

Health



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

Josephine Blinn (left) recounts a story for Eileen Alven.

Continued from previous page right there with them helping them through the final stages of life."

She said the comfort such visits can generate often spreads to

patients' friends and visiting relatives at the same time.

Program guidelines remind the chaplain's volunteers they aren't there to evangelize, they aren't there to counsel, for instance. And volunteers meet to-

gether regularly to talk through situations they've faced. They also may consult the chaplain himself.

Rev. McCaughey recalled one chaplain's volunteer who sought assurance she'd done the right thing. She had visited a patient with dementia who started to cry. The volunteer said she talked with the patient, but still the patient kept crying so she pulled up a chair, took her hand and rubbed it.

"That's all right," she recalled telling the patient. "God sent me to this room to talk to you a while."

Rev. McCaughey said he remained silent after the volunteer finished her story. "I was struck dumb," he said.

"She looked at me again and said, 'Is that all right?'"

His goal for F.F. Thompson Hospital and Continuing Care Center, the chaplain said, is for every patient and resident to have contact at least five times a week with the chaplain's office. With full occupancy that would mean reaching 300 people. He has full

backing from hospital officials.

"We are trying to create a comfortable healing environment for people, and I think spiritual care adds to that process," said Linda Janczak, president/CEO of the hospital and F.F. Thompson Health System, and a St. Mary's parishioner.

Rev. McCaughey first set up a program by which nurses may pray for surgical patients, and now also patients delivering babies, who sign prayer request cards. It came at the request of the nurses, he said.

Rev. McCaughey, a United Methodist minister, said he recently completed a two-year program in clinical pastoral counseling, at Onondaga Pastoral Counseling Center, Syracuse, to meet his denomination's requirements.

In some ways, he acknowledged, "We're learning as we go along."

Although Catholics may equate chaplaincy volunteers with eucharistic ministers — another valuable component of

spiritual care, he said — there is a difference.

"A eucharistic minister represents the Catholic Church to Catholics," he said. The volunteer program emphasizes spiritual care giving, not religious care giving, he said. "Everybody is spiritual, everybody may not be religious. ... 'God' or religious language may be not used because it is not where the person is."

"It is important to feel safe in their own frame of reference."

Alven, now a coordinator for the program, said, "I get a great deal more from being with people in these settings than I give to them. You become so much more aware of God in every person's life with whom you come in contact. You come to see the dignity of every single individual. It's overwhelming."

No matter how ill or disabled a person is, she said, "You seem to become very humble in the site of what these wonderful human beings are accomplishing for themselves."

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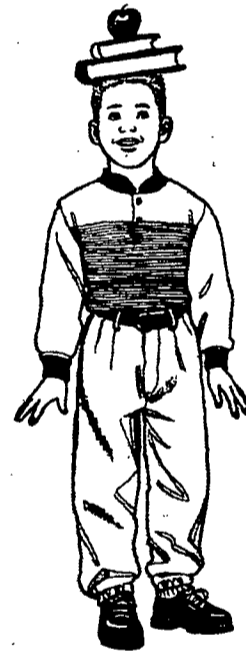
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EDUCATION



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The Rochester Diocese has made lifelong Christian education its top priority. Thus, as schools and students gear up for the first day of school, the *Courier* will make its annual study of trends, developments and issues in education — from kindergarten to the continuing education of adults, from Catholic schools to religious education programs.