

Christmas Appeal

Bus passes enable veteran to start new job

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 30 years, the appeal has enabled the Catholic community to help thousands of people in 12 counties to help 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 the 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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By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Lynwood A. Daniel, 43, a half-Shoshone Indian, half-African-American U.S. Army veteran, has seen his share of ups and downs. But he sustains himself by reciting a Native American prayer his mother taught him.

"The light of God surrounds you," he said. "The love of God enfolds you. Just know wherever you are, God is."

Sitting in a Monroe Avenue restaurant, Daniel recounted a life filled with tragedy and hope that he is trying to turn around. A cook by trade, Daniel lives in the city, has no car and recently received two 10-ride bus passes to help him get back and forth to his new job at a suburban steak restaurant. The bus passes were purchased for him by a caseworker at Catholic Family Center, and paid for with funds from the *Christmas Appeal*. Daniel said the free passes will tide him over until he can pay for his own passes with his first paycheck.

Daniel moved to Rochester from Michigan in October. He had been looking for a job when he turned to Catholic Family Center, which has also helped him with free food and job contacts, he said. He added that he is grateful to God for blessing him through the center at this time in his life.

"He's always been there for me," Daniel said of God. "I haven't always been there for him."

On that note, Daniel said he has struggled with alcoholism in the past as well as a variety of other challenges, including fathering two children out of wedlock with separate women. His teenage daughter lives with him in Rochester, but his son died tragically on Thanksgiving Day 1992. Anthony, 15, was killed as an innocent bystander in a New York City park shooting.

"He just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time," Daniel said.

A Persian Gulf War veteran, Daniel served three stints of varying lengths in the army between 1973 and 1991. He said he was wounded when his tank was hit during the Gulf War, and said he had also served his country in such places as El Salvador and Lebanon.

"I've seen a lot of killing," Daniel said.

He added that he thinks combat stress and the killing of his son combined to make him turn to drink. In part, he said, he

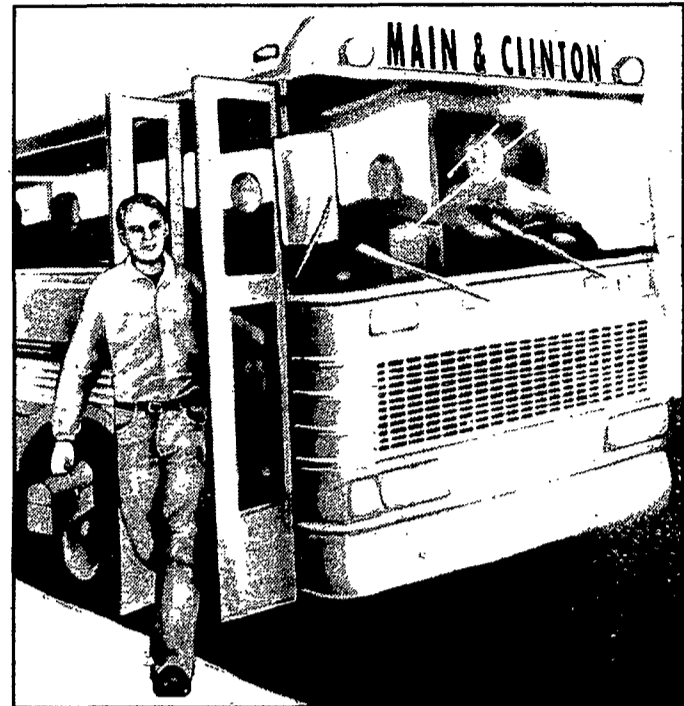


Illustration by Linda Jeanne Rivers

was haunted by the faces of his son and of those he had seen die in battle. Eventually, a Catholic priest he met helped turn him around, Daniel said.

"He said, 'Lynwood, they're in heaven,'" Daniel recalled the priest telling him. "When are you going to forgive yourself?"

As he prepared to take on his new job, Daniel seemed confident of the future.

"I have learned in life that we have to take responsibility for our actions," he said. "I want to do things with my life."

He also noted that even if he didn't have the bus passes to help him get around the city, he was strong enough to walk wherever he needed to go.

"I'm a soldier, and I'll always be a soldier," he said with a smile. "I'll walk from point A to point B."

People in need

Christmas Appeal funds are available year-round to people in need. The cases below are typical of those who received funds this past year. Catholic Charities Community & Residential Services provided assistance in the first four:

★ A woman recently released from the hospital and coping with a terminal illness was given a Wegmans food voucher, as her support from the Department of Social Services had been canceled — apparently the hospital listed her as "deceased" rather than "discharged." Her support was to be reinstated.

★ Rent subsidy of \$200 was granted to a woman who provides a home for her 8-year-old great-nephew. She is not eligible for public assistance or a housing subsidy, and the two faced homelessness.

★ A grandmother who cares for four young grandchildren was given \$36 in food vouchers.

★ With \$50 in Appeal funds, a 4-year-old was enrolled in the WEE (Wegman Early Education) program, a non-profit, education-based day-care program. Besides benefiting the child, his attendance provides respite for his mother, who is HIV-positive and very ill.

★ Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation returned to a home where Appeal funds had helped replace a leaking roof in 1989. The resident's husband had since died, and her daughter and grandson had moved from her house into their own home. The resident's own health problems made her unable to maintain the home, and she feared falling through the bathroom floor where a leaking tub had created a hole. Sheen Housing performed repairs and also connected the resident to the public water system, as her water was unfit for drinking.

The Catholic Family Center provided assistance for the cases below:

★ Christmas Appeal funds totaling \$40 assisted an elderly couple in making a necessary repair on their gas stove. They were on a fixed income.

★ A young father was given \$12.50 in Christmas Appeal funds to help buy a bus pass so he could submit job applications.

★ A single father of two teenagers obtain food with a \$40 grant after the family's refrigerator broke down. The landlord replaced the refrigerator but not the food. The family had limited income.

★ With \$75 in Appeal funds, a family was able to make necessary car repairs so the husband could remain employed. The family had no extra means to be able to afford repair.

★ A single mom purchased a bed for her 6-year-old son who had returned home from foster care, thanks to \$60 in Appeal funds. She had no extra income from the Department of Social Services.

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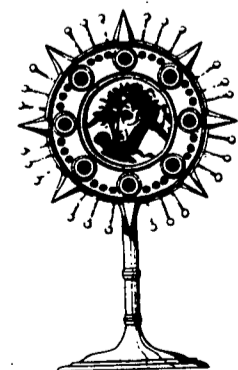
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