

Christmas Appeal

Funds help to fix broken homes, lives

What is the Christmas Appeal?

It is a cooperative effort of the Catholic Courier and diocesan Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Rochester to raise funds for people in desperate financial crisis.

For the past 28 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 for them when no other sources of aid were available.

Who benefits from it?

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?

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 outreach; Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation; and diocesan Urban Services.

PLEASE USE MY
DONATION TO HELP A
NEIGHBOR IN NEED

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

MAIL CHECK
(payable to "Christmas Appeal")
and this coupon to:
Christmas Appeal
c/o Catholic Courier
PO Box 24379
Rochester, NY 14624

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

Three children in one family all recently had "the flu."

Or so the family thought.

But then an inspector from the Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation went to the family home to examine a leaky roof and discovered a potentially life-threatening carbon monoxide leak from the furnace — the true cause of the children's illness. The children were taken to the doctor, and the furnace was fixed.

Oh, and the roof was repaired, too.

"That was one of our scariest cases," acknowledged Allynn Smith, executive director of Sheen Housing.

But, she noted, as happened in this case, Sheen Housing workers are trained to check for other potential problems when they go to homes.

"Sometimes, housing people are the only ones who are actually inside the home," she noted. "It's like an entrance in, and staff makes assessments for other services."

Thus, for example, they check to make sure there is food, to see if the residents have any health problems, or to see if any other repairs are needed.

Still, repairs are the center of the Sheen Housing ministry. The foundation offers emergency assistance for low- and moderate-income families through a combination of loan and grant programs throughout the Diocese of Rochester, and in Allegany County.



Linda Rivers

That's where the Christmas Appeal comes into play.

The Christmas Appeal was begun in 1969 as a combined effort of diocesan Catholic Charities and the *Catholic Courier*. The intention of the Appeal was to provide a pool of money that could help people in emergency situations who can't find help elsewhere, or who can't wait for that help to begin.

Smith noted that Sheen Housing uses Christmas Appeal money to help "leverage" additional funds to help families and individuals solve their housing problems.

State and federal housing programs, Smith explained, do not completely fund projects. Instead, they require agencies to find local funding to pay part of a project's cost. The foundation uses appeal monies to help pay this local portion of

the cost.

"The Christmas Appeal money gives us money to tap those other sources," Smith said. "The Appeal allows us to tap into other funds so we can stretch our resources."

Thus in 1997 alone, Smith reported, Christmas Appeal funds were used to help obtain nearly \$100,000 in additional aid.

The repairs were made on everything from septic systems to roofs — with electrical and plumbing systems, gas lines, water heaters and windows in between.

"These repairs would not have been completed without Christmas Appeal funds," Smith noted.

Smith warned that housing situation is getting worse.

"We're seeing an incredibly greater need," Smith said.

She explained that as the population ages, more and more people are on fixed incomes and are having a harder time physically and financially keeping up with home repairs. In addition, she noted, the housing stock is aging, meaning that more repairs are needed.

People living in rural areas are particularly hard hit.

"In a lot of areas, there is no Salvation Army, Red Cross, other things out there that can help them," she said.

For many of these people, Sheen Housing is the only place they can turn. And the Christmas Appeal funds play a vital role in providing that help. But more is needed.

"We have families in need waiting right now," Smith declared.

Neediest Cases

Monies collected during the *Catholic Courier*/Catholic Charities Christmas Appeal aid people throughout the year, but especially at Christmas. The following are some of the individuals and families who have been helped in the past with Christmas Appeal funds.

★ A couple with two young children faced foreclosure on their home and utilities being shut off after the husband lost his job. Appeal funds were used, along with aid from another agency, to help them pay their utility bills while they worked out their financial problems.

★ A single woman in her early 20s with two small children who was working full-time and going to school part-time had to move to a homeless shelter when her landlord failed to meet housing codes. She was given money to cover the

first month's rent at a new apartment, and was helped with food and clothing.

★ An elderly man on a fixed income was mugged, and robbed of his Social Security check. He was given \$25 to help him purchase food.

★ An elderly woman carried water from a spring and used an outhouse because her house had no running water or indoor plumbing. She had a stroke, and was not able to move back home due to the conditions. Appeal monies helped to pay for the installation of in-house water and a bathroom, and to remodel the kitchen so she could return home.

★ A young man with debilitating arthritis needed a special tub for medical purposes, but there was no room in his 360-square-foot, two-room home for it. Appeal funds were used to help to enlarge the house to accommodate the tub, and to add electrical service and make

the kitchen handicap accessible.

★ A family in which the mother and 17-year-old son were disabled was living in a house in which the ceilings were falling. Appeal funds were used to repair the house, and Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation workers contacted the Office for the Aging to provide other assistance to the family.

★ A 68-year-old woman living on Social Security could not afford to make necessary repairs to her home. The walls, flooring and ceilings in most of the rooms, and the plumbing, kitchen and bathroom faucets needed to be replaced; the electric system was hazardous; one section needed to be replaced immediately in order to keep the house from shifting. The woman could not afford to move and pay rent. The repairs were all made with the help of Appeal funds.

• Talk FREE 'til Valentines Day!
• FREE Activation
• FREE Phone

NO Airtime Charges \$19.95 MONTH FREE UNLIMITED Incoming calls or Weekends

Plus... 12 FREE DINNER CERTIFICATES \$175 Value
The Rio, Rooney's, Cherry's, Crystal Barn, Ozzies, Harry's, Bacco's, Red Osier, Rochester Club, Renaissance Grill, Scuttlebutts & Kenny Rogers Roasters!

frontier CELLULAR
TOLL FREE 1-800-724-1822



GREECE 621-1888
HENRIETTA 475-1900
FREE DELIVERY!

Requires 12 month new activation with Frontier Cellular for qualified customers. Free airtime excludes NAC & taxes. Customer receives Free Airtime thru 2/14/98

REMOTE CAR START..... from \$129.95

Engaged Encounter

A weekend experience of preparation for couples planning to be married.

1998 Dates

January 23-25	May 15-17
February 6-8	June 5-7
March 13-15	September 11-13
April 17-19	October 2-4
May 1-3	November 13-15

Times: 7:30 pm Friday through 2:00 pm Sunday
Place: St. Charles Borromeo Center

For more information please call
Josette and Bob Paresi at 421-0756

