

PARENTING

Church favors subsidized day care

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Nicole Marinelli said there's no way she could hold down a full-time job without child care that's subsidized through a program administered by the Monroe County Department of Social Services. She's the single mother of 4-year-old twin boys and a 9-year-old girl.

An administrative assistant at a Rochester plastics company, Marinelli said she depends on her New York State-funded subsidy to pay for child care at Generations Child Care. The agency has four sites in Rochester; her children go to the site located in the former Most Precious Blood School building on Stenson Street. Another Generations site is located in the former Holy Ghost School building in Gates. Marinelli is a parishioner at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Eighty-five percent of Generations' clients use subsidized care at the Stenson Street site, according to Kathy A. LeFrois, executive director of Generations Child Care. The unsubsidized cost of care for one child alone can run as high as \$180 weekly, she said. But subsidized child care enables Marinelli to keep working, save money, and stay off public assistance, the mother said. She said she pays \$54 a week for child care.

"I support myself and my family, and that allows me to have bigger dreams for my future and my children's future," Marinelli said.

Marinelli is lucky enough to qualify for subsidized aid, but the New York State Catholic Conference wants more parents like her to benefit from subsidized child care. The conference is working with such groups as the Diocese of Rochester's Public Policy Committee to promote an increase in funding for child care subsidies. The Diocesan Public Policy Committee has joined the conference's statewide effort to gather signatures on legislative petitions.

The "Support for Working Families Campaign" petitions are being made available at various parishes after weekend Masses this month. The public policy committee has provided parish leaders with bulletin articles and pulpit announcements as well. Information on the campaign is available on the Web at http://www.dor.org/fall_advocacy.htm.

"The supply of quality, affordable child care is seriously inadequate in our communities ...," the petition reads. "Therefore, I call on you to invest in our children by allocating adequate state funding to help parents (especially low income) pay for high quality child care; help providers cover operating costs and pay child care workers a living wage."

The Catholic conference used several statistics to buttress its case in favor of expanding subsidized day care. For example, it cited the fact that families with



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer
Shanette Simmons helps 2-year-olds Bruce Newton and Jada Lewis piece together a puzzle in the Toddler II class Sept. 5. Simmons is assistant director of the Generations Child Care center at the school of Most Precious Blood Parish.

two children spend approximately 30 percent of their budget for child care. The conference also noted that half of U.S. families earn less than \$35,000 a year.

"While some parents can choose to have one parent stay at home to care for their children, many working parents have no choice — they must work," the conference stated.

David Hamilton, the state conference's associate director, said the conference would like the state to increase the current income eligibility standard for a subsidy from twice that of the federal poverty level to 2.75 times the poverty level. (The poverty level is \$17,650 annual income for a family of four.) Additionally, he said, the state's Catholic leaders are promoting an increase in funding for child-care workers' wages and child-care providers' operating costs.

LeFrois said she would welcome an increase in wage subsidies. She pointed out that a child-care worker with a bachelor's degree may start out at only \$8.50 an hour with her agency.

"You can go to Wal-Mart and stack shelves for \$10 an hour ...," she said.

According to a number of child-care experts, low pay leads to turnover of as much as one-third of all the employees at child-care centers yearly throughout the state. Last year, the state did create a \$40 million bonus program that rewarded workers who stayed for at least one year at an agency. But child-care advocates say more money is needed if child-care workers are to be kept from leaving for such greener economic pastures as schools.

The Catholic conference's campaign echoes the demands of the "Child Care That Works" campaign currently being

promoted by a coalition of agencies and other groups throughout the state. In brief, "Child Care That Works" wants the state to provide \$177 million more in new child care subsidies, \$75 million in compensation subsidies, and \$40 million for construction and renovation of care facilities.

The diocese won't know how successful its own campaign has been until after it starts receiving petitions from parishes, according to Judy Taylor, communications manager for the Diocesan Office of the Director of Catholic Charities. She added that it's likely completed petitions will be delivered to the offices of various state legislators located in the diocese.

Kathy Dubel, justice and peace director for Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier in Elmira, said that at least 15 of the 35 parishes in the counties of Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tompkins and Tioga have contacted her office regarding the campaign. She added that some parishes may promote the campaign later this fall after dealing with other issues.

