

# FEATURE

## Grant to fund housing plans

By Lee Strong  
Associate editor

The Diocese of Rochester has received a \$15,000 grant from Fleet Bank of New York to help plan four housing proposals for seniors and disabled individuals in Monroe and Ontario counties.

With the help of that money, diocesan officials plan to submit to the state a proposal to develop 32 housing units for seniors in the Honeoye area in Ontario County. Another project would develop 59 units for seniors in Henrietta — coupled with 40 other units of affordable and market-rate housing at the site.

Officials have already submitted one proposal to buy and renovate the former YMCA building in Geneva to convert it into retail spaces and 21 apartments for people with disabilities, and one to construct a 32-unit housing development for disabled people, on land behind the diocesan pastoral center in Gates.

All told, the four projects would produce 175 affordable rental units over the next year.

The diocese's Providence Housing Development Corporation has been using the Fleet Bank grant to prepare the grant proposals to submit to the Housing Trust Fund of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal, according to Maggie Bringewatt, Providence's executive director.

Specifically, the monies are helping to pay for the architectural drawings, engineering work and consulting services needed to complete grant applications, Bringewatt said.

The grant is the first that Providence Housing has received from Fleet Bank, Bringewatt said. The financial institution has recently hired a vice president for community lending and is focusing more on assisting projects such as those proposed by Providence, she explained.

Bringewatt said she expects responses to the Geneva and Gates proposals in May.

The Honeoye project application will be submitted around Easter, she added. The Henrietta project will not be ready for submission to the state in the immediate future.

## Mercy infirmary converts to ILS

By Kathleen Schwar  
Staff writer

Lourdes Hall Infirmary isn't what it used to be.

The infirmary, at the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas motherhouse in Brighton, is being turned into an Independent Living for Seniors center. This adult care center may be only the second such program to exist within a women religious community in the country.

Renovations are underway to create a permanent ILS center on site to provide care for the women religious — and for priests and lay people from outside their community.

"We were looking at alternative ways to provide this care as we moved into the future," Sister Mary Fran Wegman, RSM, said. "And it was becoming obvious to us our resources were going to run out and we weren't going to be able to provide this forever."

One option for the sisters was nursing home care, she said. But the Mercy Sisters chose to enroll in ILS, which coordinates help for people as their needs change. Since last fall ILS has operated two days a week at the motherhouse, where it leases space. By December the women religious expect it to be a permanent full-time site.

The center, known as the McAuley ILS Center, will accommodate up to 80 participants, not only women religious, priests and family members of religious, but also non-religious, non-related residents living outside the religious community. Each must meet eligibility requirements for nursing home care.

"We see it as a real positive way we can use the resource we have here and offer it as a home and ministry to other people," Sister Wegman said. "It is a way we can share what we have."

ILS, which is part of Greater Rochester Health System, provides the women religious with opportunities for socialization, meals and activities such as crafts and exercise, plus a clinic. A caregiver is stationed at the motherhouse around the clock for the approximately 25 persons currently in the program.

"It's like we are deinstitutionalizing the manner in which we were providing the care," Sister Wegman said of the new program. "It actually relinquishes the control we had over our health care, but I'd see that as a positive thing as well."

She noted ILS has a multidisciplinary approach. The ILS team includes physi-

*'We were looking at alternative ways to provide this care as we moved into the future'*

—Sister Mary Fran Wegman, RSM

cians; nurse practitioners; clinic and home-care nurses; social workers; dietitians; physical, occupational and speech therapists; and home-health aides. It also incorporates provisions for transportation, pharmacy, eye and dental care, and other needs.

Mercy sisters visited a similar program in Milwaukee, where the School Sisters of St. Francis are participating in a PACE (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly), Sister Wegman said. It is the only other religious community she knew of that has adopted this model of health care. ILS is considered a PACE program.

"A lot of people are considering it because we see nuns go through all the time," commented Sister Toma Miller at the Sacred Heart Center of the School Sisters. She said her order chose to enroll in PACE because it was a more affordable way to care for sick and aging nuns, and because of its philosophy — to keep frail elderly as independent as possible for as long as possible.

The Sacred Heart Center has about 45 women religious living in its convent area, another 20 women religious who come regularly for the day care and health care, and 100 lay people who also attend regularly — whether for a watchful eye, meals, a bath, physical therapy, or games and socialization.

PACE receives a monthly fee per enrollee. According to Kathy McGuire, administrator of ILS, "Everything covered by Medicare and Medicaid is provided by

this program."

The care is provided as needed, she explained, from a one-hour home-care visit by a caregiver to arranging hospital or nursing home care. The staff continually evaluates each participant and follows each through with changing levels of care. Some nurses and caregivers previously working at the infirmary now work for ILS.

Sister Wegman noted the women religious' health insurance and Medicaid, for some, cover their costs. She declined to discuss the expenses involved in caring for the aging women religious' health.

However, McGuire noted, "Certainly no women religious community is so financially viable it cannot look at the long-term care situation and say, 'Oh my gosh how can we do this.'"

Renovations also will expand room on the third floor for more priests to live at the motherhouse, Sister Wegman said. Currently the diocese has three priests there. Meanwhile, about 30 sisters are moving into former sewing, kitchen and office areas to make room for renovations.

Both McGuire and Sister Wegman noted the new program already is increasing socialization among participants as well as between them and outside help, beyond that provided by previous visits women religious received.

"Just having more people coming in from outside will bring new life, and more people to interact with," Sister Wegman said, noting even more will be arriving as the center expands.

"I think it is a great opportunity for our sisters as they are aging and have physical limitations, to continue to minister to others, because they will be in the program with them," Sister Wegman said. "It's a wonderful way to reach out, to listen to people's stories and share in their life experiences. And our lives will be enriched by those who will be coming here."

### Thoughts to Consider



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Funeral Director

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