

## DIOCESAN NEWS

## Federation strives to resurrect neighborhoods

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff Writer

ROCHESTER — As Eileen Dillio stood in front of a house at Enterprise Street and Post Avenue, a group of adolescents noisily chased one another around the property, trespassing in a way that no homeowner would allow — if one lived there.

Then again, the boarded-up house with peeling paint and garbage strewn about the lawn has seen worse moments, she said, noting that sometimes people openly urinate on the property.

"They figure nobody lives here, so who cares," said Dillio, who lives five blocks from the house, and who serves as business manager at her parish, Our Lady of Good Counsel.

However, neighbors do care about properties like the empty house, she said, because they lower the area's property values and sometimes attract people who make trouble, like drug-users who will sometimes frequent empty houses. To end the scourge of blighted and empty properties in this area of southwest Rochester, Good Counsel parishioners are joining with their neighbors in an attempt to lure new homeowners.

To that end, Interfaith Action, a federation of 14 area congregations, including Good Counsel, has formed a partnership with Neighborhood Housing Services of Rochester Inc., a private, not-for-profit housing organization. The partnership was announced by Interfaith members and area residents at a March 30 meeting with city officials, in Good Counsel Church.



Mike Mergen/Photo intern

Eileen Dillio, shown in front of a deserted house at Enterprise Street and Post Avenue, Rochester, is optimistic about efforts to lure new homeowners to southwest Rochester.

Neighborhood Housing provides financial, educational and technical services to low- and middle-income prospective home-buyers in an attempt to sustain the city's neighborhoods. The organization is funded by federal, state and local grants, as well as private donors, according to Karna Gerich Cestero, executive director. She added that her organization will also occasionally work with current owners who want to rehabilitate and sell a property.

Dillio said that the federation members had already done extensive surveys of 14 streets surrounding Good Counsel and

found 30 vacant properties, and another 60 properties that need minor to major repair. Dillio, who has raised six children in the area with her husband, Richard, said Interfaith Action decided to form the partnership because the future of the area depends on young families moving there and occupying these properties. It's hard to legally touch owners who do the bare minimum of legally required upkeep, she said, but some owners might be willing to sell their houses to young families willing to rehabilitate them.

Cestero said Interfaith Action members will promote Neighborhood Housing's

services in the area by distributing informational fliers and word-of-mouth.

"We hope to activate a real direction in neighborhood revitalization that is guided by the residents, embraced by the residents and maintained by the residents," she said.

At the March 30 meeting, Interfaith Action also asked city officials to vigorously enforce property codes in the area.

In related news, leaders of St. Monica's Parish, which belongs to the Roman Catholic Community of the 19th Ward along with Good Counsel and St. Augustine's, have also been working through Interfaith Action on housing issues in their neighborhoods.

On April 14, Interfaith Action leaders announced they were pleased with the city's response to their request that the city rehabilitate or demolish nine vacant properties on Genesee Street, which, like Good Counsel, is also located in southwest Rochester.

In a press statement, the federation leaders said three properties were demolished, with another demolition planned for another property; rehabilitation had begun on two properties; and auctions were planned at two other properties. The city also said it would take steps to improve the administrative processes it uses to dispose of or rehabilitate vacant houses.

"Our people are very heartened by this progress," said John DeMott, a St. Monica's parishioner and federation leader, said in the statement. "It gives us hope that, one day, all of Genesee Street can be restored."

### Courier wins awards

The *Catholic Courier* received seven awards in the New York Press Association's 1999 Better Newspaper Contest.

**First place — Sports Feature Photo** for a photo from the Catholic schools' golf tournament by former staff photographer Greg Francis, now with Messenger-Post Newspapers. Published June 3, the photo showed Sister Mary Marvin, RSM, Dr. Greg Riley and Ellen Fralich reacting to a missed putt.

**First place, Division 4 — Graphic Illustration** for staff graphic artist and illustrator Linda Jeanne Rivers' interpretation of the Jan. 14, 1999, cover story on Y2K and accompanying quotation from Rev. 20, "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven holding in his hand the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hands." Judges observed: "Powerful illustration — forces the reader to move to the story for more understanding."

**Second Place, Division 4 — Picture Story** for Francis' pictures in the Aug. 5 issue of the summer camp graduation for refugee children, sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph.

**Second place, Division 4 — Special Sections** for the *Courier's* Oct. 14 tribute to the late Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, who died Oct. 6. "... strong content with massive resources coming together," the judges wrote.

**Third place, Division 4 — Best Small Space Ad** for a Sept. 16 ad headlined, "Beautiful smiles make confident people." Rivers designed the ad for Donald A. Fantuzzo, DDS.