One parish that has joined the campaign is Our Lady Queen of Peace in Brighton, according to Sharon A. Dickman, coordinator of the parish's social ministry committee. Dickman said the Catholic Church's campaign to relieve Third World debt in 2000 was popular at the parish, and a petition on the issue garnered 400-500 signatures. She added that she is therefore optimistic that an issue like subsidized day care may draw even better support.

"I think the hard part of Third World debt was trying to connect it with the local community," she said. "There's more of a direct connection with child care and people's needs."

Family Events

● **SAT, SEP. 15 — Drama:** "A Circle of Friends: An Abolitionists' Tour of Mt. Hope Cemetery in 1860"; relive Rochester's involvement in the Underground Railroad; North Gate House, Mt. Hope Cemetery, 791 Mt. Hope Ave., Rochester; 10, 11:30 a.m.; \$10 adults; \$5 children 8-18; for adults and children ages 8 and up; reservations recommended; 716/271-4552, ext. 342.

● **SAT, SEP. 15 — Coastal cleanup:** sponsored by Water Education Collaborative at Rochester Museum & Science Center; cleanup locations: Genesee Valley Park, Durand Eastman Beach, Turning Point Park, Seth Green fishing site in Maplewood Park area; 9 a.m.-noon; complimentary breakfast; lunch and entertainment at Durand Eastman Park noon; to register call Margit Brazda 716/271-4552, ext. 320.

● **SAT, SEP. 22 — Program:** "Fairies and Other Magical Beings"; story and craft; Helen McGraw Branch, Irondequoit Public Library, 2180 E. Ridge Rd., Rochester; 2 p.m.; free; to register call 716/336-6060.

● **SAT, SEP. 22 — Family fun:** "Truckloads of Fun"; climb aboard a real fire truck, U.S. Postal Service truck, school bus, Monroe County Bookmobile and more; Strong Museum, One Manhattan Sq., Rochester; 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; free with regular museum admission; \$6 adults; \$5 seniors; \$4 children 3-17, under 3 free; 716/263-2702.

● **SEP. 22, 29 — Make a scarecrow:** bring old clothes, tools, stuffing and pumpkin for head provided; Cumming Nature Center, 6472 Gulick Rd., Naples; 1-3 p.m.; \$3 per scarecrow plus admission; adults \$4; students K-12 \$1.50; reservations required; also Oct. 6, 13, 20; 716/374-6160.


● **SUN, SEP. 23 — Rail excursion:** "Fall Foliage Express" special family fare day; sponsored by National Railway Historical Society; 34-mile ride from Sodus to Newark; 11:30 a.m.-2:15 p.m.; adults \$10, children \$3; to order tickets call 716/224-0581; also on sale 10:30 a.m. day of trip.

● **SUN, SEP. 23 — Concert:** Pangaia Steel Band; Folk Festival, Hobart & William Smith Colleges; Rts. 5 & 20, Geneva; 1:50 p.m.; free; 716/554-4011 or visit website www.pangaiasteelband.com.

Do You Have School Age Children?
Would Your Child Benefit From a Full Day Kindergarten?
BATES-RICH BEGINNINGS CHILD CARE
Now offers Full Day Kindergarten for younger 5 year olds or children who are ready for a longer school day.
Smaller groups foster early development of Kindergarten skills!
In addition to our wrap program for grades 1 to 3, Bates-Rich has added a wrap program exclusively for older children in grades 3-5!
We also offer wrap care for children in kindergarten thru Grade 5.
Call 244-3650 for details or enrollment information!
Accredited Center, Registered NYS Dept. of Education.


PASSANTINO SPORTS
School, Team & Corporate Apparel
692 Titus Avenue
544-9077

CAPEZIO DANCE SHOES SALE
Buy one pair, and get one half-price of equal or lesser value
(Sale ends September 30, 2001)
"Rochester's Team Sports Specialist"

Wegmans  now available at select stores

Your home for family entertainment!
try the convenience of...

5* DAY RENTALS
on every movie or game in the store, including new releases!



*3 Day rentals on Popular Hit and Catalog only at Closing store