



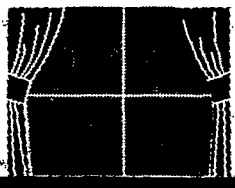
Catholic Courier

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Bishop's legacy houses hope

Christine Grachus, a mother of two young boys, bought a ranch house in Livonia in 1991. But it wasn't until after she had settled in the house that she noticed something unsettling — namely, the house's foundation.

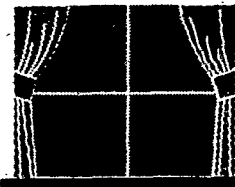


During her first winter in the home, snow blew in beneath a basement window. Grachus also noticed the window was no longer attached to the foundation. It

was then she realized the foundation was deteriorating, something she now believes the previous owner knew but never told her.

Grachus said she wasn't able to notice the cracks in the foundation because the owner had covered the foundation walls with insulation. She considered taking legal action against the previous owner, but a lawyer told her it was wiser to spend her money fixing the foundation.

Separated from her husband since before she moved into the house, her income consisted of child support payments and the money she took home from her part-time job as a chef. She explored several ways of obtaining loans to fix the foundation, but was unsuccessful.

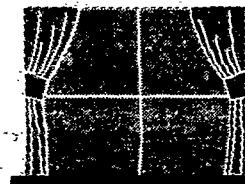


"I would make attempts, and then not do anything for awhile because I knew I was financially unable to do

this," she said.

Today that point is moot because she has a new foundation, thanks to the Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation, a joint effort of the Catholic and Episcopal dioceses of Rochester. The foundation's main office is located on the third floor of the headquarters of the Episcopal Diocese, at 935 East Ave., Rochester.

The foundation — which marks its 30th anniversary this year — helped Grachus obtain federal and state grants in 1997 to pay for a new foundation and other work needed on the house.

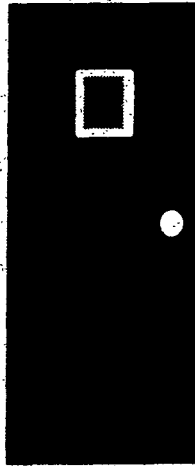


"I just went through my first winter with this (new foundation) and there were no problems," she said.

She added that she sent the Bishop Sheen foundation's staff members Christmas cards last year.

"I called them 'my little angels,'" she said. "It was just wonderful that there was someone out there to help."

Helping low- and moderate-income families fix up their homes or obtain new housing has been the goal of the Bishop Sheen foundation since it began in 1968. The foundation
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Greg Francis/Staff photographer
The Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation helped Christine Grachus of Livonia repair her home's foundation.

STORY BY ROB CULLIVAN

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