

INSURANCE

Continued from page 1
because it affects all facets of society," Sweeney concluded.

PARISH PUSH

Sweeney shared similar thoughts on the challenge uninsured patients present to the health-care system during an April 5 workshop sponsored by the hospital, the Diocese of Rochester's Public Policy Committee and Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier. Held at St. Joseph's, the workshop was part of a push to get Catholics in the diocese to talk about health-care access, a priority issue for the public policy committee this year, according to Marv Mich, director of social policy and research for Catholic Family Center in Rochester.

Mich noted that similar workshops, featuring health-care and Catholic social-justice experts, took place at various sites around the diocese in April, with the idea of preparing parishes to promote health-care access awareness this month and in June. Various speakers were slated to give homilies or talks at several parishes' liturgies last weekend and during the next several weeks. And many parishes will have on hand copies of a petition calling for New York's government to streamline the enrollment process for such government health-insurance programs as Medicaid, Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus.

"One million New Yorkers are eligible for coverage under Medicaid, but are not enrolled," the petition states. "Tens of thousands more New Yorkers lose Medicaid coverage each year due to complex re-certification procedures."

An advocacy packet distributed to parish representatives who attended the diocesan workshops included



Paul Finch/CNS

Nurse Gene Werner attends to Samantha Lawrence and her 2-month-old son, Rodney Lewis, during a checkup at the De Marillac Maternity Program at Lourdes Hospital in Binghamton, N.Y., earlier this year. The clinic helps provide prenatal care to about 500 women each year who are uninsured.

prayers for doctors, nurses and the faithful, as well as homily suggestions. The packet also contained a fact sheet that could be inserted into bulletins.

In addition, the packet provided information about the New York Health bill introduced into both chambers of the state Legislature in March. The bill — A.6925 in the Assembly and S3068 in the Senate — offers health-care coverage to all New Yorkers under a system that would be financed by premium payments from all employers, employees and self-employed people, in a manner similar to the current structure of Medicare funding. The program would be paid by funding that currently goes to Medicaid, Medicare and other programs.

NATIONAL CONCERN

Catholics and others are also concerned about health-care access on

the national level. Gathered in one room at Washington's Union Station March 5 for a meeting on the issue were the heads of the American Medical Association, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, AARP, Catholic Health Association, American Hospital Association and a wide range of other health-care, labor, consumer and philanthropical organizations.

But a 19-year-old construction worker from Schoolcraft, Mich., represented more people than did any of the other participants. That's because Nick Swinehart — like 41 million other Americans — has no health insurance.

Being uninsured threw Swinehart's life into turmoil last summer when, after putting off seeking medical treatment because he lacked insurance, he was diagnosed with malignant melanoma, or skin cancer. Although a local church and members of the community have helped

pay the medical bills for his surgery and chemotherapy, he still faces questions about how he will pay for interferon treatments recommended by his doctor, as well as doubts about his long-term prognosis.

"Having cancer is bad enough without worrying about having health insurance," the teenager told the crowd gathered for the national kickoff of Cover the Uninsured Week, a March 10-16 project involving two dozen partner organizations and hundreds of other groups in raising awareness about the uninsured.

Father Michael D. Place, president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association, said the experiences at Catholic health-care institutions across the country "tell us that there is a crisis in this nation — and we bear witness to it every day."

The problem might be even bigger than previously thought, according to a study by Families USA released at the March 5 event. Although U.S. Census Bureau data places the number of uninsured at 41 million, Families USA found that some 75 million people under 65 years old were without health insurance at some point in 2001 or 2002.

Scarlett Emerson, director of parish and community development for Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes in Geneva, said Catholics have a role to play in informing their legislators of their desire to see the issue of health-care access addressed.

"I think it's important for the people in the pews to express their anxiety over what's happening," she said.

Mich added that he sees chiming in on the health care debate as part of one's Christian mission.

"It's continuing the healing ministry of Jesus," he said.

Contains reporting by Nancy Frazier O'Brien of Catholic News Service.

GENERAL

Announcements

ADOPTIONS: The Catholic Courier does not publish adoption advertising. To obtain a list of agencies that serve birth mothers and adoptive parents, call 585-529-9530. Agencies wishing to be included on this list may send information to the Catholic Courier.

MERCHANDISE

Automobile for Sale

1996 Dodge Grand Caravan SE.
6 cyl., quad seating, dual sliders, power everything, AM/FM cass., AC, 93K
\$5100 or b/o.
585-704-9095

Adult Care

BARBARA'S ADULT CARE: Companionship, Errands, Grocery, Dr. Appointments, Transportation, **Gates/Chili** area only. Call 585-247-4978.

Achieve big results for your small business with
Courier Classified
Call 585-529-9530

SERVICES

Health Care

Save up to
80% on your
prescription
medications

www.unidrugs.com

OR CALL US AT

1-800-583-0960

Call 24 hours a day

Masonry

MASONRY REPAIRS ALL TYPES, brick & cement step repairs, basement walls & garage foundation repairs. 40 years experience. Al Meyvis Sr. 323-1007.

Your Life Story

Share the written story of your life, with family and friends, in a beautifully produced storybook.

Call **Life Stories**
at 585-271-0598 for details

Moving & Hauling

K-D Moving & Storage, Inc.

Experience in office, household moving and deliveries

Big or Small, We do them All!
473-6610/473-4357
23 Arlington St. Rochester NY 14607
NYD01#9057

Painting & Wallcovering

AL MEYVIS, JR.: In/Ex painting, basement walls repaired/new sump pumps installed, all type home repairs, yard maintenance and clean up. NYS certified. Call 392-4435.

Spring Cleaning?

Catholic Courier Classified can help sell your items

20 words for \$15 • Call 585-529-9530 today!