

# Christmas Appeal

## Bishop Sheen Housing taps into fund

### What is the Christmas Appeal?

It is a cooperative effort of the *Catholic Courier* and diocesan Catholic Charities to raise funds that will help people in desperate financial crises.

For 27 years, the appeal has enabled the Catholic community to help thousands of people in 12 counties to help meet life's basic needs. Christmas Appeal funds have been there when no other sources of aid were available.

### Who benefits from it?

Funding of the Christmas Appeal helps individuals and families in short term financial crises. These are people who have no financial resources and are either awaiting or are ineligible for assistance through other sources.

### How does it work?

The appeal consists of a series of articles in the *Catholic Courier* and a direct-mail solicitation of prior donors.

Appeal proceeds are allocated to the emergency funds of the following diocesan agencies: Catholic Family Center, Finger Lakes Social Ministry, Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier, Catholic Charities of Livingston County, Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation, and diocesan Urban Services.

Please use my donation to help a neighbor in need.

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for other aid to kick in.

The Bishop Sheen Housing Foundation, meanwhile, began as a result of Rochester Bishop Fulton Sheen's concerns about housing problems in the 1960s. The Catholic agency combined with a similar Episcopal effort to form a foundation that serves people in the 12 counties of the Roman Catholic diocese, and Allegany County as well.

The foundation uses appeal funds for emergency repairs on such things as plumbing, roofing, and electrical and heating systems.

"It's got to be a critical home repair," Smith explained. "It can't be cosmetic. It has to be something health- or safety-threatening."

Thus appeal funds have been used to replace faulty furnaces and hot water heaters, fix steps and windows, provide

in-house running water, repair leaking roofs and insulate homes.

Smith said her agency helps approximately 500 families a year. Many of the people aided are seniors or are disabled.

Christmas Appeal money is often used to make initial, emergency repairs, and thereby get foundation staff in the door to uncover other problems in the home.

"Once you get in, you can discover there are worse problems," Smith remarked.

In addition, the appeal funds and the initial work help to draw additional funds from government and other charitable sources to help complete more work.

Unfortunately, Smith observed, the number of people needing help is grow-



1996  
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Christmas Appeal

ing as the population -- and existing housing -- ages.

"There is going to be a housing crisis," Smith predicted.

At the same time, however, state and federal sources of funding are drying up, Smith said. And due to ongoing decreases in contributions to the Christmas Appeal, the foundation's share of that money has been shrinking.

"Everybody keeps telling us the private citizen will take it on," Smith said. "They can't. They've got problems of their own."

As a result, the foundation can't help everyone who seeks its help, Smith said.

"It's sad," she said. "For every person we serve, there are probably two we don't."

— Lee Strong

### Neediest Cases

The *Catholic Courier*/Catholic Charities Christmas Appeal helps people throughout the year, but especially at Christmas. The following individuals and families have been helped by Christmas Appeal funds during 1996.

★ A single mother, 30, with two daughters, 5 and 9, received \$19.98 to purchase two pairs of new shoes for her children.

★ A single mother of two boys, 6 and 11, needed help repairing her bathroom floor, which was caving in due to a plumbing leak. She received \$69.45, which allowed volunteers to repair and insulate the floor and repair the leak.

★ A young mother of four lost everything in a house fire. Christmas Appeal funds in the amount of \$50 allowed her to purchase some used household items for her new apartment.

★ A single grandmother who was recently granted custody of her four small grandchildren received \$100 to stop foreclosure on her home until the Department of Social Services was able to increase her benefits to support the children.

★ An elderly woman on a fixed income was given \$70 to repair her broken water heater.

★ A single woman, 51, receiving SSI, was given \$15 to repair her

eyeglasses.

★ A young, single mom received \$15 to purchase infant formula for her new son, while waiting for WIC benefits to be approved.

★ A grandmother was given temporary custody of her three grandchildren because their mother is in and out of jail due to prostitution to support her drug habit. The grandmother received a voucher to buy the toddler his first pair of shoes.

★ A man receiving public assistance needed to travel to New York City because his father had had a heart attack and was not expected to live. The DSS was unable to provide him with money for a bus ticket, so the man was given \$39.95 in Christmas Appeal monies to buy a ticket and be with his father.

★ A woman trying to get a job and get off public assistance faced eviction. She received \$109.72 to supplement monies she found from other sources, was able to pay her rent and is now working and keeping up with her bills.

★ A 35-year old single man found employment through an agency in Atlanta. He received \$122 to pay for transportation to the job site, as he had no outside means of funding for transportation.

★ A husband and wife with two young children fell behind in elec-

trical payments when the husband was laid off from his job. They were given \$100 to prevent termination of service.

★ A couple finding it difficult to meet expenses since the husband became ill fell behind in their bills and received a 72-hour court notice of intent for eviction. They received \$50 to help prevent eviction.

★ A family with a 20-month-old son and 6-month-old daughter moved and, in the process, encountered problems with their Medicaid. They were given \$23.16 to help pay for diapers and prescriptions for the children's ear infections while waiting to resolve the Medicaid problems.

★ A father of four was given \$35 to purchase food for his children, because his wife had stolen their food stamps to exchange for drugs. He also went to court to obtain custody and an order of protection against the wife.

★ An Ethiopian family who won an immigration lottery in their country to come to the U.S. were given \$50 in Christmas Appeal funds to purchase food, infant formula and diapers, and shoes for their youngest child.

★ A widow whose husband left little in Social Security benefits needed help with daily expenses so she would have money left to pay her property taxes. She received some food vouchers to help tide her over.

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