**Third place, Division 4 — Photographic Excellence.**

**Honorable mention — Coverage of Health, Health Care & Science**, for the Sept. 16 health-care edition and the Aug. 12 issue, which included the story of Bill White, who had asked to be taken off the ventilator that had kept him alive for 30 years.

The association presented the awards at a March 10-11 conference.

## Interfaith alliance calls for halt to executions

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff Writer

ROCHESTER — The Diocese of Rochester, as part of an interfaith alliance of 50 local congregations and organizations with members in the Protestant, Jewish and Muslim communities, has asked the Monroe County Legislature and the Rochester City Council to call for a moratorium on executions in New York state.

Suzanne Schnittman, Life Issues Coordinator for diocesan Catholic Charities, announced the effort at a press conference April 14 in the Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial. She was joined by representatives of several religious groups, activist groups and leaders of the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Schnittman said that many representatives calling for the moratorium oppose the death penalty altogether and want it abolished. However, the moratorium is a step in that direction, she noted.

"This is an interim measure, and it has received enormous support throughout the country," she said.

One Monroe County legislator, George C. Wiedemer, was on a list of more than 100 citizens supporting the moratorium that was distributed at the press conference.

When contacted for comment, a city official said the city council does not pass non-binding resolutions. But all nine council members signed a March 3 letter to Gov. George Pataki asking that he support a moratorium on the death penalty. No one has been executed in New York state since 1963, but Pataki reinstated the penalty by signing a legislative act in 1995.

"Around the country, new scientific breakthroughs are showing that many innocent people have been mistakenly executed," the council members' letter to Pataki read, referring to DNA testing. "New York State is not exempt from these tragic mistakes, each of which has irrevocable consequences."

The council members also questioned the fairness with which the penalty is applied.

"It is both statistically documented and anecdotally observable that the overwhelming numbers of death sentences are meted out to the poor and to people of color."

Schnittman said no one in the local anti-death penalty coalition seemed to be aware that the council members had written Pataki, and added that she first learned of the letter when contacted by the *Catholic Courier* for comment April 17.

She said she was pleased that the council had taken the step. She noted her belief that it would have an impact on local citizens' views because Monroe County currently has asked for the death penalty in five out of seven first-degree murder cases, the highest proportion in the state.

Decrying the death penalty has become a nationwide trend. Gov. George Ryan of Illinois halted executions in his state on Jan. 31, saying he wanted to uncover why so many death penalty sentences have been overturned. Since then, several U.S. bishops, including Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston, Texas, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bish-

ops, have called for suspension of federal executions.

Meanwhile, various members of the U.S. Congress have called for execution moratoriums until all death row inmates have had an opportunity to use DNA testing to prove their innocence. And at least 10 city councils, including those of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Pa., and San Francisco, have called for a halt to executions until the justice system can be examined for how fairly it metes out the penalty.

Death penalty opponents and groups from around the country will converge for a conference titled "Unmasking the Death Penalty: Opening Hearts and Minds" at several sites in Binghamton April 28-30. Conference speakers include Bud Welch, whose daughter was killed in the 1995 bombing of Oklahoma City's federal building, and David Kaczynski, whose brother, Ted, is serving four life sentences after admitting he was the Unabomber serial killer.

The cost is \$40 per person for three days, or \$25 for Saturday and Sunday. For information, call 716/325-7727.

## LAMPLIGHTER

### Lunch Specials

#### CHEESEBURGER

Half pounder on a bed of caesar salad with olives and tomatoes \$6.95

#### FRENCH DIP

Sliced beef in a crusty French loaf with a luscious AuJus dip \$6.95

#### SOUP & SANDWICH

Our chef selects a new combination daily \$5.95

All Lunch Specials served with a choice of soup or salad

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SUNDAY  
AND  
MOTHERS'  
DAY  
SERVING 1PM TO 8PM

Creekside Plaza  
831 Fetzner Rd.  
Corner Maiden Lane  
225-2500

### Dinner Specials

#### RACK OF LAMB

Marinated in Balsamic, crusted with Dijon, served with garlic smashers, seasoned broccoli and mouth watering Bordelaise sauce \$19.95

#### SAUTEED SEA BASS

Served on a bed of yukons, and caramelized onions with a tomato, basil, butter sauce. \$18.95

#### MAITRE'D RIB

Prime rib grilled with a peppercorn crusting and topped with a maitre'd butter \$15.95

#### PORTOFINO

Lobster, shrimp, scallops and crabmeat sautéed in olive oil and white wine, served with artichoke hearts & black olives over pasta \$18.95

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