to lead the organization in the future, Carroll said.

Noting that, in the past, SAN has been a rather loosely organized structure, SAN leaders decided at an Oct. 21 retreat at St. Rita's Parish in Webster that the network needs publicly designated leaders who can be held accountable for SAN's work,

Carroll commented.

As an example of the benefits such an executive structure could produce, SAN's executive group could establish one person to serve as a public relations representative, she said.

In addition to strengthening its organizational structure, SAN members are also researching hospitals and insurance carriers in Rochester and Buffalo in an effort to build a case that would convince county leaders to develop detoxification units for cocaine and heroin addicts, Carroll said.

She noted that she herself had recently visited a detoxification unit at a Catholic hospital in Batavia to learn more about the subject.

Such efforts grew out of SAN's extensive work earlier this year to convince the Monroe County Legislature to halt jail expansion until lawmakers had examined using expansion funds for drug treatment instead. SAN members collected over 5,000 signatures for a petition advocating their position, and the expansion was put on hold, she and other SAN officials explained.

Carroll added legislators privately told her the network's advocacy also influenced the legislature to allocate more funds for an alternatives to incarceration program.

"I think it's encouraging to know that when you band together and do something, that there's a response when you represent people," she concluded.



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

## Novena closes joyously

Father John J. Steger (right), pastor of St. Jude the Apostle Church, 4100 Lyell Road, Rochester, Oct. 28 applauds as St. Jude's choir sings happy birthday to Bishop Dennis W. Hickey. The retired auxiliary bishop, who celebrated his 80th birthday last Friday, was on hand to celebrate the Mass of Solemn Closing on the feast of St. Jude. He was joined by Father Bonaventure Stefun, OFM Cap., who began leading the novena's participants in prayer Oct. 20.

## St. Thomas More adult education series to explore basic Catholic morality

ROCHESTER — St. Thomas More Parish's Religious Education Department is sponsoring a three-part adult-education series, titled "Basic Catholic Morality," over three consecutive Wednesdays in November.

Deacon Thomas J. Driscoll, minister of Christian Formation at St. Louis Church in Pittsford, will present each session from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at St. Thomas More Church, located at 2617 East Ave.

Deacon Driscoll holds a doctorate in ministry in social-justice education, and was one of the authors of a paper on

Lifelong Religious Education for the diocesan Synod.

According to a press release on the series, sessions will explore such questions as "Is There a Distinctive Catholic Morality?"; "What are Catholic Morality's Key Teachings?"; "What Do I Do If I Disagree with the Church?"; and "How Do I Form My Conscience?"

Session dates and topics are as follows: Nov. 9 — The Catholic vision of the moral life from Jesus to St. Thomas Aquinas to John Paul II.

Nov. 16 — Sorting out today's issues from in vitro fertilization to war to TV.

Nov. 23 — Growing a genuine Catholic conscience while living in the United States.

The program has been approved for credit by the diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis.

Cost is \$10. Checks should be made payable to "St. Thomas More Parish." Non-parishioners may pay at the door; the series is free for St. Thomas More parishioners. The cost includes handouts and a copy of "Conscience In Conflict" by Father Kenneth Overbert, SJ.

To pre-register, call 716/381-0470, Mon.-Fri. between 8:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. If calling at any other time, you may leave a message including your name, address and phone number.

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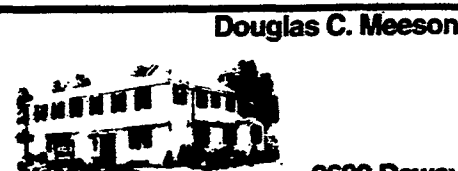
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