

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Survey finds number of uninsured to be low

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

Monroe County has a lower percentage of residents lacking health insurance than the nationwide percentage, according to survey results released Feb. 16 by the Rochester & Monroe County Partnership on the Uninsured, a group of area organizations and officials.

A follow-up study on health care provided to the uninsured is to be released later this month and was compiled, in part, with help from such Catholic health providers as St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center and Corpus Christi Center Inc., both in Rochester. St. Joseph's is a ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and Corpus is a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy.

According to the survey, conducted by Harris Interactive Inc., only 8 percent of Monroe County's residents lack health insurance, compared to 16.1 percent nationally. Meanwhile, 10 percent of Monroe County adults between the ages of 18 and 64 have no insurance, compared to 16.3 percent nationally. Most surprisingly, according to area health officials, only 2 percent of children in the county lack health insurance whereas 12.5 percent of the nation's children are uninsured.

Already, various community groups have met to discuss the survey and more meetings are slated.

Surveyors phoned more than 1,300

households in the county, and conducted face-to-face interviews with 100 phoneless households in Rochester. Among the people informed they might be contacted for the survey were clients of St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center, according to Sister Christine Wagner, SSJ, director.

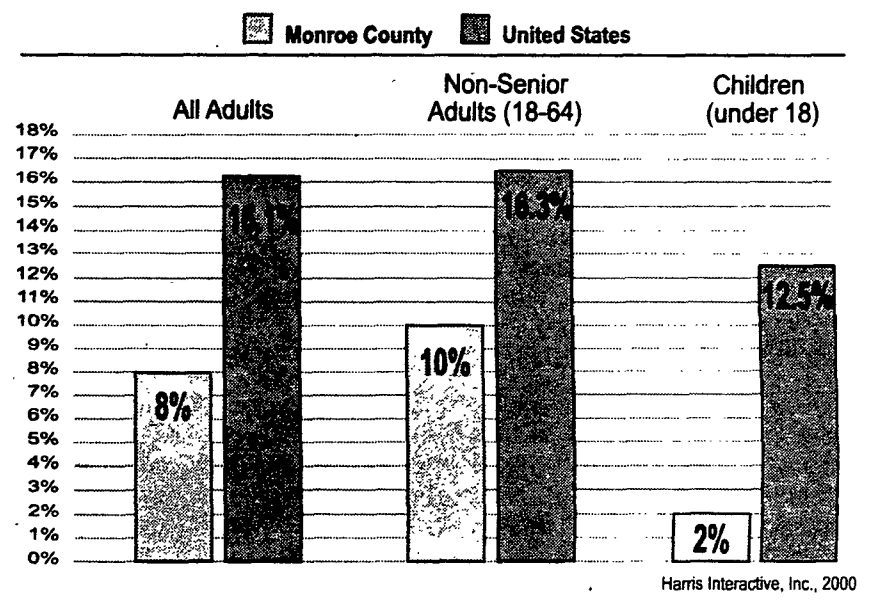
The survey apparently showed Monroe County looks pretty good when it comes to health insurance and access, according to Martha Bond, executive director of the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency. The independent, not-for-profit health planning group works on health issues in Monroe, Seneca, Livingston, Yates, Wayne, Ontario and Steuben counties.

"I think this is a very good news story with some significant challenges embedded in it," Bond said of the survey.

She pointed that while the survey results were better than expected, they still show significant numbers of people, particularly Hispanics, lack insurance. The survey showed 21 percent of Hispanic adults between 18 and 64 were uninsured compared to 10 percent of blacks and 8 percent of whites. Meanwhile, 31 percent of people in the county living at the federal poverty level were uninsured. A family of four earning \$17,050 a year or less is considered poor.

The survey was commissioned by the Partnership on the Uninsured, comprising Bond's organization along with the City of Rochester; Monroe County; Monroe Plan for Medical Care Inc., a Medicaid managed care plan involving 2,500 physicians; and Rochester Primary Care Network, a federally funded group of community health centers in the city. The partnership was formed in spring of 2000 with the goal of ensuring all Monroe County residents are continuously covered by an affordable health insurance plan and able to access appropriate health services when needed.

## Percentage of uninsured



For those who are not insured, or underinsured, health care presents a number of challenges, officials said. For example, of the 175 to 200 people who visit Corpus Christi Center weekly, 50 to 75 percent come for health care, said Sister Kathleen Kolb, RSM, the center's executive director. She pointed out that her center frequently sees adults in their 30s with chronic health problems like diabetes and hypertension who are hampered by their lack of access to regular care.

Sister Wagner said she sees similar problems at her center, which serves 3,500 to 4,000 people a year for health reasons. Sister Wagner said 99 percent of the people who come to St. Joseph lack insurance or are underinsured. She added that most who seek the center's physical and mental health services are the adult working poor, with incomes that may be little more than double the federal poverty level. She added that she wished the survey had examined the link between mental illnesses and physical illnesses because many of her clients' mental and emotional states are exacerbated by their physical problems and their in-

ability to pay for treatment.

