

# Christmas Appeal

## Aid inspires woman to make 'clean sweep'

By Lee Strong  
Associate editor

A Catholic Family Center carpet got a much needed cleaning thanks to Tracy Butts.

Armed with her cleaner, Butts showed up at CFC's Community Resource Services, 218 Clifford Ave., Rochester, late last month. She gave the lobby carpet a good going over.

Butts had noticed that the carpet was dirty back in July when she came seeking emergency help.

Her husband Abraham had just lost his construction job — along with their health insurance. Their part-time carpet cleaning business did not make enough to cover their basic bills. And she was still waiting for her first paycheck from her new full-time job, as well as for its health plan to kick in.

They didn't know where they would get the money to buy food to feed themselves, their two children and their niece, who had been living with them since her mother — Tracy's sister — had died the previous year.

Meanwhile, Tracy suffered from high blood pressure and severe migraines.

"They make me so that I black out," Tracy Butts said of the migraines.

Without medicine, she added, she would have been unable to work. But with



no money and no insurance in place, she could not afford the needed medication.

Desperate, she went to a

social service agency for help.

"They told me I would have to wait a whole year," she recalled. "They suggested that I go to the Catholic Family Center."

She did, and immediately received vouchers for food, and to buy her prescription medication.

Bobbi McGarrity, Catholic Family Center's emergency services provider, noted that she regularly uses Christmas Appeal monies to help with needed prescriptions for people like Butts.

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. Over the years, workers at Catholic Charities, the Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation and diocesan Urban Services have tapped into the fund year-round to help provide everything from boots for children to mid-win-

ter furnace repairs.

McGarrity reported that the number of people coming for help in the last year has grown.

"With social service changes, with downsizing, we're noting an increase," McGarrity said.

At the same time, McGarrity said, the emergency center has increased its efforts to provide more than just short-term, emergency assistance.

"We're looking at some longer term case management with some people," she said. "We're helping people with job training and education."

Thus in the last year Christmas Appeal funds have been used, for example, to help pay tuition and fees for education and job training programs, for licensing exams, for work clothes and for bus passes to get to work.

"We're using funds to help people with the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency," she noted.

And sometimes it leads to added benefits — such as a clean carpet.

"It looks great," McGarrity reported.

Tracy Butts said she was grateful for the help she received, so she just wanted to do something in return.

"It wasn't much, but it was giving back," she said. "I just wanted to show them I appreciate what they did for me and my family."

### 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 29 years, the appeal has enabled the Catholic community to help thousands of people in 12 counties to 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 emergency funds of the following diocesan agencies: Catholic Family Center; Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes; Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier; Catholic Charities of Livingston County outreach; Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation; and diocesan Urban Services.

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### 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 kinds of individuals and families who have been helped in the past with Christmas Appeal funds.

★ An elderly couple on a fixed income lost food during a power outage. Their refrigerator was off several days and all the perishable food was spoiled. They were given \$30 in Christmas Appeal funds, along with referrals to food cupboards, so they could have food until they received their Social Security

check.  
★ A single mother in her early 30s with three small children recently got off public assistance and obtained a job. Catholic Family Center was able to purchase two 10-ride bus passes for her so she could get to and from work until she got her first paycheck.

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