

# Christmas Appeal

## Fund helps independent man feel 'honored'

**Lee Strong**  
Associate editor

Roger Bushek is an independent man. For years he worked as a salesman, business executive and business consultant.

Two strokes, however — one in 1983 and the other in 1995 — have left him paralyzed on his left side and essentially bedridden in his Farmington home.

Bushek wanted to remain in that home, and, as much as possible, to be self-supporting.

But when his savings were gone, he found Social Security was not enough. He investigated government aid, but found either that he did not qualify, or he'd have to sign over his home, for some programs — which he did not want to do.

Then he discovered if he signed a reverse mortgage, he could continue to live in his home while receiving monthly payments for it — in essence, selling it on installments. He was ready to pursue this option. But an inspector discovered the well water that Bushek had been drinking for years was contaminated, and a mortgage could not be approved.

Bushek did not have enough money to hook up to the town water system. And he found no local agency willing or able to help him.

Until he found the Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation.

"They helped me put in the water line," Bushek said. "Without (their help) I wouldn't have been able to live in my own house."

"The person who came to my rescue was Sister Rosemary," he added.

Sister Rosemary Mackie, SSJ, is a rehab specialist with the Sheen Foundation.

When she learned of Bushek's need, she tapped into Christmas Appeal monies to help pay for the water line.

Sister Mackie explained that she uses Christmas Appeal monies to help many individuals like Bushek who need help they can't get elsewhere. Sometimes the appeal monies are enough. Sometimes she uses the appeal monies to help leverage aid from other sources, or "pieces together" appeal funds with other monies to create the needed package.

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

Sister Mackie noted, for example, that mobile home owners are not eligible to receive repair grants from state and federal agencies due to regulations about mobile homes, but that many of the older homes desperately need repairs

due to leaks. So she uses appeal funds to help these people.

Allynn Smith, Bishop Sheen's executive director, pointed out that the people aided through Christmas Appeal funds "are usually the lowest income families, especially the elderly and single parents."

Appeal funds have been used for repairs on everything from septic systems to roofs — with electrical and plumbing systems, gas lines, water heaters, and windows in between. When Bishop Sheen workers enter homes, they also see if other kinds of help are needed, such as health care.

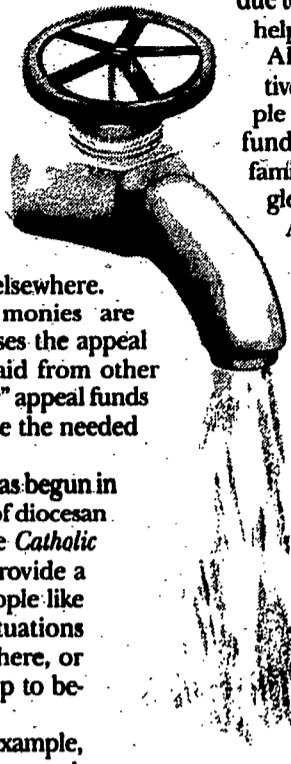
Smith said her staff has been seeing increasing needs.

"There seems to be an increasing need for housing assistance," she acknowledged, adding, "This year we're noticing more and more people needing assistance with food."

Bushek, for one, found that when other agencies failed him, the Bishop Sheen

Foundation came through.

"They honored me," he said. "I'm a recipient of a valid check."



### 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.

★ A single woman in her early 40s recently got laid off from her job due to downsizing. When she lost her job, she lost her health insurance. While waiting for her unemployment benefits to begin, she developed a severe kidney infection that led to her being hospitalized. She needed \$68 to buy medicine.

★ A young single mother with four children under 12 found that public assistance and some cash benefits she received were not enough for even a reduced price camp application fee. She received \$40, enabling her four small children to attend a summer day camp program, which helped to increase their self-esteem.

★ An 18-year-old single mother with two children ages 2 years and 8 months was working part-time as a home health aid and attending a nurse's training program. She had managed to get together enough money to pay part of the necessary tuition, but needed help with paying for the remainder. She received it, as well money to help pay for a required licensing examination.

★ A single mother and her two children ages 14 and 12 had been homeless. The family had found an apartment, but when they went to pick up their belongings that had been in storage, they found that everything had been stolen. Christmas Appeal funds enabled her to replace some of the stolen items so they could start life in their new home.

★ A woman needed help to leave an abusive situation. She had a vehicle but

### 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 crisis. 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.

PLEASE USE MY DONATION TO HELP A NEIGHBOR IN NEED

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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What is the best way to start your weekend?  
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Delicious appetizers, soups, veal dishes, vegetarian, chicken, fish, and homemade pasta

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Serving Lunch & Dinner

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**CHICKEN AU POUIVE SANDWICH**  
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**GRILLED OSTRICH**  
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All Lunch Specials served with a choice of soup or salad

**Dinner Specials**

**GRILLED LAMB TENDERLOIN**  
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Monday - Saturday

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**Daily Specials**

no money for an apartment. With Christmas Appeal funds she was able to pay the first month's rent on an apartment. She now has a job and a place to live.

★ A grandmother on a fixed income had become the guardian of her four grandchildren. She was in jeopardy of losing her home to foreclosure. She managed to get together enough money to purchase the home, but was unable to afford the additional money to pay for the required assessment to get a mortgage. Christmas Appeal monies paid for the assessment so they could get the home.

★ An unemployed man had an opportunity to accept a job, but needed to buy steel-toed work boots in order to start work. Christmas Appeal funds purchased the boots and he was able to accept the job.