

DIOCESAN NEWS

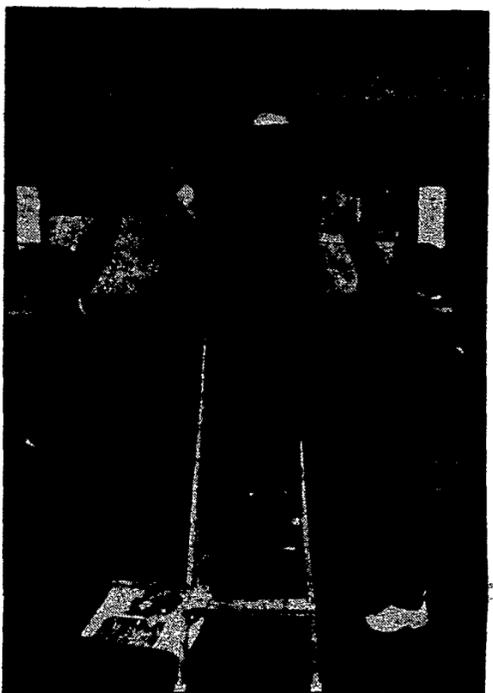


Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

A time for kindness

(Above) Arthur Knapp (left), 12, and Robert "Max" Hanna, 13, make a poster for the Kindness and Justice Challenge at Siena Catholic Academy in Brighton Jan. 18. The two-week program honors Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other advocates for justice.

(At right, from left) Montgomery Bryant, 13, Peter DiCamillo, 14, and Phillip Grotto, 13, hang signs that say "Our Garden of Good Intentions" outside Katherine Roth's classroom Jan. 18. Students were to practice an act of kindness every day.



City ministry incorporated

By Kathleen Schwar
Assistant editor

The House of Mercy, a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy since 1985, has been separately incorporated and is no longer sponsored by the congregation.

The house, at 725 Hudson Ave., Rochester, continues to be run by Sister Grace Miller. Her brother, Father Neil Miller, is president of the board.

A letter from the leadership of the Sisters of Mercy stated, "However, we will continue to support this ministry through our commissioning of sisters to minister there, identifying potential volunteers for the ministry and through financial contributions, when possible."

The congregation's leadership sent the letter in early December to the *Catholic Courier* and individuals and organizations with which the ministry has had a relationship.

"It seemed better from all perspectives (that) we separately incorporate the ministry so that it can continue, and continue to do its wonderful work," Sister Sheila Stevenson, congregation president, told the *Courier*. "And we don't have to worry in some ways about the accountabilities to the Sisters of Mercy."

Such accountabilities are not only financial, but also deal with policies and practices, she said.

The house was begun in the inner-city as a drop-in, outreach center for the poor. About four years ago it experienced conflicts with Monroe County and the City of Rochester and faced possible shut-down. However, the city

reached a deal with the House of Mercy that allows the ministry to shelter up to 19 homeless people overnight.

The ministry previously was located on the city's Central Park, where it received more than 2,000 visits a month. Visits to the current facility on Hudson Avenue, have increased to more than 4,000 a month, Sister Miller said.

She said clients visit "for survival needs," including food, shelter and help with legal problems. "With welfare reform, it's worse," Sister Miller said. "We have the working poor coming to us."

She acknowledged having refused to turn over sums of money for her congregation to administer, saying the donations must go toward immediate needs.

"I wanted to protect the donors," Sister Miller said, adding that some donors wanted their money to go directly to the House of Mercy. "And I wanted to protect names; I wouldn't give (the congregation) the donors' list."

The House of Mercy has a budget of about \$150,000, she said. Donations come from churches and individuals, including some gifts received through the United Way donor-option program.

Sister Miller said incorporating separately was "forced" on her and her board. "We were hurt with the way it came down," she said. "I know what they are saying, but I think it's more than what they are saying."

Sister Stevenson commented, "The ministry itself is a good ministry. It serves a population of people not being served by other agencies or ministries within Rochester. We believe in that."

Economy, costs force hospital to lay off 25

By Kathleen Schwar
Assistant editor

St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira eliminated 25 positions Jan. 16, laying off 25 employees, and is undertaking reductions in non-labor costs as well.

"Locally and throughout New York State numerous hospitals have had to implement very similar cost reduction plans within the last several months," the hospital's president, Sister Marie Castagnaro, SSJ, stated in a Jan. 16 news release.

The 295-bed hospital has experienced several layoffs through the years, noted Denis Sweeney, director of marketing/community development. "St. Joseph's always finds a way to rebound, to come back. We're confident, hopeful that will be the case here."

