

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Officials reschedule flu clinics, for high-risk only

By Kathleen Schwar  
Assistant editor

The flu hasn't really arrived in our area yet, health officials say. That's good, because flu vaccine is hardly to be found. The Visiting Nurse Service cancelled 300 flu clinics that had been scheduled for this fall. In Clyde, Wayne County, a public clinic planned for Nov. 30 at St. John the Evangelist School was cancelled. In Elmira, Chemung County, St. Joseph's Hospital cancelled 14 flu shot clinics.

They all fell through due to a shortage of the vaccine. But some are again planned.

"Right now we are just trying to calm people down and get people into flu clinics," said Tam Cleveland, coordinator of the Monroe County Health Department's immunization program and Disease Control Unit. More vaccine was coming in, she said, but would still be restricted to high-risk people. At high risk of complications from influenza are people who are 65 and older; nursing-home residents; children and adults with chronic disorders such as asthma; people with suppressed immune systems; and pregnant women.

"If we get enough flu vaccine in, we'll hold clinics for the general public in January," Cleveland said. "What we are doing is targeting the people at the greatest risk for significant illness or death ... One of the difficulties we face is trying to figure out how many high-risk people there are."

The vaccine shortage extends across the nation. A new strain of flu (dead virus) was mixed with two others, but proved difficult to grow, she said. Why that was so, and why distribution has been so unpredictable is unclear, officials said.

"This has made all of us scratch our heads," Cleveland said, adding that she expects a full investigation at some point.

"Experts who study flu tell us that we will experience a pandemic of flu," Cleveland added. "So this vaccine shortage has been very important in determining what works in our community, how community organizations, public and private, can work together, and some work that needs to be done on the redistribution mechanism."

### Be cautious, not 'crazy'

Noting that many people may remain unvaccinated when flu season hits, Lisa Rosenbauer of the Health Ministry Network advises precautions be taken, but "You needn't go crazy!"

"Basic good hygiene, and some forethought, will be your best defense," she stated in a newsletter for her parish, Fairport's Bethlehem Lutheran. The network operates under the auspices of Mercy Center with the Aging.

"Don't be afraid to share the (sign of) peace during worship, or give your friends and loved ones a hug. Most of us have adequate immunity to those kinds of contact."

At the same time, she noted, "Colds and most viruses are usually passed through physical contact, like shaking hands or using the same water glass."

Wash your hands often, especially after sneezing or coughing, she said, adding that friction is important and that antibacterial soap will not provide added protection. Also, healthy eating habits, with lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, regular exercise and eight hours of sleep a night helps.

Flu is a respiratory, not stomach, illness, and is marked by a rapid onset of fever, sore throat, muscle aches, chills and headache.

Meanwhile, because the Monroe County Flu Coalition took charge, she and others noted, county nursing-home patients have been vaccinated.

Thanks to such coalition efforts as those of the VNS, which turned over 8,000 doses to the county medical society, some private physicians vaccinated high-risk patients. VNS previously handed over 5,000 doses for nursing homes.

The cost of those batches rose from \$24.99 per vial (10 doses) to \$46.99, according to Nancy Jones of VNS' customer relations and community outreach. Al-

though the reason for this isn't yet clear, she said, "We're getting gouged." HMOs and Medicare are covering patients' costs.

Wegmans, in cooperation with the flu coalition, restricted distribution of vaccine to high-risk individuals at its flu clinics this fall. To accommodate larger crowds it moved the few clinics it could hold to Irondequoit Mall and community centers.

In Monroe County approximately 9,000 people had received vaccines, as had several thousand more people in surrounding counties as of the first clinics, according to Jo Natale, Wegmans' manager of consumer services. The clinics did not begin until November, however, a month later than usual. The grocery store chain was planning four more clinics for the week of Dec. 11.

"Wegmans should be complimented for having their clinics," Jones said. The chain had contracted with Independent Nursing Care of Buffalo to administer the vaccine, which Wegmans itself did not buy, she said.

At St. Joseph's Hospital, Denis Sweeney said officials planned to hold a flu clinic 1-4:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14, at Horseheads Primary Care, and would publicize any further dates. The hospital had vaccinated

more than 526 of its 800-plus employees, at their request, and was in the process of vaccinating volunteers.

St. John's Parish rescheduled its clinic in the school hall for 1:30-3:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14, for those at high risk. And St. Patrick's Church in Cato, Cayuga County, planned to host a clinic Dec. 9.

St. James Hospital in Hornell has vaccinated its nursing-home residents and employees, according to Julie Hart, marketing director.

Officials noted that many caregivers and such municipal employees as police officers are yet to receive immunizations. Children, Cleveland said, "are the germ factories. ... You can imagine the teachers are like sitting ducks."

She encouraged people to take advantage of flu shots when available, and noted that peak seasons occur in February and March. It takes 10 to 14 days to develop immunity after getting a shot.

"So if you're vaccinated in January, it's still worthwhile," she said.

The Monroe County Flu Coalition has a hotline at 716/274-6189. In other counties residents may contact their health departments.



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

## Renaissance music

Mark Ross and Kathy Duhig of Musica Spei (Music of Hope), perform "A Child is Born: Renaissance Choral Music for the Christmas Season" at St. Anne Church in Rochester Dec. 9. Musica Spei, made up of nonprofessional Rochester singers, performs music ranging from Gregorian chant and medieval to early 17th century pieces.

### Assumption plans Mass for Fr. Charles Adams, OFM

Father Charles Adams, OFM, died Dec. 3, 2000, in St. Petersburg, Fla.

A memorial Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 16, at Church of the Assumption, 20 East Ave., Fairport. Father Adams, a Rochester native,

was assistant pastor at Assumption from 1983-96.

The *Catholic Courier* will carry a full obituary of Father Adams in a subsequent issue.

Merry Christmas from the dental office of:

Glen A. McIntyre, DDS



Michael J. Garrity, DDS

New Patients Always Welcome  
Most Insurances Accepted

Special In-House Treatment Includes:

Endodontics • Dentures • Partials  
Soft Tissue Management • Bleaching

Gift Ideas and Gift Certificates Always Available



381-9873

1825 Penfield Road • Four Corners of Penfield

## Catholics Serving the Community since 1912.



6 Empire Blvd. • Rochester, NY 14609  
Phone: 288-4664 • Fax: 482-0218

At John M. Hedges, we respect and value traditions. Traditions of trust and, of true personal interest in every respect, including the appreciation of the financial concerns of every family.

Please call or visit, we are available for:

- At need funeral service arrangements
- Pre-need arrangement consultation
- Irrevocable Trusts
- Memorial Service Arrangements

We are centrally located at Empire and Culver (across from St. Ambrose) to meet the needs of families from every section of Rochester and its suburbs.

Catholic owned and operated for nearly 100 years

John M. Hedges

Alan E. Giltner

Barbara R. Mull

John F. Foley