

DIOCESAN NEWS

Catholic Charities opens office in Steuben County

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier has significantly expanded its services by adding a new facility in Bath, Steuben County.

The office opened last month in the former St. Mary's School, at 36 E. Morris St. Services are overseen by Christopher Wilkins, the office's full-time development director. Wilkins had served in a similar capacity for the past 2½ years for Finger Lakes Social Ministry, the Catholic Charities office operating in the Finger Lakes area.

According to Wilkins, the Bath office is a needed addition for economically strapped Steuben County residents seeking food, supplies, health care and other emergency services. The numbers of people seeking such aid are rising, he said, due to the effects of welfare reform.

"It will impact this county harder because there are fewer jobs available. It's a rural area," Wilkins said. He added that the region's agricultural industry, also, is struggling because meat and milk prices are currently low.

* Anthony Barbaro, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier, predicted that Steuben County residents will also be more likely to seek assistance because they're no longer required to contact the main office in Elmira, Chemung County.

"There is a recognition that local response to local issues is going to be the most effective strategy," Barbaro said.

It didn't take long for these local issues to

surface. One day after the Bath office's opening was announced in mid-January, Wilkins noted that "the phone was ringing off the hook" with requests for services.

Barbaro said he is hoping for the Steuben office to develop an extensive volunteer staff in the upcoming months. In addition, he expects that the office's presence will encourage Steuben County residents to become further involved in public policy issues.

Establishment of the Steuben office was made possible through Catholic Charities' recent sale of land in Horseheads, Chemung County.

In December, the Lowes Companies, Inc., a national building-supplies chain, paid Catholic Charities \$1.3 million for the 12-acre site. This cash was put into the Nellie Monroe Social Ministry Fund, which will provide most of the Bath facility's \$50,000 operating cost over the next year. The fund is named after the woman who donated the land to Catholic Charities in 1991.

Wilkins added that the new office's expenses were further reduced through the generosity of St. Mary's Parish in Bath, which is providing the facility rent-free.

"We were welcomed with open arms," Wilkins said. "Father Bob Hammond (St. Mary's pastor) said, 'This is real important; we'll provide the furniture and space.'"

Wilkins said he hopes to establish parish-based subsidiary offices in Corning and Hornell to help localize efforts even further.

Barbaro noted that his office plans to use resources from the Nellie Monroe Fund to launch a similar operation in Tompkins County during the coming months.



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

Blessing of the throats

In anticipation of the feast of St. Blaise, the patron of individuals with throat ailments, Deacon Edward Smith blesses a youngster's throat at St. Dominic's Church, Shortsville, before Mass Feb. 2.

Obituaries

Signe May; was musician, secretary

Signe May, a musician and secretary in Elmira churches and schools for more than three decades, died Jan. 3, 1997, at St. Agnes Hospital in White Plains, N.Y. She was 64.

Ms. May was organist and choir director at St. Peter and Paul Church for 32 years. She also assumed organist duties at St. John the Baptist Church in 1990 when that church clustered with St. Cecilia's Church and St. Peter and Paul to form the Eastside Catholic Parish.

In addition, Ms. May was secretary for more than 30 years at the former St. Mary's School, now known as Holy Family Primary School.

A memorial Mass for Ms. May was celebrated Jan. 11 at St. Mary's Church in Elmi-

ra. Interment was scheduled at St. Peter and Paul Cemetery.

Ms. May did not have any surviving immediate family members. However, Connie Brady, principal of Holy Family Primary School, noted that St. Mary's Church was packed for Ms. May's memorial Mass.

"We were her family and all of us knew that," Brady remarked. "We were always worried that Signe didn't have any family, but she was probably chuckling because she wound up having the biggest funeral of all."

A memorial fund has been established in Ms. May's memory. Those wishing to donate to the Signe May Scholarship Fund should send contributions to the Holy Family Catholic Schools business office, 301 Demarest Parkway, Elmira, N.Y., 14905.

Richard Lewis; headed tire firm

Richard E. Lewis Sr., president of Lewis General Tires and a member of Rochester's St. Thomas More Parish, died Dec. 28, 1996, following a long illness. He was 76.

Mr. Lewis attended St. Augustine's School and the Rochester Institute of Technology. During the Second World War, he was a lieutenant in the Army Air Corps. After the war, he joined the tire company his father, Leon, founded.

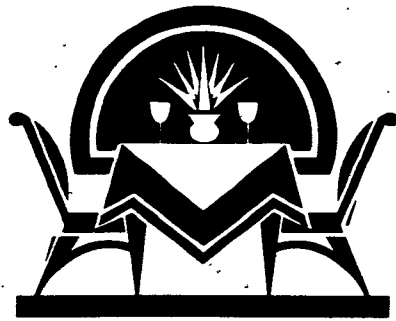
Mr. Lewis was active in Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, before joining St. Thomas More Parish some 40 years ago. He also helped raise money to build the Sisters of St. Joseph's Convent Infirmary.

In addition to his wife of 54 years, Wilma (nee Kenning), he is survived by sons Richard Jr. (Kathleen), Stephen (Linda), Jon (Vicki), and Peter (Jennifer); daughter Mary Elizabeth (Dana) Conslor; brothers Donald (Anne), and Leon Jr. (Dorothy); sisters Margaret Mead, and Carol (Samuel) Rankin; mother-in-law Dorothy Kenning Pommerening; 12 grandchildren; one great-grandchild; and nieces and nephews.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark celebrated the funeral Mass for Mr. Lewis Dec. 31.

The family requested that donations in Mr. Lewis' memory be made to St. Thomas More Church, McQuaid Jesuit High School, or the Carmelite Monastery of Rochester on Jefferson Road, Henrietta.

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