

DIOCESAN NEWS

State directors honor Tierney with award

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Maurice "Moe" Tierney, who served as diocesan director of Catholic Charities for 14 years, is being recognized this week by Catholic Charities directors from around the state.

Tierney will receive the 1999 Vinnie DeFazio Award at a directors' reunion dinner Friday, Oct. 1, at Eagle Vale Country Club in Fairport. The honor is from the State Council of Catholic Charities Directors.

"I'm immensely honored. I'm thrilled," said Tierney, 71, in a telephone interview from his home in Charlottesville, Va.

Tierney, who moved to Virginia in 1998, said he cannot attend the dinner because his wife, Jessie, has been ill. Jack Balinsky, the current diocesan Catholic Charities director, will accept on Tierney's behalf.

Tierney grew up in Boston and received bachelor's and master's degrees from Boston College. He also served as a Marine officer in the Korean War.

From 1955 to 1977, Tierney worked at United Way agencies in North Dakota, Illinois, Ohio and New York state. He then settled in for a long stay with Catholic Charities in the Rochester Diocese, remaining until his retirement in 1991.

As director, Tierney oversaw the integration of the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry, Catholic Youth Organization and Catholic Family Center into a single agency — the Catholic Family Center.

Tierney counts the consolidation among his tenure's highlights, along with development of Catholic Charities offices in Elmira and Geneva, as well as substantial advancements in justice and peace advocacy.

"It wasn't just me. We had just a fantastic team. Whenever I use the word 'I,' I really mean 'we,'" Tierney remarked. "Oh God, it was wonderful — the best years of my life."

Following his retirement, Tierney helped launch other Catholic Charities offices. He oversaw a study for the development of branches in Livingston and Steuben counties, and directed the Livingston office for one year after it opened in Mount Morris in 1995. Since then, a Steuben County branch has opened in Bath.

Sister Nancy O'Brien, RSM, Livingston County Catholic Charities' Director of Rural Outreach, recalled Tierney as a tireless and dedicated director in Mount Morris.

"He was very involved in it. He was here



Mike Mergen/Photo Intern

Catholic Charities Week

Rochester Mayor William Johnson hands a proclamation declaring Sept. 27-Oct. 3 as Catholic Charities Week, to, from left, Jim Crowley, Catholic Charities' diocesan director of finance, Jack Balinsky, diocesan director of Catholic Charities, and Carolyn Portanova, president and CEO of Catholic Family Center, at City Hall, Sept. 22. The proclamation, for Rochester and Monroe County, recognizes that the Catholic Charities USA Annual Conference will be held in Rochester Sept. 30-Oct. 4.

full-time, and then some," Sister O'Brien said.

Tierney was a member of the State Council of Catholic Charities Directors from 1984 to 1991. He served on the Fiscal Officers Subcommittee and the Committee on Refugee and Immigration Services, advocating on behalf of displaced Haitians and other refugees seeking political asy-

lum.

Tierney was the main local organizer for the national Catholic Charities annual meeting held in Rochester in 1980. Balinsky also noted that Tierney "was the inventor and prime sponsor of alternate housing at the national level," as well as "a staunch advocate for appropriate immigration policy."

St. Mary's restructures emergency department

The former emergency department at St. Mary's Hospital, Rochester, now serves only patients whose medical conditions are not deemed life-threatening.

The department became known as the St. Mary's Walk-In Care Center on Sept. 27. All inpatient medical/surgical beds from St. Mary's have been consolidated with those at Greene's Park Ridge Hospital, which continues to provide emergency services for patients in life-threatening situations. Park Ridge and St. Mary's form the Unity Health System, an alliance that went into effect in 1997.

Stewart Putnam, St. Mary's president, said Unity Health had notified local ambulance companies of the change and that ambulance drivers will be reminded by 911 dispatchers.

Putnam said Unity Health is also making public-service announcements and notifying people who live in the St. Mary's area, or were treated at the St. Mary's emergency department during the past year.

The Walk-In Care Center will be open around the clock, serving people with illnesses and injuries that would likely not require hospitalization. Putnam said about 85 percent of those who had been treated at St. Mary's emergency department fell into this category, based on recent trends.

