

# Christmas Appeal

## Appeal

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Sarah remarked that Catholic Charities extends her compassion that is otherwise hard to come by. "It's very sad that people judge, but very good that there's a place to go like Catholic Charities where they don't judge," she commented.

This year, Sarah was one of the few Christmas Appeal recipients who agreed to share her story with the *Catholic Courier*. She feels strongly about promoting Catholic Charities to people with similar struggles, she explained.

Catholic Charities' ongoing support, Sarah said, is helping her bounce back from some demoralizing setbacks she's endured over the years. Her first husband, she said, was a sex addict who drained her of her savings, in part, by constantly calling phone-sex hotlines. She added that her second husband mentally abused her and battered their son. After she and Dylan had left home, she came to discover that her ex-husband had sexually abused the boy.

Nowadays, Sarah said, several of her family members are enduring serious illnesses. She doesn't have a wide network of friends, she added, because other families do not want their children around Dylan when he acts out.

Yet Sarah said she maintains hope and optimism through her faith.

"Thank God we believe in God," she remarked.



Illustration by Linda Jeanne Rivers

She is a former atheist who "used to think God was an adult Santa Claus," but she recalled that God came into her life precisely when she needed him the most.

"I threw my hands up to God and asked the Lord to show himself to me, because I needed to know he was there," she said. Almost immediately, she added,

"I felt the warmth from head to toe."

From her own experiences, Sarah has also developed a new sensitivity toward people in need. "This was the biggest success of my life, being poor," she said. "Now I know there are people who have drug and alcohol problems, and are victims of spousal abuse and mental abuse. And they need help for it."

Sarah said she should be ready to go back to work soon, provided that things go well with her mother who was due to have surgery in early December. Sarah hopes that her next job will somehow involve serving the impoverished. At the very least, she said, she'd like to make

an ongoing volunteer commitment to such agencies as Catholic Charities.

Devoting her life to these causes, Sarah said, brings her much deeper satisfaction than the big paychecks ever did.

"To me, that's rich," she stated. "I can tell you, I'm a better person because of all this."

## 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 awaiting 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 Ecumenical Housing Foundation; and diocesan Urban Services.

## 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:

\*"Jim" works for \$7.55 an hour trying to support his wife and baby. He needed to replace two tires on his car for it to pass a state inspection. Catholic Charities of Livingston County paid \$83.67 for the tires.

\*"Dave," who is unemployed and has diabetes, had recently moved into the area and had no health insurance or doctor. Catholic Charities of Livingston County connected him with a doctor and spent \$26 for a prescription. The agency also helped him apply for Medicaid.

\*John, a man with developmental disabilities who lives in a family care home, needed help buying a plane ticket to Kansas when his mother died. The

family had decided to have her funeral and burial in Kansas. Catholic Charities Community Services helped him buy a ticket with \$76 in Christmas Appeal funds.

\*A woman who is infected with AIDS and is mother to five children needed diapers, laundry soap and hygiene products in a recent emergency situation. She receives food stamps but they are limited to assistance for food. Catholic Charities Community Services used \$20 in Christmas Appeal money to help out.

\*The Hispanic Migrant Ministry Brockport office used \$500 for food baskets for five families, totaling 26 people. These were farm workers whose regular work had ended but were remaining in the area. Many need to find a place to rent once their seasonal work has ended. The Wayne County Hispanic/Migrant Ministry used \$600 to similarly help 25 families. "We want to offer them some food and other basic items as a Christmas present from the Catholic community," Sister Luci Romero stated.

\*A young mother went to the hospi-

tal at the same time that her husband had to go to Puerto Rico for the sickness and death of a parent. Their three young children were left to the care of a friend, who did not know where to turn for help with food or money for the children. St. Michael Parish in Rochester used \$50 to provide food vouchers and school supplies.

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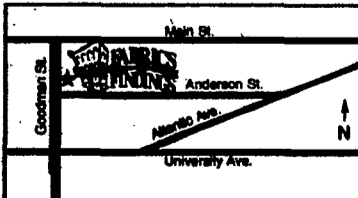
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