

DIOCESAN NEWS

Efforts raise sizable sums for disaster victims

Parishes and schools began collecting money for disaster relief soon after the Sept. 11 attacks in New York City and at the Pentagon. Among those the *Catholic Courier* has heard from are:

★ The children of **Ss. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Catholic School** in Auburn contributed enough personal size toiletries to fill 235 bags for rescue workers. They contained a comb, toothbrush, toothpaste, razor, shaving cream, deodorant and other supplies. The school had contacted Sen. Hillary Clinton's office for the suggestion, and Nichole Murley, a representative for Sen. Clinton, came to pick up the items for distribution. Parents and Auburn Memorial Hospital also contributed boxes of items.

★ **Holy Rosary School** fourth- and fifth-grade teachers Carissa Dibble and Nicole Perry had all grades and teachers at the Rochester school write letters to corresponding grade levels at schools in New York City.

★ Parishioners of **St. Margaret Mary Parish**, Irondequoit, collected \$3,885 in their second collection Sept. 16 for Catholic Charities USA to use toward disaster relief in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

★ **St. Stephen's Parish**, Geneva, hosted a community service Sept. 11 where \$1,409 was collected for disaster relief. On the day of prayer declared for Sept. 14, adults and children packed the church, where the congregation gave \$1,453, which grew to \$1,556 by the end of the weekend.

★ **St. Rita School**, Webster, tithed \$2,500 from its Sept. 29 fall fundraiser, a marathon at North Ponds Park. The mon-



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Third-grader Monica Cintron and other students at Holy Rosary School, Rochester, "lend a hand" — red, white and blue handprints on school windows — as a sign of support for people in New York and Washington, D.C.

ey will go to Catholic Charities for relief efforts. They also were writing to U.S. troops in England, because one of the teacher's sons is stationed there.

★ **St. Agnes School**, Avon, raised \$1,397.08 through a penny drive. That figure was doubled to \$2,794.16 after the local HSBC Bank pledged to match whatever amount the students raised. Proceeds will benefit the American Red Cross, said Dr. Gerald Benjamin, school principal. He noted that the penny drive also spurred a parishwide drive at St. Agnes.

Benjamin said the school collection generated "incredible statistics": 822 rolls

of pennies, 30 rolls of quarters, 56 rolls of dimes and 49 rolls of nickels. The coins' total weight, he said, was 276 pounds.

This all started when one of my fourth-graders, Emily Savino, wrote me a wonderful letter telling me she hoped we could initiate a penny drive," he remarked. "The children are feeling good about their contributions. I assured them whether they gave a penny or 100 pennies, the act of thinking of others was more important than the money they could contribute."

★ Students at **St. John the Evangelist School**, Spencerport, brought in jars of pennies and spare change during the



A third-grader puts his handprint on the window of his classroom at Holy Rosary.

week of Sept. 17-21 to collect for the American Red Cross Disaster Fund. The school wrote a check of \$261.60, equal to the amount of change collected, to the fund. Additionally, the school's first-graders wrote a letter of condolence and support to Mayor Rudolph Guiliani of New York City, and invited him to come to the school someday so that they could cheer him up.

★ Students at **Siena Catholic Academy** in Brighton collected \$1,100 for the American Red Cross from Sept. 12-15. The students sacrificed money that would have been spent on lunch treats, and also collected funds from friends, family and neighbors. Additionally, some of the school's students helped load up trucks with clothing, blankets and pillows for relief workers in New York City that were sent from various sites in Monroe County.

★ Students at **St. Michael's School** in Newark had collected more than \$890 in funds by Oct. 1 for relief efforts in New York City. The students planned to continue collecting funds through Oct. 4.

Additionally, a third-grade class wrote letters of support to third-graders at St. Joseph's School in Manhattan. Finally, **Hannah Steensma**, an eighth-grader, asked the school if she could organize a rally around the school's flag pole, and the rally took place Sept. 19. Students sang patriotic songs and prayed, and fifth-grader **William Guchone** closed the ceremony by playing taps on his harmonica.

—Staff reports

Keep fear in check, counseling expert says

By Wendy Strauss
Guest contributor

We are now more than two weeks past the tragic and devastating events of Sept. 11. How should we be feeling at this point in time?

The answer to that question is not crystal clear or easy. After all, our emotions are as varied and individual as are the American people. Additionally, some of us were impacted directly because we knew someone lost in the attack or its aftermath, while others of us were touched indirectly.

However, none of us is immune to the intense emotions that these terrible acts wrought. So it is perfectly normal, as you read this newspaper today, to be fearful and/or "on edge." It is important, though,

to realize that fear hampers healing. While in many areas of the world people live in a perpetual state of trauma, that has not been the case for Americans. So we need to work together to promote healing for our loved ones and ourselves. How do we do that?

• In the months to come, pay attention, watch and listen to those people you know well so that you can be aware of behavior that isn't "normal" for them. Is your normally easygoing spouse short-tempered? Is your best friend not eating or having trouble sleeping? Is your co-worker experiencing loss of concentration or becoming socially withdrawn? While these reactions are normal now, a few weeks down the road they could be a signal that help is needed.

• People need to talk about this — some-

times over and over — so be accessible and willing to listen. Talking about our emotions helps us process the impact. Different cultures have different traditions they follow to help deal with "everyday trauma" like the death of an elderly parent or spouse. In Christian faiths, wakes may be held to honor the deceased and to comfort surviving loved ones. For Catholics, a requiem Mass is an important tradition and a significant part of the burial rites. In the Jewish faith, people sit shiva for seven days, again out of honor and respect and the need for comfort. In the Muslim culture, mourning is limited to a three-day period and the community "entertains" the family to take their minds off their loss. The emotional and physiological effects we're experiencing as a result of the attack are very similar and require a similar grieving process.

• Take care of yourself. Now is not the time to make major, life-altering decisions. Maintain a normal routine as much as possible. In times of stress, we are more vulnerable to illness, so exercise and eat right to keep your immune system strong. Take time to play and enjoy life with your family and friends. Laugh — it truly is good medicine.

I'm sure this is not the first time you've read or heard this type of information since the tragedy occurred. Nor should it be the last. The healing process will be long and supporting one another will be critical.

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Strauss is director of EAP and counseling for the Catholic Family Center, Rochester.

'Works of Love' registration deadline set for Oct. 8

School students and other groups interested in taking part in Catholic Charities' first "Works of Love" program have until Oct. 8 to register. Works of Love week runs from Oct. 21 through 27.

Ruth Putnam, coordinator, may be reached at 716/328-3228 or 800/388-7177, ext. 366, to register or for ideas.

The program is designed to help educators incorporate Catholic social teaching into their curriculum, by

linking service components to issues of justice. A religious education class at Holy Ghost Parish in Gates kicked off Works of Love this summer by gathering personal items for people who had participated in Restart Substance Abuse Services and were starting new homes.

The program also is open to faith formation programs, youth and adult groups and parish social ministry committees, and others interested.

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