Psychiatric emergency services will continue to be offered at St. Mary's. In addition, the Walk-In Care Center will expand its social services, providing patients with referrals for non-medical needs.

"We are increasing staff in social work and case management," Putnam said.

Patients who do arrive at St. Mary's with life-threatening situations will be given life-support services until 911 can be contacted and the patients can be transferred to an appropriate facility, Putnam said.

Putnam said the restructuring will cut down on waiting time for walk-ins at St. Mary's. He estimated that the department will serve 15,000 patients in the upcoming year.

— Mike Latona

Inspectors keep watch over nursing home

By Kathleen Schwar
Staff writer

Auburn's Mercy Health and Rehabilitation Center nursing home has faced ongoing inspections and the threat of fines in the wake of a state survey.

The home is sponsored by the Sisters of the Third Franciscan Order; five sisters serve as administrators.

Among the state Health Department's findings from a Feb. 7-10 visit:

- One resident was not given a shower for 27 days; five had not had a shower or bath in nine days; and several residents were not provided weekly showers as scheduled.

- 12 residents were in bed the entire 3-11 p.m. shift on at least six nights. More were found in bed at 5 p.m. on various tours, and some before the evening meal.

- Scheduled 3 p.m. "nourishments" for 17 people were distributed at 4:55 p.m. before the evening meal and with no feeding assistance provided. Some of the snacks were not delivered at all. Snacks and meals were late, some grew cold.

- The facility "failed to appropriately monitor and track resident pressure sores (bed sores), and/or prevent pressure sores from developing or progressing to a deteriorating status."

The state recorded seven health deficiencies at Mercy. Federal statistics show the average for nursing homes in New York is two per inspection. Inspections usually are made about once a year.

In addition, state inspectors noted several "quality of life" concerns. Their report states, "... the facility failed to consistently promote care and provide an environment that fully maintained or enhanced the dignity and self worth for 52 of the facility's approximately 290 residents."

After the February report, surveyors re-

turned in June and July, and were expected to make another unannounced visit. Failure to correct deficiencies can lead to fines, federal action to assign a temporary manager for the home, and loss of certification for Medicare and Medicaid payments.

"We do take the findings very seriously," said Sister Linda Ann Palmisano, OSF, administrator of the home. The Franciscan sisters have hired consultants to address the state findings, Sister Palmisano noted.

"We are working with the consultants, looking at the facility as a whole," she said. "We have been looking at this as an opportunity to improve services we render."

Sister Palmisano said this is not the first time the home has faced so many deficiencies, but that it has been working toward compliance. She declined to say what changes the home is making.

Robert Kenny of the Health Department public affairs office said, "We have every reason to believe they are going to come up with a satisfactory plan of correction and will move forward to provide the best possible care that can be provided."

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The state's 50-page report included the home's response. The home stated it would provide in-service and staff counseling in many cases, and recruit more staff.

Workers had told surveyors that staffing shortages contributed to some of the deficiencies cited. On one 3-11 p.m. shift only four certified nursing assistants were available to assist 50 residents.

Nelsa Selover, director of the Cayuga County Office for the Aging, said she visits a friend at Mercy every Monday night, and "there's certainly nothing that stands out. The building is very clean, there are no odors. Staff is diligent."

She said the facility apparently has difficulty finding staff to fill in when needed.

Sharon Arliss, director of the office's ombudsman program, said she had not had many complaints about the home in her program's first year of operation.

Anyone with a nursing home concern may call a statewide senior citizens hotline at 1-800-342-9871.

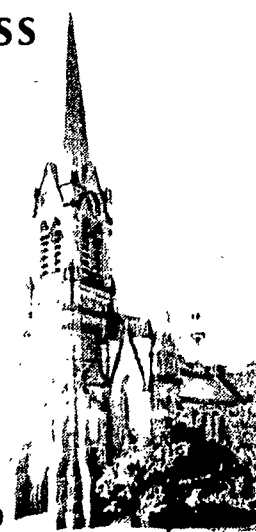
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