

DIOCESAN NEWS

Convent to become home for dying

By Mike Latona
Staff Writer

Plans are underway for a new hospice care facility to open in the convent building at St. Joseph's Church in Wayland.

The facility, located at 310 Second Ave., is due to open in the fall, said Cris Share Wensel, who serves on the Vincent House board of directors. The convent building has been vacant since 1997, when the last of the Sisters of St. Joseph who had resided there moved out. It had been used for parish meetings since then.

Wensel said that a home for the dying, staffed by professionals and volunteers, is important because many people who are terminally ill do not have family in the area or who can adequately care for them.

"This allows a person to have the feeling of dying at home," Wensel said.

Vincent House will provide hospice care for two people at a time, each with a prognosis of three months or less to live. Wensel said that Vincent House would become the first of its kind in the area. Whereas the Elmira-based Southern Tier Hospice provides home hospice care in Steuben County, there are currently no designated buildings in the county where patients may live and receive hospice care.

The two-story convent is about 75 years old and was built to accommodate six to eight nuns at a time, Wensel said. Other parts of the building will be used as overnight rooms for clients' family members, a reception area for visitors, and storage space for parish-owned items.

Wensel said that she hopes Vincent House will obtain a signed lease within the next month from Father Stephen Kraus, pastor of Holy Family Catholic Community. St. Joseph's Church is a member parish of the cluster.

Father Kraus said he is enthused about the project. "I think it's just a wonderful idea — to provide an atmosphere of family, caring and peace," he commented.

The facility is named Vincent House in recognition of the St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Joseph's Church. In the summer of 1998, members of that group originated the idea to convert the convent into a home for the dying.

Wensel said that except for some paint-



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

From left, Sharon Mitchell, Bob McAllister, Marilyn Beaupre, Cris Wensel of Catholic Charities, Penney Case-Adams and other volunteers tour the former Sisters of St. Joseph Convent in Wayland on Feb. 24, and note repairs and renovations needed to convert it into a home for the dying.

ing and minor renovations to the furnace and roof, "The house is in wonderful shape. It's lovely on the inside."

Wensel said that \$6,500 has been raised toward the board of directors' fundraising goal of \$70,000. The funds will cover renovation, as well as salaries of staff members once Vincent House opens. Churches, service organizations, private donors and government agencies are the chief projected fundraising sources.

"Our biggest single challenge will be to raise the monies that are needed," Father Kraus said.

Father Kraus also noted that the home for the dying will also need about 70 volunteers once it opens. "Volunteering would be a wonderful witness to people's Christianity," he remarked.

This effort is not limited to the Catholic community, Wensel emphasized. She said that Vincent House will accept clients and volunteers of all denominations in Steuben and surrounding counties. Wensel added that Vincent House will work in conjunction with Southern Tier Hospice to coordinate referrals.

Wensel acknowledged that some members of the St. Joseph's community have been slow to accept the idea of using a former convent for hospice care. However, she said that most parishioners view Vincent House as a truly Christian effort.

"Caring for the dying is the work of Jesus," she said.

Wensel noted that anybody wishing to inquire about volunteer opportunities can call her at 607/776-8085. She added that speakers are also available to give informative talks to groups about Vincent House. Speakers can be scheduled by contacting her.

Wensel, who serves as parish and community development coordinator for Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier in Bath, said that as other church buildings in her coverage area become vacant, she will advocate for them, also, to be used for such social service purposes as homes for the dying, free clinics or homeless shelters.

EDITORS' NOTE: Donations may be sent to Vincent House, PO Box 566, Wayland, NY 14572.

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Comments, suggestions, or questions? Here's how to contact the *Catholic Courier*.

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flections on life in the church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play, and reserve the right to edit them for legal and other concerns.

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Recognizing

• **Nazarene Liberal**, a parishioner at St. Dominic's Church in Shortsville, passed away Feb. 25.

• **St. Joseph's Hospital Auxiliary**, Dimira, has won a 1999 Auxiliary Advocate Award from the National Association of New York State, an Albany-based organization of the state's health facilities. The award recognizes individuals for their efforts in job performance, volunteerism, and sponsorship of educational and research projects.

worker on the island, to distribute

• Mayor William A. Johnson Jr. presented his annual "Unsung Hero" awards to several people at a breakfast in downtown Rochester on Feb. 19. The award-winners included Eleanor Goode, a retired nurse who volunteers for the Meals on Wheels Program and at Dimitri House, an outreach ministry for the homeless that is affiliated with Corpus Christi Church, Rochester; Marie Kossel, also a volunteer at Dimitri House; Sister Beth LeValley, SSJ, recently elected president of the episcopal organization Greater Rochester Community of Churches; and Sister Mary Regis Straight, RSM, 84, who spent 17 years in inner-city Rochester working as a school teacher.

'Roe' of *Roe vs. Wade* to speak in Brighton

Norma McCorvey, the "Jane Roe" of the 1973 U. S. Supreme Court *Roe vs. Wade* decision that legalized abortion nationally, will speak on why she joined the pro-life movement in two talks Thursday, March 2.

The first will be at 5 p.m. in Brighton Town Hall, 2300 Elmwood Ave., and the second, at 7 p.m. Monroe Community College, 1000 E. Henrietta Road, Brighton.

Her appearances are sponsored by Brighton Residents Against Violence to Children Inc. (BRAVE Inc.), which has sued in New York State Supreme Court to overturn Brighton's decision to allow Dr. Morris Wortman, a physician who performs abortions, to open an office on South Clinton Avenue. The court is expected to make a decision in the case sometime this spring.

McCorvey was poor, uneducated and pregnant when her desire to have an abortion became the basis of the case brought before the Supreme Court. McCorvey's heart changed on the abortion issue in 1995 after she worked at an abortion clinic and "witnessed firsthand the impact of her actions, including the exploitation of women and abortionists making millions of dollars at women's expense," according to a statement from BRAVE.

For further information on McCorvey's appearances, contact Carol Crossed at 716/475-6743, Margaret O'Brien at 716/244-4883, or Monroe Community College Students for Life at 716/657-6176.

Christmas Appeal total bigger than last year's

Donations to the 1999 Catholic Courier/Catholic Charities Christmas Appeal rose to \$53,000.50, well above the 1998 total of \$49,401, thanks to the generosity of 968 donors.

The 1999 total also included \$836 raised through an Oct. 29 Halloween dance the Courier sponsored in conjunction with Odyssey, the diocesan young-adult network.

Christmas Appeal money is used year-round by Catholic Charities agencies throughout the diocese to help people in emergencies who are ineligible for other help or waiting for such help to begin.

"There is no other source for the different cash items that the Christmas Appeal covers," said Judy Taylor, communications manager for diocesan Catholic Charities. "And it's hard to imagine what the people who have been helped would do if they didn't have this help. It surely brings a little miracle into a pretty dark life."

Lenten fast regulations

The following regulations for fast and abstinence during Lent are based on the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

• Ash Wednesday (March 8) and all Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence from meat for all Catholics 14 and older.

• Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fasting. Fasting means only one full meal and two smaller meals that, taken together, do not equal one full meal. All individuals between the ages of 18 and 59, inclusive, are bound by the laws of fasting.

• Catholics are especially encouraged to perform acts of penance during Lent.