

DIOCESAN NEWS

House of Mercy still to shelter some homeless

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

The City of Rochester and the Sisters of Mercy announced an agreement on Jan. 23 that allows the House of Mercy, an outreach center owned by the religious order, to continue sheltering up to 19 "hard-to-serve" homeless people.

The terms of the deal were outlined in a press release that contained a copy of the agreement signed by Rochester Mayor William A. Johnson, Jr., Sister Ann Miller, RSM, president of the Rochester Regional Community of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, and Sister Grace Miller, RSM, director of the House of Mercy. The two women religious are not related.

In a phone interview, Sister Grace Miller noted she welcomed the agreement.

"I'm glad that the weight of closing is off ...," said Sister Miller, whose center was supposed to end sheltering homeless people last week. "We remain open as a shelter, thank God."

As part of the agreement, the House of Mercy within 21 days is to abide by standards and operating procedures for shelters that house 19 or less people in the city. Those standards were set by the Homeless Services Network, a coalition of 20 shelters, agencies and organizations that serve the homeless. The standards mandate, for example, that shelters provide individual beds for guests.

The House of Mercy also agreed to write a plan within 10 days for screening and processing its clients, including the "hard-to-serve," that is, clients who find it difficult to enter the social service system because of mental illness, drug addictions, or behavior problems. The plan would include provisions to identify the needs of such clients; limits on their stays at the center;

and methods of referring them to support and transitional services.

The House of Mercy also agreed to work with the Monroe County Department of Social Services in identifying clients at the House of Mercy who would qualify for DSS services and who would cooperate with various agencies willing to provide services.

Under the agreement, the House of Mercy also said it would create rules and criteria within 10 days that distinguish between the center's drop-in services and its shelter services. Such rules may include disallowing drop-in clients to stay at the center past a certain hour each night, according to Jacquie Whitfield, director of the city's Bureau of Human Services.

Meanwhile, the Rochester Regional Community of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, which owns the House of Mercy, agreed to study within 21 days the possibility of turning it into a legally approved residential emergency shelter. If the order decides to pursue making the center a shelter, it will apply for the permits needed to renovate the building within three months, the agreement states.

The Sisters of Mercy also agreed to choose a representative from its ranks to serve in the Homeless Services Network. Tami Bohannon, communications director for the Sisters of Mercy, said the order would pick a representative by Jan. 29.

The agreement apparently settles a contentious dispute that began the night of Dec. 9 when city housing authorities raided the House of Mercy, 725 Hudson Ave.

Officials found several homeless people staying overnight at the center, a fact readily acknowledged by Sister Grace Miller, who said she was taking in people who either could not find shelter or who had been rejected by other shelters. The House of Mercy was not zoned for use as a homeless shel-

ter, and was violating the law, a fact admitted by both Sister Miller and the Sisters of Mercy. The religious community promised the house would end sheltering homeless people by Jan. 24.

Sister Miller said that negotiations with city officials to settle the dispute over the House of Mercy proved fruitful for both sides.

"What the mayor discovered in our dialogue is that there's a segment of the homeless population that has not been reached," the house's director said.

Whitfield agreed that she and other city officials now understands that the House of Mercy often helps "hard-to-serve" people

whom other shelters turn away.

"If it's 3 a.m. and you're visibly intoxicated, it's the only place you can get in," she said of the House of Mercy.

The House of Mercy also does not demand any identification from its guests, unlike many shelters, and never charges its guests to stay there, she said.

Yet Whitfield did caution that the agreement did not mark a return to the House of Mercy's days as an illegal shelter housing as many as 60 homeless people a night.

"This is not carte blanche to go back up to 40 people," she said. "We believe that on any given night, the number of truly hard-to-serve individuals should not be over 19."



Matthew Scott/Staff Photographer

Good Morning, God

Sister Joan Sobala, SSJ, returned to the airwaves Jan. 18 with a new version of "Good Morning, God," the radio program she co-hosted with Father George Norton from 1984 to 1991. The program, broadcast from 8:30 to 9 a.m. Saturdays on WWVG-AM (1460), includes music, the readings for the upcoming Sunday Mass and reflections on those readings. Sister Sobala said she brought the show back in response to repeated requests.

School system earns accreditation

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

For the first time, the Nazareth Schools are a fully accredited grade K-12 school system — becoming the first such accredited system in the Diocese of Rochester.

