

DIOCESAN NEWS

Mercy Rehab cited again, works on better care

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

For the second time in two years, Auburn's Mercy Health and Rehabilitation Center nursing home has been cited for several deficiencies in its care by the New York State Health Department.

The 297-bed home, which employs about 400 people, is sponsored by the Sisters of the Third Franciscan Order.

Following two unannounced surveys of its facility in September, the state denied all Medicare and Medicaid payments to Mercy for any patients admitted on and after Nov. 2. The facility has six months from that date to correct its deficiencies, according to Robert Kenny of the health department's public affairs office.

Surveys of Mercy in 1999 revealed several deficiencies that the facility pledged to correct last year. As it did in 1999, Mercy has again given the state a plan of cor-

rection designed to bring it in compliance with state regulations. Kenny said the state would conduct another survey to make sure Mercy corrected its deficiencies.

"I can say we will be going in, but I can't say when," he said during a phone interview from his Albany office.

Sister Linda Ann Palmisano, OSF, Mercy's administrator, said the center has taken steps to rectify the situation and is prepared for another survey.

"I think they will see definite improvements," she said of state investigators.

In part, she blamed the recurrence of deficiencies on the difficulties that nursing homes have in finding sufficient numbers of staff persons to work in such care.

The 96-page report on the 2000 surveys cited Mercy several times under five quality-of-care requirements: dignity and respect; activities of daily living; pressure sores; staffing; and administration.

"The most serious deficiencies found

during this survey were a pattern of deficiencies that cause actual harm that is not immediate jeopardy whereby significant corrections are required ... and substandard quality of care was identified," the state report read.

In addition to a shortage of nursing staff, among the problems state investigators found at the center were the following:

- A resident who lay in bed in her own feces was taken to lunch unwashed.

- A resident who lay in bed until 1:40 p.m. in the afternoon before being helped up for the day.

- A tube-fed resident advised by a dietitian to receive 2,058 calories daily was receiving only 1,272 calories.

- Staff failed to walk residents regularly. As a result, one resident went from walking several hundred feet every few days to being bedridden within 2½ months.

The investigators also found unsanitary areas in the kitchen and in the manner in which food was served. For example, aides served food in the same gloves used to

reposition residents in the morning. Repositioning was done many times by moving the incontinence pad under the resident.

Sister Palmisano noted that the center had already conducted in-service with the assistance of Cayuga Community College to educate employees on complying with the state's requirements. She added that the center has instituted a regular exercise program for all residents who can participate, and has also made improvements in its food and call bell policies.

Sharon M. Arliss, coordinator of the ombudsman volunteer program with the Cayuga County Office for Aging, said she was surprised by the number of deficiencies found by the state at Mercy, given the center's pledges to improve care last year. She said she had received no greater proportion of complaints about Mercy than any other nursing home in the county over the last year. Arliss added that she recently has increased from one to three the number of ombudsman volunteers assigned to Mercy, although the increase was unrelated to the state report.

Priestly visit has a spin



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Matt Griswold, 11, laughs with Father Joseph Sasso, a retired diocesan priest who enjoys woodworking, at the School of the Holy Childhood in Henrietta Nov. 21. Father Sasso spent two years making this Ferris wheel for his niece, and at a friend's suggestion brought it to the school for the children to see.

Father Robert Beligotti resigns

Father Robert Beligotti, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church, Auburn, for seven years, resigned his position Nov. 30.

In a letter shared with parishioners during Dec. 2-3 Masses, Father Beligotti stated his decision was made out of pastoral concern for members of the parish and himself. The letter was read at the end of the Masses by Bill Olsen, diocesan director of human resources.

Father Beligotti had been on a leave of absence from his position since September to address personal concerns. The Diocese of Rochester had stated that the concerns "are not related to any type of criminal activity or behavior."

Father Peter Deckman, who assumed pastoral leadership of St. Francis when Father Beligotti took his leave, will stay on as interim pastoral leader. A permanent pastoral leader is not expected to be appointed until June, according to a statement from the Diocese of Rochester.

"It is with a sense of regret that I accept (Father) Beligotti's resignation as pastor of

St. Francis of Assisi," Bishop Matthew H. Clark said in the statement.

"I am comforted by the fact that he has been prayerful in his consideration and that he will continue to share his talents and ministry elsewhere within our diocese. I am also at great peace in knowing Rev. Deckman will continue to provide excellent spiritual leadership to the people of St. Francis," the bishop stated.

Father Beligotti's next assignment has not been determined yet, Tedesco said.

Ordained in 1968, Father Beligotti has served as associate pastor at these parishes: St. Charles Borromeo, Elmira Heights; Holy Family, Auburn; St. Vincent de Paul, Corning; St. Mary's, Elmira; and St. Anthony of Padua in Rochester.

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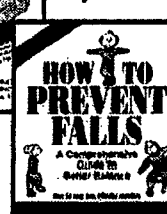


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