

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Charities leader notes huge demand for help

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Since the early 1980s, an overwhelming increase in people seeking help from Catholic Charities has been met with an equally impressive response from those agencies and their volunteers, according to Father Fred Kammer, SJ, president of Catholic Charities USA.

CCUSA is the nation's network of Catholic Charities agencies, including the Diocese of Rochester's. Father Kammer was one of 900 people who attended CCUSA's annual convention at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center from Sept. 30 to Oct. 4.

In an interview Oct. 2, Father Kammer pointed out that in 1981, Catholic Charities agencies across the nation provided such forms of emergency assistance as food and shelter to less than 1 million people. In 1997, that number had grown to 6.8 million, he said, blaming a variety of factors — including corporate downsizing, the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s, and the break-up of families.

At the same time, though, Father Kammer said, the church responded admirably to the increased pleas for help. For example, he said, Catholic Charities had 25,000 volunteers in 1981, whereas now it has 10 times that number.

"People have seen more hunger and homelessness on the streets than at any time since the Great Depression, and ... responded with an outpouring of energy and compassion," he said.

Another challenge facing Catholic Charities — the nation's largest private network of social service providers — has been the impact of welfare reform in the 1990s, Father Kammer said. At the same time that the government has pushed more people off the welfare rolls, Catholic Charities has

seen more people — including whole families — seek assistance from both its agencies and Catholic parishes, he said.

He noted, for example, that CCUSA's own surveys of parishes indicates they're doling out more food and cash assistance for such things as rent to families. He added that one of the negative impacts of welfare reform is that even people who may be eligible for certain types of assistance — Medicaid or food stamps, for examples — are no longer bothering to apply for them because they don't believe they're eligible.

In response to the fact that poor people can no longer look to the government for lifetime income assistance, Catholic Charities' agencies have devised a number of strategies to help the poor make it in the economy, he said. For example, more agencies are helping poor people develop their "soft skills" in the job market — in other words, how to dress, how to be on time, and how to resolve workplace disputes, he said.

He added that several agencies have developed mentoring programs that pair volunteers who have jobs with low-income clients who are seeking jobs or who are learning how to keep a job. He noted that a small number of agencies have even paired families with one another in a mentoring fashion. Mentors help clients learn the art of networking to get a job, he said, and the mentors learn a lesson as well.

"There's an education of the volunteer family, or volunteer individual, about the realities of poverty," he said.

He added that the nation's welfare rolls may have been reduced by half since 1996, according to a number of reports, but that there's not enough information available on what happens to people when they go off welfare.

"Success is not to get people off of welfare," he said. "The success is to get people out of poverty."



## 'Our roots, our future'

Movida Dance Company performed Oct. 4 before Archbishop Desmond Tutu spoke at the Catholic Charities USA annual convention, "Images of our roots, visions of our future." Movida performed traditional African dance and music for the 1,400 people in attendance, at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center. Ramone "Sunshine" Perez, left, performed in the lobby and led people inside as the doors were opened to the luncheon featuring Archbishop Tutu.



Mike Mergen/Photo Intern

## Consistent Life Ethic grants to fund efforts to save, enhance lives

By Kathleen Schwar  
Staff writer

Totalling \$36,000 — the largest sum in their five-year history — this year's Consistent Life Ethic grants will fund everything from bus tokens to prison ministries in the diocese's 12 counties. They'll also help train people for work.

"We're picking up the pieces from welfare reform," said Suzanne Schnittman, diocesan coordinator for the consistent life ethic. "The level and breadth of funding this year reflects the desire to continue strong support of unborn life, as well as a willingness to explore avenues to enhance lives — especially those of inmates as well as the many caught in the severe cutbacks from welfare reform."

In Steuben County, one CLE grant will buy gas for volunteers who take clients shopping and to social-service and medical appointments.

"It will be a great benefit. I'm excited about that," said Sister Margaret Mary Mattle, director of Mercy Rural Ministry headquartered in Wayland, northern Steuben County. Her CLE grant will help expand the ministry's Project Christopher. She has recruited eight volunteers, who drive clients as far as Canandaigua and Rochester.

"The need is for transportation among those folks who don't have cars, which are naturally the economically deprived," Sister Mattle said. Steuben County has no public transit system, she added.

CLE grants are funded primarily by contributions raised through an annual benefit dinner and auction, the Thanks Giving Appeal and private donations. In addition to the Mercy Rural Ministry, more than 50 other agencies will receive grants. The recipients, by region, are:

### MONROE COUNTY

Bethany House; Birthright of

Rochester; Cameron Community Ministries; Catholic Family Center Pregnancy Services; Catholic Family Center STAR Program for Elderly; Catholic Family Center Teen Suicide Program; Corpus Christi Center; Education for Peace Week; Feminists for Life; Hispanic Migrant Ministry; Mercy Prayer Center; Mercy Residential Housing; Our Lady of Perpetual Help Recovery; St. Andrews Food Cupboard Refugee Room; St. Bridget's Women's Circle; St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center; St. Michael's Woodshop; St. Peter's Kitchen; Sex, Truth and Decisions; and Step by Step Retreats for Women.

### LIVINGSTON COUNTY

Birthright of Geneseo; Catholic Charities Legal Services; Teresa House Inc. Comfort Care.

### FINGER LAKES

Auburn Hospitality Association; Birthright — Auburn, Canandaigua, Ontario, Seneca County, Victor; Catholic

Charities Women to Work; Crisis Pregnancy Abstinence Education; Faith Haven Vocational Opportunities; Finger Lakes Visiting Nurse/Hospice; House of John Comfort Care; Pines of Peace Comfort Care; Wellsprings Illness Workshop.

### SOUTHERN TIER

Birthright — Ithaca, Owego; Catholic Charities of Steuben CLE Project, Catholic Charities of Tompkins Debt Forgiveness; Catholic Charities Teens and Family; Corning-Painted Post Health Ministry; Elmira Correctional Facility Jubilee Justice Project; Interfaith Hospitality Center at Elmira Correctional Facility; Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers; Loaves and Fishes Job Training; Mercy Rural Ministry/Project Christopher.

### ALL COUNTIES

Common Ground Consistent Life Awareness Fund; Legal Aid Immigration Program; Pax Christi Father McCarthy Retreats; Project Rachel Promotion.

"Every human being is a unique and unrepeatable gift of God."

Pope Paul VI

MCQUAID  
HIGH JESUIT SCHOOL

HONORING THE GIFT AND THE GIVER

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1. (b), 2. (a), 3. (c), 4. (c), 5. (a), 6. (b)

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