The impact of the cuts remained undetermined, however, noted Mark Genovese, spokesman for the New York State Teachers Association. He said of eight registered nurses whose positions were cut, only three have left the hospital. Five were able to claim other positions in the hospital. The union allows nurses to bump others from positions they can fill.

However, Genovese said, "It's not good when you start chipping away at your patient-care work force."

"Our general comment is it seems to be that some of these (25) positions affect patient care," Genovese said. "They are patient-care provider titles. We consider that alarming because a hospital is in the business of providing patient care."

Although the hospital declined to list the positions being eliminated, Genovese said they include transport aide, orthopedic technician and administrative assistant positions, one nurse manager, a pharmacy technical aid, an audio-visual worker, and LPN and aide positions. In addition, he said, it appeared the cardiac rehabilitation services unit would be eliminated.

If the hospital eliminates lower-level support positions, Genovese said, more work falls to registered nurses. And if it eliminates managerial nurse positions, nurses also would miss that support, he said.

Sweeney said the intent was to avoid affecting patient care, but rather to target positions in middle management, department heads and support personnel throughout the hospital.

He noted the hospital's bad debt and charity-care costs had risen from about \$2.3 million in 1996 to almost \$3 million in 2000. A figure for 2001 was not yet available.

Chemung County reported an unemployment rate of 6 percent in November 2001, and a loss of 600 jobs during the previous year, Sweeney said, citing New York state Department of Labor figures. Across New York, unemployment had risen from 4.4 percent in July to 5.5 percent in November.

Layoffs have hit a major county employer, Hardinge Inc., a major manufacturer of metal cutting produces for cars and other industries. Hardinge cut 40 percent of its local work force since June. Other area hospitals also announced layoffs.

Such economic conditions caused St. Joseph's bad debt/charity costs to rise, the hospital stated. Other factors cited in announcing the cost-reduction plan were rising costs of supplies, pharmaceuticals and technology; and continued cuts in reimbursement for Medicare and Medicaid, which make up more than 65 percent of its patient revenue.

"St. Joseph's has always had a reputation of providing quality healthcare at an affordable price," Sister Castagnaro said in the statement. "We offer only high quality programs and services to the residents of our community and we will continue to do this during these turbulent times."

Black congress day planned

The Diocese of Rochester will sponsor a Morning of Reflection for African-American Catholics on Saturday, Jan. 26, at St. Monica's Church, 831 Genesee St., Rochester.

African-American Catholics in the diocese will be welcomed for prayer, dialogue and presentations in preparation for the National Black Catholic Congress IX in Chicago Aug. 29-Sept. 1.

Assisting at the reflection will be Brenda Easley Webb, regional coordinator for the congress and director for the Buffalo diocesan Office of Black Ministry, and Father Michael Upson, Rochester diocesan coordinator for the congress and administrator of Immaculate Conception Parish, Rochester.

"African-Americans, Africans living in America and persons from the Caribbean Islands, are a great richness in

our local Catholic Church," stated Bernard Grizard, associate director of diocesan Parish Support Ministries. "As we prepare for the National Black Catholic Congress, we are re-affirming the ongoing efforts to respond to the need for evangelization and inculturation of the Church in the Black Catholic Community."

The congress will help achieve that goal, he noted.

The diocese expects 20 delegates — primarily from St. Monica, Immaculate Conception and St. Bridget parishes — to represent it at the congress. The theme will be "Black Catholic Leadership in the 21st Century: Solidarity in Action."

Registration for the diocesan reflection day is free. More information may be obtained from the Parish Support Ministries office, 585/328-3210, ext. 328.

Obituary

Sr. Marion Fitzgerald, OSF, 88

Franciscan Sister Marion Fitzgerald, a former Rochester resident, died Jan. 8, 2002, at the St. Elizabeth Motherhouse in Allegany, N.Y. She was 88 years old.

Sister Fitzgerald was born in New Hampshire. After her family moved to Rochester, she belonged to St. Michael's Parish and attended Holy Rosary School. She entered the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany in 1936, and professed her final vows in 1943.

She was a housekeeper and cook during her entire active ministry, serving in

the states of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Rhode Island. She briefly returned to Rochester in 1961-62, serving at the Our Lady of Good Counsel Convent in Rochester. She retired in 1984.

Sister Fitzgerald is survived by a niece, Marion Bradley; nephew, Warren C. Hammersla; nephew-in-law, Michael McKain; and other nieces and nephews.

Her funeral Mass took place Jan. 11 at the St. Elizabeth Motherhouse chapel. Interment was at St. Bonaventure Cemetery in Allegany.