

## Efforts mount

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"If people get to know each other and trust each other, and know that we take care of their day-to-day needs, then they won't have to resort to violence," Lombard explained. The parish also sponsored a hot dog roast last summer and held a free Thanksgiving dinner Nov. 21.

A number of other parishes have likewise attempted to reach out to the community. Rochester's Blessed Sacrament Parish, for example, is attempting to establish a midnight basketball program. St. Augustine's Parish, part of the Roman Catholic Community of the 19th Ward, is providing office space for a credit union to serve the poor.

Sister Beth LeValley, SSJ, who is helping coordinate the effort to open a credit union, noted that economic pressures are linked to violence.

"The people who are low income for the most part have the same kinds of hopes, the same kinds of dreams that other people have, but don't have the resources to do anything about them," Sister LeValley said.

All too often, she continued, financial institutions do not meet the needs of these people. Thus a credit union is a way to empower them, and to prevent

the sense of hopelessness and frustration that can lead to violence, she acknowledged.

Diocesan offices and parishes, and affiliated organizations, are also actively attempting to help people better their lives. The Worker Ownership Resources Center in Geneva, for example, began as a joint effort of Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes Social Ministry to help people create their own businesses.

Shelters and homes such as Corpus Christi Parish's Dimitri House, St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, and the Catholic Family Center's Francis Hospitality Center exist to help the homeless. Bethany House provides temporary shelter and support for homeless and battered women, while Melita House offers shelter, support and assistance to young pregnant women.

The various offices of diocesan

“There’s something very simple about it to me. According to the teachings of Jesus Christ, we cannot turn to violence in any way to solve problems.”

Kathleen Cannon

Catholic Charities provide counseling services to assist the victims of poverty and violence. They have also been active in advocating for — or against — changes at the government level on issues related to violence, including economic policy, welfare reform, abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty and the criminal-justice system.

The diocesan Public Policy Committee, for example, is currently

planning an education effort and a petition campaign — scheduled for Jan. 14-15 — to oppose any legislation restoring the death penalty in New York state. Catholic Family Center, meanwhile, is working with Monroe County parishes to create a social action network.

"We've decided to focus on drugs and violence," noted Brian Kane, CFC's director of social policy and research. "Part of the way to break through the cycle of violence is to find ways for people to be healed. Just throwing them in jail is not going to break the cycle."

Thus the group is advocating for alternatives to jail for drug offenders, and for creating detoxification centers for drug users.

Beyond direct service and advocacy, the diocese is also addressing violence through several education efforts.

Catholic schools have incorporated peace and justice, and conflict resolution into their curriculum across all subject areas, noted Sister Patricia Carroll, SSJ, assistant superintendent for government services and administration for the diocesan Department of Catholic Schools.

Sister Carroll pointed out that children having conflicts are taught ways to resolve their problems without resorting to physical or verbal violence.

The basic approach in the schools is to emphasize that students should respect each other as they would Christ, Sister Carroll observed.

"It's quite a challenge," she added.

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