"They're having to make serious decisions about how to spend resources," she said, pointing out that medical care often loses out to rent and food. "When these kinds of stresses enter their life, they need psychological support."

Bond said one hope she had was that the survey data encourages more efforts to publicize Medicaid among those unaware they may be eligible. Sister Wagner added that she hoped more physicians and other health-care workers who volunteer their free time to work with their poor might be able to get breaks on their malpractice insurance, as some already do. Such discounts might encourage more health-care workers to consider volunteering, she said.

Like Sister Wagner and Bond, Sister Kolb was impressed with the low numbers of uninsured the study found, but added this note for community leaders:

"I just hope because the numbers of uninsured are not higher, that they don't say it's not that bad of a problem because, if you don't have health insurance, it's a bad problem."

## Plan calls for bi-racial talks

Bishop Matthew H. Clark is among community leaders who will be paired through the City of Rochester's new Bi-Racial Partnerships for Community Progress program. Paired individuals will include Anglo-Americans, African-Americans, Latinos, Asians and members of other ethnic groups, and will meet throughout the year.

The program is an outgrowth of the Task Force on Race and Ethnicity, formed by Rochester Mayor William A. Johnson Jr. in 1999. The task force studied ways to help bridge philosophical and cultural barriers among ethnic and racial groups, according to the mayor's Feb. 15 press release.

Pairing individuals "was an idea that came in the relationship between the mayor and his task force," said the Rev. Kenneth Dean, special assistant to the mayor. "The program is uniquely designed to fit Rochester."

Also asked to take part was Sister Janet Korn, RSM, Catholic Charities' social justice awareness coordinator. She noted that she will be contacting parishes for prayer support, as requested by Rev. Dean.

In three phases, bi-racial pairings will be made between: leaders of churches, corporations, higher learning institutions and other organizations; then, among middle-level leaders, executives and other "people of influence"; and then among the general population, Rev. Dean said.

Also among the 78 initial participants are Episcopal Bishop Jack McKehey, Rabbi Laurence Kotok, St. John Fisher President Katherine Keough, the Rev. Norwell Goff of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Rochester Police Chief Robert Duffy, William Carpenter of Bausch & Lomb, Thomas Jackson of University of Rochester, and Sister Beth LeValley, SSJ.

## Cathedral establishes renovation committee

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

With establishment of a core committee and the scheduling of several meetings in upcoming weeks, plans are moving forward for Sacred Heart Cathedral's renovation project.

The core committee, composed of Sacred Heart parishioners and people belonging to other parishes, was to hold its first meeting Feb. 28 at the cathedral. Members were to meet with Father Richard Vosko, a priest from the Albany Diocese who is serving as liturgical design consultant for the project. Father John Mulligan, Sacred Heart's pastor, said Father Vosko was "to orient the committee" on his overall philosophy of the planned renovation.

Father Mulligan noted that the core committee consists of two co-chairpersons (one from Sacred Heart and one from the Rochester Diocese); himself; a diocesan representative; and co-chairs of seven subcommittees. Those subcommittees include architect selection; art and furnishing; music and instrument; prayer and worship; logistics and hospitality; publicity and communications; and fundraising.

Father Mulligan declined to name the

committee members, saying that as of press time on Feb. 26, one committee spot was still being finalized.

"We've been very pleased with the response. There's been a real willingness of the people to come forward," said Father Mulligan, who also serves as a diocesan vicar general.

The core committee's next action will be to conduct interviews of potential architects in mid-March. From there, Father Vosko is set to return to the Rochester Diocese April 25, to speak about the cathedral renovation at the annual priests' convocation.

Father Vosko will also hold public meetings in the diocese May 7-9 to offer "an overview of the Christian worship space and the Cathedral tradition along with an overview of our cathedral projects," according to Father Mulligan. The first of these meetings is expected to take place at Sacred Heart.

Sacred Heart Cathedral is located at 296 Flower City Park, on Rochester's northwest side. Its renovation, a means of honoring Bishop Matthew H. Clark's 25th anniversary as Rochester's bishop in 2004, was announced last fall. Renovation plans would include the sound system; lighting and wiring; baptismal area; penance areas;

handicap access; a social gathering space; bathrooms; bishop's chair; and floor plan.

Specific proposals for the renovation will not be announced until late 2001 or early 2002, Father Mulligan stated. He also said that no projected cost or fundraising strategies have yet been determined.

The planned renovation has spurred protests led by a group known as the Sacred Heart Cathedral Preservation Committee. Members feel the project would incur unnecessary costs, and that proposed changes do not correspond with what they believe are Catholic Church guidelines.

A chief bone of contention is the possibility of Sacred Heart's tabernacle being moved from the center of the altar. Father Mulligan has stated that no Vatican stipulation prohibits such an action. Sacred Heart's pastor has also said that all cathedral renovations would be done in accordance with church norms.

The protest group was founded by Michael Brennan, who only joined Sacred Heart Parish this past fall. The group has staged demonstrations outside the cathedral and circulated a petition opposing the renovation. Father Mulligan declined to comment on the protesters.



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