

Christmas Appeal

Donations refilled needed prescription

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — In January 1998, LaRue Young, a parishioner at St. Bridget's Church, was laid off from her job as a technician at Eastman Kodak where she had worked for 22 years.

"I just thank God that my kids were grown," Young said as she talked in the living room of her city home. Her son and daughter had already completed college, she said, so at least she didn't have to worry about supporting her kids anymore.

Divorced since 1988, Young does have to be concerned about high blood pressure with which she was diagnosed about seven years ago, and has to take expensive medicine to control it. Her health insurance and severance pay ran out about a year after she was laid off, she said. Surviving first on unemployment compensation, and then with the help of family, she struggled to pay for her prescription out of pocket, which cost about \$200 a month.

"My back was against the wall," she said. She eventually heard of St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center Inc., where she was able to get a similar, cheaper type of heart medicine for free in addition to free regular medical checkups. Sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph, and staffed primarily by volunteers, the South Avenue center provides health care and other social services to city residents.

People in need

Christmas Appeal funds are available to people in need throughout the year. Agencies that distribute the funds provided the *Catholic Courier* with the following "cases" as examples of people they serve:

★ "Patti," a single mother of a two children, 10 and 7, found a job in a law office, but had no way to get there or to get her children to child care. She used her monthly income to buy a car, but then was unable to pay her bills. Catholic Charities/Turning Point center in Steuben County used \$50 in Appeal money to pay Patti's water bill. The agency also arranged payment plans with the woman's landlord and utility companies.

★ "Charles," an unemployed 57-year-old, was the single parent of three children, ages 2 to 5, and caretaker for his mother. His wife had died recently. Catholic Charities/Turning Point in Steuben County used \$70 toward food and transportation expenses. The agency also made him aware of several other

"I've always been a strong and independent woman," she said. "All of a sudden, I needed help. I just thank God St. Joseph's was there to help me. Otherwise I would have been up the creek without a paddle."

However, in October of this year, even the center was unable to provide her the prescription, she said. She contemplated asking family members to help her out, but she said she decided not to because they themselves were saddled with bills.

Fortunately, she was referred by someone she knew to Catholic Family Center. Using funds provided by donors to the Christmas Appeal, a CFC employee was able to give Young a voucher for \$53.98 so that she could get her prescription filled for one month, she said.

Young added that life has taken a turn for the better, noting she was hired earlier this year as a relief worker at a community residence for people with developmental disabilities. Young said she works 20-30 hours a week, and hopes to be hired full-time eventually. "I love it," she said of her job. Her two years of struggle did not undermine her belief in God, she noted. "It's never shaken my faith in God because I do believe his will is going to be done, and he doesn't put on you more than you can handle."

She added that she grew up attending a Catholic school and remembered the lessons the nuns taught her about Jesus' admonition to help him by helping the least of his brothers and sisters. "That's how I've tried to live my life," she said, noting, for example, how she helps out two elderly women she knows by taking them to various appointments. "Who am I to turn my back on someone who needs a sandwich, a piece of bread? It's coming back to me now. I need something now, and thank God (people) were in place to help me."

A physically challenged single mother with a teenage daughter received \$185 from Catholic Charities of Livingston County to make a partial security deposit on an apartment. Another agency paid for a moving van to move her from an area wracked by vandalism that kept her awake nights and contributed to stress that affected her condition.

★ The House of Mercy has clarified that it used \$2,000 to provide Christmas food for about 25 families, not one, as reported in the Nov. 23 *Catholic Courier*. "Christmas is special to many of our people," Sister Grace Miller said. "We like to give them enough for a beautiful Christmas meal and brunch. We try to spread the money out for Christmas. This money helps us immensely."



Illustration by Linda Jeanne Rivers

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 crises.

For the past 31 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 waiting 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 Eumenical Housing Foundation; and diocesan Urban Services.

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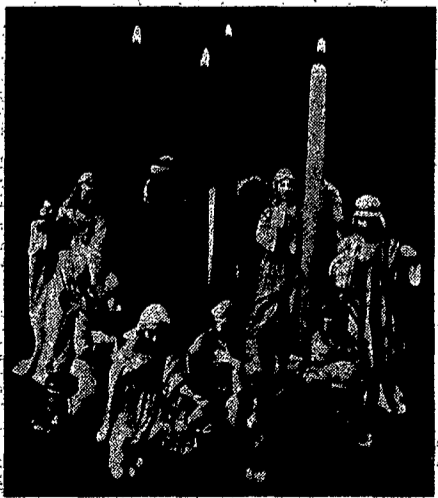
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