## Appeal helps woman start anew

By Kathleen Schwar Assistant editor

ROCHESTER — A stroke or something similar slowed Phyllis Gordon, sent her into debt and depression, and made her dependent on others' goodwill for a time.

But her creative mind goes on its merry way. And the George Eastman House is grateful because that compels Gordon to build a gingefbread house each year for its auction fundraiser, "Sweet Creations."

A self-described military brat raised in Europe, Gordon married an Air Force officer and had four children. She held several jobs to help her husband further his education. She was a clerk at Wegmans and

cooked at a restaurant. In 1985 she and her husband divorced. On her own for the first time, she trained to become a chef and in the 1990s started a catering business.

She also has a "Funky Finery" business, creating clothes of bygone years, and makes fragrant soaps.

In April 2000 Gordon suffered what doctors think was a stroke. Paralyzed on the left side of her face, she can't close her left eye. She has limited ability to swallow, weakness along her left side, and a limp. She works hard at rehabilitation but various other side effects still disturb her.

Plus, she can't enjoy meals, such as her favorite, spaghetti. It's just hard for her to keep the food in her mouth.

Last year – just seven months after her stroke – she submitted for the Eastman event a "House of Hope."

She had submitted her first houses as a student of the Rochester Educational Opportunity Center, working with Canopy's Restaurant. For her House of Hope, she explained how she tucked M&Ms as a surprise into trees set atop brownies; made a nougat and Tootsie Roll Rudolph on the roof; put bubble-gum balls on light posts; and sided the house with pecans, black walnuts and macadamia nuts.

"I love beauty," she said. "I don't scrimp on my gingerbread houses." A relative as far as Texas sends her pecans.

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Andrea Dixon/Staff photographe

Phyllis Gordon (right) laughs with caseworker Bobbi McGarrity, visiting Gordon's home in Rochester.



## Catholic Courier

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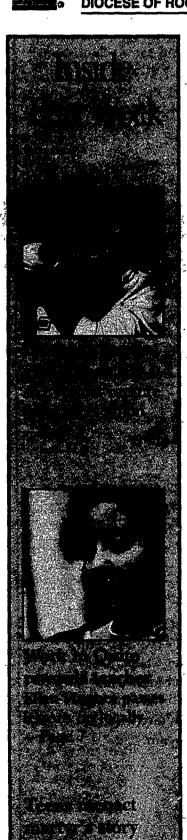
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## Will Sept. 11 affect giving?

As the nation's families gather to celebrate Thanksgiving, charities wonder if this year's compation with reliant attacks may lead than it has been throughout the bountiful past decade. The economy is no longer booming, while the

war on terrorism is.

Already nervous about how the economic downturn might affect their donations level this year, charity organizations are now also concerned that the nation's preoccupation with relief efforts in New York City after the Sept. 11 attacks may lead donors to give less to traditional charities.

Sister of St. Joseph Barbara Kuhn, director of St. Peter's Kitchen, a daily free-meal ministry of Ss. Peter and Paul Parish, Rochester, said she has seen a drop-off in donations since Sept. 11. The kitchen, which serves about 200 individuals each day, conducts its fundraising campaign each year from the end of October to the end of December. As of mid-November last year, the kitchen had raised 39 percent of its goal. This year, she said, the kitchen has only raised 27 percent of its \$45,000 goal.

"People have only so many dollars for charity," she said, noting she suspected Sept. 11 played a part in the donation drop-off. "There was this great need there in New York, and that's where they sent the money."

This comes at a time when the kitchen has seen an increase of 5 to 10 percent in the number of people coming to its lunches since last year, she said. However, she was optimistic that her kitchen would survive both the Sept. 11-related donation drop-off and the increased demand.

"If we get in a crisis situation, I'm sure folks would respond. That's the way in Rochester."

## National trends

After the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Americans were quick to pull out their wallets for everything from i mprompt u neighborhood car washes to celebrity-sponsored telethons, raising billions of dollars for the recovery efforts and Continued on page 10