The schools were granted a 10-year accreditation by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. This distinction, recently announced by the system, reflects confidence in an institution's mission and goals, performance and resources.

"It's not that it's a status thing. But if you are accredited, it says you're a good organization," said Sister Ann Collins, SSJ, executive director of the Nazareth Schools.

The school system comprises Nazareth Hall Elementary School, a grades kindergarten-five co-educational school located at 180 Raines Park; Nazareth Hall Middle School, a grades six-eight co-educational institution located at the Nazareth Academy building, 1001 Lake Ave.; and Nazareth Academy, a grades nine-12 all-girls' school. In addition, an early childhood program for 3- and 4-year-olds is offered at Nazareth Hall Elementary School.

Nazareth Academy — which has been accredited since 1946 — applied to the Middle States Association in 1995 because its 10-year accreditation term was about to expire. Due to the fact that Nazareth Hall had consolidated with Nazareth Academy in 1994,

the entire school system sought accreditation. (Nazareth Hall had never been accredited.) The accreditation came in October.

"This solidified our vision as a common group," Sister Collins said.

The accreditation process took place over a two-year period. First, Nazareth conducted a self-evaluation and sent its findings to the Middle States Association. Representatives of the organization then visited the Nazareth Schools for a one-week observation period in March 1996. During that time, 17 evaluators talked with administrators, instructors and other staff members.

According to Sister Collins, the Middle States Association was particularly pleased with the strong rapport fostered by the Nazareth staff.

"(Evaluators) were complimentary on our education environment — nurturing, building of self-esteem," Sister Collins said. "They were very impressed with school spirit, the cooperation between staff-student and staff-parent."

The grant of accreditation is another big plus for the Nazareth Schools since their merger. In those three years, Sister Collins noted, overall enrollment in the schools has risen approximately 27 percent. Enrollment is 285 at Nazareth Hall Elementary School; 130 at the middle school; and 285 at the high school.

"It seems like we've flourished," Sister Collins said.

Obituary

Sister Regina Connor, SSND; taught at Bishop Kearney HS

Sister Regina Connor of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, formerly Sister Mary de Lourdes, died Jan. 6, 1997, at the age of 91.

Her 50 years of teaching included an assignment at Bishop Kearney High School, Rochester, 1967-71. She retired in 1985 and moved in 1991 to the Lourdes

Health Care Center, Wilton, Conn.

A funeral Mass was celebrated Jan. 10 at the SSND Motherhouse chapel in Wilton, and interment was at St. Mary Cemetery, Bethel, Conn. Donations are being accepted for the SSND Development Fund, 345 Belden Hill Road, Wilton, CT 06897.

The Monthly Prayer Request For Priests

Will you pray for a priest each day?

JESUS' PRAYER FOR HIS PRIESTS

O Jesus, by Thy most loving Heart, I implore Thee to inflame with zeal for Thy love and glory all the priests of the world, all missionaries and those whose office it is to preach Thy word, that on fire with holy zeal, they may snatch souls from the devil and lead them into the shelter of Thy Heart, where for ever they may glorify Thee.

Imprimatur: E. Morrogh Bernard, Vic. Gen. Westmonasterii, May 5, 1953

Prayer Suggestions: Mass, Rosary, Fasting, Day Offering, Eucharistic Adoration, Offering sufferings, Divine Mercy Chaplet

February, 1997

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Look for the March MPRP Calendar in the February 27th Courier.						
					Rev. Fathers:	Bishop Matthew H. Clark
2 Pope John Paul II	3 All priests on Sabbatical	4 John C. Murray, CSB	5 Joseph Stanton, OCSO	6 John Colacino, CPPS	7 Norbert L. Nolan	8 Robert Grzybowski OFM Conv.
9 Thomas F. Brennan	10 Kevin P. Murphy	11 Leon J. Hogenkamp SJ	12 Joseph M. McDonnell	13 Lawrence V. Murphy	14 Julian Phelan, OFM Cap.	15 William C. Marceau, CSB
16 Frank E. Lioi	17 John L. O'Connor	18 Peter Mandina	19 William A. Burns	20 Robert J. Donovan	21 Gennaro J. Ventura	22 John M. Mulligan, VG
23 Daniel J. Condon	24 Robert J. Downs	25 Elmer J. Schmidt	26 Ronald P. Harley	27 James F. Doyle		

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