Christmas Appeal

Appeal assists people low on options

By Mike Latona Staff writer

When a 31-year-old single mother became ill and lost work and wages, the Samaritan Center of Elmira provided \$425 for rent for her and her daughter, 6, who risked eviction.

PAGE 12 THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2001

When a young working mom had to move - her landlord refused to correct violations in her apartment and also had sprayed rodent repellent when her infant was in the home – Catholic Family Center provided \$325 for a security deposit and first month's rent in a new home.

Many times, Catholic the Courier/Catholic Charities Christmas Appeal benefits those who feel there's nowhere else to turn. These examples, as well as smaller allocations for such basic items as work shoes, are among hundreds of cases handled throughout the year.

Since February, Nancy Annibale, caseworker for Cayuga County's branch of Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes, has distributed Christmas Appeal funds to 30 families, mostly in allotments of \$25 to \$50.

"One of the things I hear a lot is, we were able to help them when they weren't able to get the help somewhere else," Annibale said. "I've heard that many, many times from people."

She even gets that reaction for a gesture as seemingly simple as allotting gas money for work or appointments. "They'll say, 'If you hadn't done that, what would I have done?" " Annibale remarked.

Annibale said that Christmas Appeal funds in Cavuga County have also gone toward purchasing prescriptions; a used retrigerator; supplies for babies; and a wait-



ress uniform. The uniform's cost was \$32 - not an exorbitant amount to some people, but Annibale noted that the recipient 'couldn't have started her job without it."

Those who seek Christmas Appeal assistance, Annibale said, have included single mothers; men or women working one or two jobs but who still can't make ends meet; and people who are awaiting financial assistance from other sources, such as government programs or child support.

"All they need is that bridge for a month, a month and a half," said Laurie Trojnor, director of Catholic Charities' Cayuga office.

Mercy Sister Nancy O'Brien, director of rural outreach for Catholic Charities of Livingston County, said the Christmas Appeal has helped people in her area who don't have medical insurance; those who have insurance but can't afford the co-payments; who need money for home repairs; or who need money for car insurance, car repairs or fuel. "Those are probably the main things over the last few months," Sister O'Brien said.

Sister O'Brien noted that the Christmas Appeal, unlike many other forms of charitable assistance, doesn't require recipients to go through extensive red tape.

"Not being a government agency, we

don't have restrictions if they don't fit (a set of criteria)," Sister O'Brien said.

Annibale added that the Christmas Appeal also doesn't impose restrictions regarding the recipients' personal lives. "If you tell a person they're living bad, they're going to say 'I'm bad' and not find strengths," she commented. "You have to find the strengths in the family. You can't say what's wrong with them, you have to say what's right with them."

"For the most part, everybody's trying," Trojnor said. "They don't want to call for assistance, but things will get a lot worse if they don't."

Trojnor and Annibale said they strive to go a step or two beyond allotting Christmas Appeal funds. They refer recipients to other organizations and programs, and offer practical advice toward better money management. "It's more that follow-up - how are you going to pay (your bills) the next month?" Trojnor remarked.

Every once in a while, Sister O'Brien said, she hears from people who have turned the corner financially, but haven't forgotten how the Christmas Appeal helped them. One such person recently wrote to Sister O'Brien, recalling how Christmas Appeal funds provided Christmas gifts for her family last year.

"Her children had said to her, 'Oh Mommy, we're going to have Christmas after all," Sister O'Brien said.

What is the Christmas Appeal?

It is a cooperative effort of sthe Catholu Course and diocesan Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Rochester to raise funds for people in desperaie

financial crisis For the past 52 years, the appeal has enabled the Catholic community to help thousands of people in 12 counties to help meet life's basic needs. Christmas Appeal funds have

been there for them when no other sources of aid were available.

Who benefits from it?

The Christmas Appeal helps indi viduals and families in short-term financial crises. These are people who

have no financial resources and are either awaiting or are ineligible for assistance through other sources.

How does it work?

Appeal proceeds are allocated to the emergency funds of the following diocesan agencies: Catholic Family Center, Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes; Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier; Catholic Charities of Livingston County outreach; Catholic Charities Community Services; Bishop Sheen Ecumenical

Housing Foundation, and diocesan Urban Services.

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ome and visit our beautiful South 45 garden section, a garden-like setting of two, three and four grave lots. including a raised-lawn crypt area highlighted by a bronze statue of Christ fallen under his cross



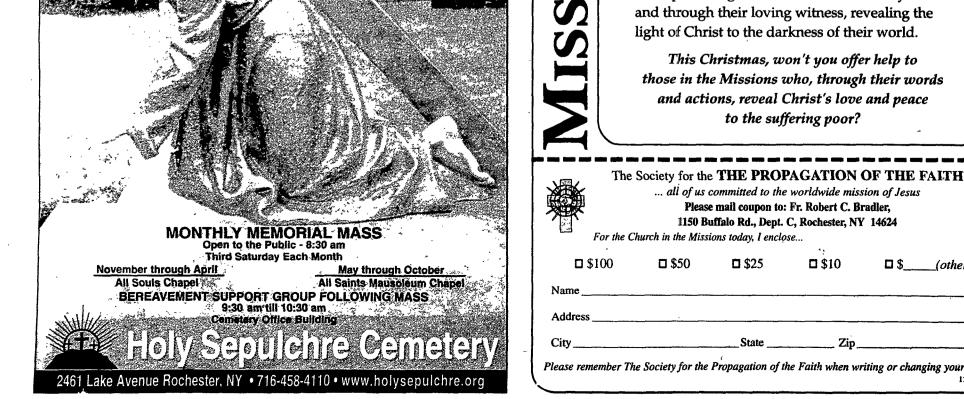
Tn a slum in Nairobi in Kenya, some 50,000 Lstreet children between the ages of 6 and 16

live in holes in the ground; their roof: a sheet of plastic. Lay catechists in the area are trying to change all

that. With help

through the Propagation of the Faith, they have opened a house and school for these young-

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