

# Driven to serve another

## Irondequoit parishes give a lift to seniors

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

A group of Catholics from Irondequoit will drive you to the edge — of the boundaries of their town, that is.

All you have to be is 60 years old or older, ambulatory, and belong to one of six Irondequoit faith communities: Christ the King, St. Cecilia, St. Margaret Mary, St. Salome or St. Thomas the Apostle parishes or St. Ann's Community, a multilevel health-care organization that serves seniors.

Volunteer drivers will transport seniors for free from their residences to anywhere in Irondequoit, according to Steve D'Arienzo, coordinator of Good Samaritan Transportation, which was initiated by the faith communities nearly two months ago. The service's offices are housed at St. Ann's, and Good Samaritan is funded by the Diocese of Rochester and private donations, he added. Good Samaritan is one of the services provided by Irondequoit Senior Ministries, a cooperative venture of the six communities, according to Donna Walker, who heads the ministries.

Along with volunteer driver Patrick Ferriter, Walker and D'Arienzo spoke about Good Samaritan during a June 2 interview outside the Rochester General Hospital Rehabilitation Center in Irondequoit, where Ferriter had just dropped off Anna Heater, a parishioner at St. Margaret Mary who had an appointment there.

Good Samaritan was created in



response to focus-group discussions conducted by the faith communities. The discussions revealed that seniors were in need of such a service, Walker said.

"We heard that the homebound needed help," she said, noting, for example, that a number of seniors were missing weekend Masses. "One of the things that people missed most was their connection to the parish."

Volunteers were recruited through calls issued from church pulpits and in parish bulletins, and to date more than 30 people have signed up to drive seniors, D'Arienzo said. He noted that Good Samaritan picks up between one to two new volunteers each week. Volunteers must be registered members in good standing with a diocesan parish, D'Arienzo said, and must have a valid driver's license and an insured, inspected and registered vehicle.

Training is provided, and drivers only have to be available for as little as one hour a month, he said. Good Samaritan keeps track of the miles driven by each volunteer transporting clients and provides them with a receipt they can use when itemizing deductions on their tax returns, he said.

One such driver is Ferriter, a parishioner at Christ the King. The retired Eastman Kodak Co. engineer said he volunteers as a driver both for family members and other charitable groups in addition to Good Samaritan, and that he likes to use his car for a good purpose.

"Having a car is just about necessary in this day," Ferriter said. "As long as I can drive, I figure I'll help people until I can't drive."

Good Samaritan has already provided more than 30 rides to 21 individuals, D'Arienzo said, noting that many seniors have expressed gratitude for the free service.

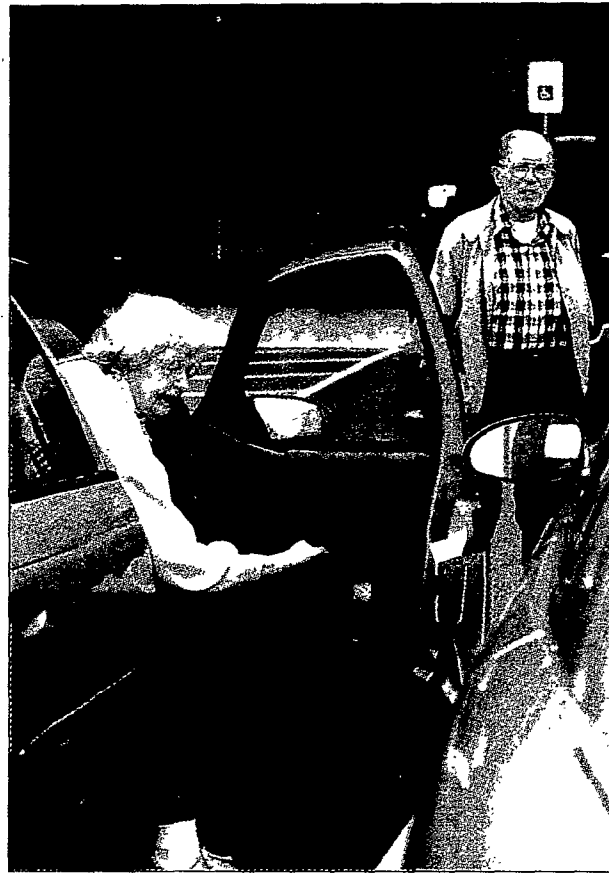
"They're reluctant to ask for help from family and friends," he said. "They feel like they're imposing on family and friends. Yet, we are here strictly for that purpose."

Heater said she is a widow who doesn't know how to drive, and appreciates her fellow Catholics volunteering to give her a lift now and then.

"Every one of the (volunteers) are so nice, and they make you feel comfortable," she said.

Walker added that Good Samaritan saves seniors money that would otherwise be spent paying for other forms of transportation. She added that the volunteers are building relationships as well.

"We've had people from Christ the King help people from St. Margaret Mary by taking them to a Scripture study at St. Salome's," she said. "We are Christ to each other through this ministry."



Rebecca Gosselin/Catholic Courier

Anna Heater, a parishioner at Irondequoit's St. Margaret Mary Parish, arrives for a June 3 appointment at the Rochester General Hospital Rehabilitation Center in Irondequoit. Heater received a ride there from Patrick Ferriter, who volunteers for Good Samaritan Transportation.

D'Arienzo said at least one volunteer — Ferriter — is banking on the service coming back to him some day.

"You made me promise to take you wherever you need to go when you can't drive," D'Arienzo said jokingly to Ferriter.

"You're at the top of the list," Ferriter responded with a smile.

For information on Good Samaritan Transportation, call 585/336-1777.

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