

DIOCESAN NEWS

SSJ center to nearly triple in size by December

By Rob Cullivan
Staff Writer

ROCHESTER — St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center is nearly tripling in size in order to serve a clientele that, according to the center's staff, has almost doubled in six years. People fill the center each weekday for anything from physical exams to literacy tutoring, said Sister Christine Wagner, SSJ, executive director.

The expansion at the center, an old refurbished house at 417 South Ave., is targeted for Dec. 8, the sixth anniversary of its founding.

Sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester, the center provides free primary medical care, counseling, social-service advocacy, and high-school-equivalency tutoring, according to Sister Wagner. In addition to its South Avenue location, the center operates a satellite office in a nearby apartment complex where it works with children on conflict resolution and peace-making.

From 1995-96, the center provided services to 1,400 people, whereas by June of this year, the center had served almost 2,500 individuals in one year. Sister Wagner credited several factors for the increased demand, including the fact that the center has become better known through word-of-mouth, and that more social-service agencies are making referrals to St. Joseph's. She added that the lack of health insurance for the working poor also has contributed to the increased demand.

"People work two or three jobs, but can't afford health insurance," she said. "And



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Barbara James (right), a registered nurse, listens to Sharon Miller's lungs at St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center on South Avenue in Rochester. A part-time staffer, James is one of only seven people who are paid for their work at St. Joseph's, which relies heavily on volunteers to deliver medical and other services to hundreds of people each year.

they make too much to qualify for Medicaid," the federally funded health insurance program for the poor.

The center requests that clients make \$5 donations for services, but also accepts donations of time and skills, she said. She added that the center is one of only two in the city that provide free medical care to

the uninsured and underinsured. The city's other facility is Corpus Christi Center, which was founded by Corpus Christi Church and is now sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy.

When the center's staff decided it needed to expand St. Joseph's, the Sisters of St. Joseph purchased an adjacent old house

from the City of Rochester in 1998. The two houses will be connected by a link, an enclosed two-story structure whose first floor will eventually serve as the center's lobby and reception area following renovation. The center's first floor will have education rooms, a computer lab and five medical examination rooms, an increase from the current two. The second floor will be used for administrative offices, counseling and conferences, Sister Wagner said, adding that the building also will have an elevator for handicapped accessibility.

"Basically, what we're doing is giving the appropriate space to the services we have since we're so squished in right now," she said. After the expansion is complete, the center also will begin offering dental services, she noted.

The expansion will increase the size of the center from 2,400 square feet to 6,800 square feet.

The total cost of the project is \$400,000. The center has raised \$150,000 to date. Sister Wagner said she is soliciting individuals, foundations, banks and pharmaceutical companies for support. One pitch she is using points out that the center provides almost \$500,000 in medical care and saves the community thousands of other dollars in such services as tutoring.

"We're looking for people to kind of help us give back to the community," she said. "Basically, anybody who can understand we're providing an essential service to the community."

The center already receives considerable support from the community, she noted, pointing out that it is solely financed by private monies, and that most of its services are provided by a staff of 90 volunteers — including medical workers who pay for their own malpractice insurance — with the aid of four full-time paid staff members and three part-time paid workers.

The center informally collaborates with St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, a Catholic Worker outreach center located right across the street on South Avenue. But despite their similar names, they have no formal affiliation.

Working at the center has made Sister Wagner a strong advocate of changing the nation's health-care system to better provide for the working poor, she said.

"If things were right in the world, we wouldn't have to expand, and we wouldn't have to exist," she said.

Sister Wagner added that the gratitude of the center's clients inspires her and her staff to undertake their labor on behalf of the poor.

"They are salt-of-the-earth people that your heart just cries for them."

EDITORS' NOTE: For more information about St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center, call 716/325-5260.

Obituaries

Fr. Marceau; St. John Fisher professor

Father William C. Marceau, CSB, a professor at St. John Fisher College for 30 years, died Aug. 6, 2000, at Providence Villa in Toronto, Ontario, after a long illness. He was 73.

Father Marceau was a Rochester native. He grew up in Sacred Heart Parish and graduated from Aquinas Institute. He entered the Congregation of St. Basil in 1947, made his profession of vows in 1948, and was ordained a Basilian priest in 1957.

Father Marceau served in the U.S. Navy out of high school, then earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Western Ontario and an advanced degree from the Université Laval in Quebec. He taught for several years at Aquinas Institute before joining the faculty of St. John Fisher in 1967.

He became a renowned French profes-

sor, as well as chairman of the department of modern languages and coordinator of foreign study programs. In 1978 he was named a "Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmiers Académiques" by the French government for his achievements in promoting the French language. In 1979 he was given the Marcella DeMuth French Award by the Scholarship Foundation of the American Institute for Foreign Study.

Father Marceau also had a great love for St. Francis de Sales. In 1983 he established the Rochester branch of the Association of St. Francis de Sales, an international organization that promotes that saint's spirituality. In addition, Father Marceau wrote books on St. Francis de Sales, and traveled several times to India to conduct retreats on the saint's teaching.

"I think of him as our very dear founder

who led us to Saint Francis de Sales. He was a wonderful spiritual director," said Beth Connaughton, regional director of the St. Francis de Sales association and parishioner at St. Mary's Church in Rochester.

"His great love throughout his life was St. Francis de Sales," remarked Father Joseph Trovato, CSB. Father Trovato, parochial vicar at Irondequoit's Church of Christ the King, was a close friend of Father Marceau's and served as homilist for the priest's Aug. 12 funeral Mass.

Father Marceau is survived by his sister, Marie Kelly; nieces, Laurene, Mary and Catherine Kelly; and nephews, William, David and Laurence Kelly.

Two funeral Masses were held for Father Marceau: on Aug. 9 in Toronto, and on Aug. 12 at Rochester's Sacred Heart Cathedral. Bishop Matthew H. Clark served as celebrant for the Aug. 12 liturgy. Interment was in the priests' section of Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

—Mike Latona

Sr. M. Straub, native of Greece

Sister Mary Margaret Anne Straub, OS-CO, a native of the town of Greece, died July 21, 2000, at the age of 45.

She was the daughter of Carlton and Mary Lou (McIntyre) Straub of Country Lane. Sister Margaret was a member of the first class to graduate from St. Lawrence School in 1969. She graduated from Cardinal Mooney High School in 1973 and then attended the State University of New York College at Geneseo, graduating *cum laude* in 1977.

During college she had become friends with brothers of the Abbey of the Genesee in Piffard, who helped her discern her call to religious life. She entered Mount St. Mary's Abbey, Wrentham, Mass., in 1978 and became known as Sister Mary Margaret. She received her solemn vows on Aug. 20, 1986.

In 1987 Sister Margaret helped found what became Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Crozet, Va.

She was diagnosed with acute leukemia in 1988, and returned to Wrentham. Her

brother, Michael, donated bone marrow for a transplant in nearby Boston. Her sisters, as well as brothers from St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Mass., were frequent blood and platelet donors during her long months in the hospital.

Her strength increased and she was again able to serve her community, for which she had been liturgist, a teacher in the novitiate, and a music teacher to interested sisters. At the time of her death she was the food housekeeper. She also had recently assumed editorial responsibilities for the Regional Mailbag, a Cistercian publication.

In addition to her parents, Sister Margaret is survived by a sister, Mary Kathryn (Don) Szejbka of Fredonia; two brothers, Martin of Rochester, and Michael (Amy) and niece Colleen of Hamden, Conn.

A memorial Mass was celebrated at the Abbey of the Genesee July 30, with Abbot John Eudes Bamberger, Father Thomas Statt, and monks of the abbey concelebrating.

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