

# SENIOR LIFESTYLES

## Outreach is a way of life for former social worker

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — She has befriended many local civic leaders. She rubs elbows with such dignitaries as former Buffalo Bills football coach Marv Levy. She still serves on a number of boards for Rochester-area charities and colleges.

Yet Mary Hannick didn't reach such lofty heights because she's a social climber. Quite the opposite, in fact. After more than 30 years of ministering at the Charles and Genesee settlement houses in Rochester, Hannick's experience is much more geared toward people in need.

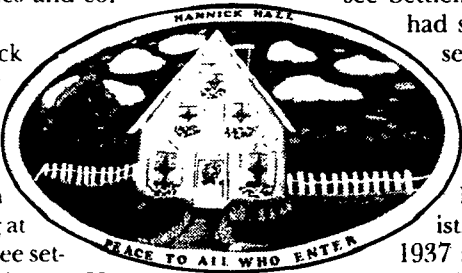
According to a close friend of hers, Mariana Rivera, Hannick is as down-to-earth as they come.

"She takes an interest in each person. She's willing to listen to anyone," said Rivera, who turns 19 on March 12.

When Rivera's mother, Isaura, moved to Rochester from her native Panama in the 1970s, Hannick opened her home up to Isaura for six months. Now it's Rivera — whom Hannick has known since birth — who stays with Hannick on weekends while attending Roberts Wesleyan College.

"She was my best friend from day one," said Rivera, who affectionately refers to Hannick as Tia (Aunt).

Hannick, a parishioner at St. Anne Church in Rochester, has never married. Yet she said that people such as Rivera are like family to her.



"There are a lot of young people in my life," said Hannick, who will celebrate her 90th birthday April 10.

Hannick's influence apparently stays in these young people's lives for years. She said she was touched by a recent phone call from a 40-year-old man in Minnesota, who remembered her as director of the Genesee Settlement House when he had sought the outreach's services.

"He said, 'Your face was the first smiling face I saw,'" Hannick remarked.

Hannick's social ministry career began in 1937 at the Charles Settlement House in Rochester, where she was director for eight years. She then served with the American Red Cross near the end of World War II, staffing hospitals in Germany and France.

Upon returning to Rochester, Hannick considered a career with Eastman Kodak Company but instead became director at Genesee Settlement House. She remained in that role for 25 years before retiring in 1971. The settlement house, at 10 Dake St., continues to serve inner-city residents on Rochester's east side.

Hannick said that she worked day and night ministering to residents of the settlement houses, but never minded the extra hours.

"At Kodak you would punch in and punch out, and be through at the end of the day. At a settlement house, your day is never over," she commented. "As a single woman, I could give all my time to it."

Hannick's devotion to assisting the un-



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Mary Hannick, right, visits with Jeanell Foster and her baby Mishew, 4 months, at Hannick Hall in Newark on March 2. Foster is a resident of the residential drug treatment program at the hall.

derprivileged, she said, stems from her parents' influence.

"They brought all three of us (children) up telling us we could do anything if we put our minds to it, and also to realize the value of everyone around us," Hannick

said. This ideal, she noted, kept her from distinguishing between race or social class.

Hannick has not sat still in retirement. Among her many volunteer efforts, she has worked extensively on behalf of developmentally disabled youth at the Mary Cariola Children's Center.

She also serves on the board of directors at Catholic Family Center and Volunteers of America; is an honorary board member at Mary Cariola; and belongs to the Nazareth College Social Work Department's advisory committee. Hannick Hall in Newark — a branch of the Catholic Family Center's Restart residential drug treatment program — is named in her honor. So are rooms at Mary Cariola and Volunteers of America.

And the honors keep coming in. In 1994, Hannick was recognized nationally when she traveled to Nashville to receive the Freedom Forum's Free Spirit Award. The honor, according to Freedom Forum president Allen Neuharth, cites people who "exemplify free expression, unselfish service and adventure."

Noting that journalists, educators and the chief of the Cherokee Nation were among the other nine Free Spirit Award winners that year, Hannick observed, "These are all very interesting people. How I got in with them, I'll never know."

In October, Hannick, along with the Bills' Coach Levy, were among the recipients of "Second Half Hero" awards at LIFESPAN's fourth annual Celebration of Aging Banquet. LIFESPAN is a non-profit agency based in Rochester that provides services and advocacy for senior citizens.

The next big fete for Hannick comes on April 10, when a 90th-birthday party will be thrown for her at Lodge on the Green in Greece. As the milestone day approaches, Hannick reports that she's in fine health and enjoys driving to board meetings, ribbon-cutting ceremonies and other civic events from her apartment near the Brighton-Henrietta border, where she has lived for nearly 20 years.

"One of the reasons I have good health is, I don't think negative. I think positive," Hannick remarked.

That's pretty much the attitude she takes in summing up her life thus far.

"I've been so blessed, so fortunate, with all the opportunities that have come my way," she said.

### Thoughts to Consider



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Activity solely for the purpose of escaping feelings and running from the pain will not work. On the other hand inactivity can further depression.

The newly bereaved should take time to deal with feelings and then begin the tasks necessary to make life meaningful.

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