

# Agency's director to leave March 31

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Giovina Caroscio, who has directed Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes for its entire 20-year existence, has announced she will resign her position effective March 31.

"After 20 years I simply believe that it is the right time for me professionally and personally to move on," said Caroscio, 51. "The office has never been as strong as it is at this point in time. The leadership of the board of directors and the professionalism of the staff are exceptional. I can leave knowing that the ministry will continue and thrive under new staff leadership, because I believe the Holy Spirit has always directed this ministry and will continue to do so into the future."

The agency's board of directors and Jack Balinsky, diocesan director of Catholic Charities, are currently seeking a replacement.

"She certainly embodies the principles of the social justice in the Gospels," Balinsky said. "Since the organization takes on the personality of the leader, Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes has been very significantly mission-driven in carrying out Gospel values. Even though we will miss her, her vision and her influence will remain with the agency for the next 20 years."

Caroscio came to the Geneva-based Finger Lakes office upon its inception in the summer of 1982. She was responsible for hiring staff and overseeing development of Catholic Charities ministries in Ontario,

Wayne, Cayuga, Seneca and Yates counties.

Caroscio noted that the office, then known as Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry, was created as part of an effort to decentralize Catholic Charities in the late 1970s and early 1980s. She said the venture was "a challenge organizationally and financially. The five-county region has natural geographical barriers, is primarily rural, and has an economy that is dependent on agriculture and the service sector for employment."

Among the many types of funding the office has sought over the years, Caroscio especially credits diocesan Thanks Giving Appeal funds for its survival.

"Establishing new and maintaining existing program services and the essential office infrastructure for a small office such as ours, at times, has been a struggle. Many not-for-profit human service organizations actually folded in the 1990s," she said. "We have struggled at times on a daily basis to meet the ever-increasing needs of children, families and communities. Thanks Giving Appeal support has been, and continues to be, an important source of revenue for the office in addressing unmet needs and raising consciousness to issues of injustice."

Among the office's highlights over her lengthy tenure, Caroscio listed the following: community education and advocacy; collaboration with parish social ministries; development of a Cayuga County satellite of-



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

## Celebration of rites

Nine men in formation for the Diocese of Rochester's Permanent Deacon Program received the rites of lector or acolyte during Mass at Rochester's Sacred Heart Cathedral Jan. 19. Above, Bishop Matthew H. Clark installs second-year diaconal candidate Robert Meyer as an acolyte, while Mercy Sister Mary Ann Binsack, vice chancellor and administrator of the bishop's office, looks on.

office in 1983; service to single mothers, single fathers and their children; establishment of the Geneva Community Lunch Program as well as other soup kitchens and nutritional programs; migrant ministry; a support ministry for separated, divorced and bereaved; construction of single-family homes for low-income families; job-search programs for the underprivileged; and a sexual-abstinence program for teens.

Caroscio said she was asked to give only a five-year commitment at the time of her hiring in 1982. "The job is ever changing, always presenting new challenges. This is why I am still in the position some 20 years later. I can honestly say I have never been bored with my job," she said. "The opportunity to share in the work under the leadership of Bishop Matthew (Clark) and with so many different staff and community people has been a great blessing for me. My commitment to this position has been more than a commitment to a job. For me personally it is a ministry. I am forever grateful to those priests, religious sisters and lay persons who have mentored me over the years."

Caroscio, a native of Elmira, graduated from Notre Dame High School. She earned her associate's degree from Corning Community College, bachelor's from Cornell University and master's in social work from Catholic University of America. Prior to her tenure with Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes, she served as outreach worker for the Economic Opportunity Program in Elmira (1974-75); executive director of the TriCounty Housing Council Inc. in Corning (1975-79); co-director of the diocesan Office of Human Development in Elmira (1979-80); and justice-and-peace director for the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry (1980-82).

Caroscio resides in Geneva and belongs to St. Stephen's Parish. At this point, she said, her future is undecided. "I will discern which of a number of job possibilities I am considering will be the right next step for me at this time in my life," she said. "Regardless of the career or job that I decide to pursue, I will always carry a passion in my heart for social-justice work. It is essential to the preaching of the Gospel and a deep part of my own faith life."

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