

Rural agency declared subsidiary of Charities

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Following a successful one-year pilot program, Livingston County Catholic Charities was declared a subsidiary of Diocesan Catholic Charities on Sept. 16, according to Maurice J. Tierney, staff director to the pilot program's steering committee.

LCCC is the first Diocesan Catholic Charities office designed to meet the needs of a rural region exclusively.

Jack Balinsky, director of Diocesan Catholic Charities, said the move means LCCC is now on an equal footing with Catholic Family Center in Monroe County, Diocesan Community and Residential Services, and the Catholic Charities offices serving the Southern Tier and the Finger Lakes.

"I'm absolutely delighted by this development because it enables us to better extend our services to meet the area's needs," Balinsky said of LCCC, adding that the Livingston region's 11 pastors fully supported the move.

James Dollard, the steering committee's chairman, said, "I think if we can be successful, we can model for (other rural regions)."

He added that LCCC will probably elect a board of directors by December.

LCCC's newly named director, Richard C. Mergers of Geneseo, was unavailable for comment as of the *Catholic Courier's* Sept. 25 deadline.

LCCC's office, at 10 Clinton St. in Mount Morris, is home to three departments: Livingston County Rural Outreach, which deals with housing and emergency needs; Community of Caring, which serves such clients as unwed mothers and abused women; and a parish social ministry development office which will work with the county's Catholic churches to expand the role of parish social ministry groups.

LCCC began as a pilot program in late August 1994. It was an outgrowth of Liv-

ingston County Rural Outreach, which itself began two years earlier as a program of Catholic Family Center in Rochester.

The pilot program was established following a diocesan study of social service needs in Livingston and Steuben counties. Diocesan officials concluded that Steuben County was being served adequately by agencies there, but they determined that Livingston County needed its own agency.

Sister Nancy O'Brien, director of Livingston County Rural Outreach, formerly ran her office out of St. Patrick's Church in Mount Morris. She noted the new Clinton Street location will enable her to work better with the Community of Caring office and with her own clients.

"It's good for me to be in an office working with other people working on related problems," she said.

For example, she pointed out that her office and the Community of Caring have organized a support group for women and children facing a variety of financial and emotional problems.

Meanwhile, Mabel Treadwell, a volunteer who will oversee the parish social ministry program, said she is looking forward to a workshop with Livingston County Catholics on Nov. 4 at St. Mary's, 13 North St., in Geneseo.

Parish social ministry committees in the region tend to focus on providing direct charitable aid to the region's needy, but Treadwell wants the workshop to widen the committees' focus, she said. For example, the workshop speakers may talk about how government budget cuts could affect the region's social service network and how parish social ministry committees could respond to such cuts, Treadwell explained.

EDITORS' NOTE - Livingston County Catholic Charities will hold an open house at its Mount Morris office, 10 Clinton St., on Oct. 24, from 3:30 to 5 p.m., and from 7:30 to 9 p.m. A Mass will also be celebrated for the event at St. Patrick's Church at 6 p.m.



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Faithful strides

Jessica Isaac (left) and Telana Stokes make their way into Seneca Park during the second annual Walk for St. Bridget's Church Sept. 24. Participants walked 10 miles to help raise money for the inner-city church's restoration.

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