

Works of Love show lasting effect

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

GATES — October is the established kickoff month for Works of Love activities. However, as the folks at Holy Ghost Parish have proven, by no means should the program be relegated to a one-month time frame.

Since its founding in 2001 by diocesan Catholic Charities, Works of Love has spurred numerous projects through the diocese combining service with social-justice awareness. A few months before the inaugural kickoff, Holy Ghost became the first parish to ever engage in a Works of Love initiative. The timetable was moved forward for Holy Ghost so students in the summer faith-formation program could participate; they did so by gathering personal items and writing letters of encouragement for clients in Catholic Family Center's Restart Substance Abuse Services.

Laurie Orman, faith-formation director at Holy Ghost, said young parishioners continued their service efforts for CFC into the summer of 2002. At that point Irene Goodwin, then the parish's pastoral associate (she's now the pastoral administrator at Scottsville's St. Mary of the Assumption Parish), was looking to expand Holy Ghost's service activities. As a result, parish social ministry — mainly an adult group — joined forces with faith formation.

"Instead of doing two separate initiatives, we decided to bring them together," Orman said. "For us it just seems natural, because that's the way we do things at Holy Ghost. The young people are involved in everything."

One of the first joint efforts was a pancake breakfast that brought in \$600 as well as several supplies for residents of the newly opened Sanctuary House, a CFC program for homeless women and children. From there, a monthly relationship

has developed between Sanctuary House and Holy Ghost. Every second Saturday, a family from the parish cooks dinner and coordinates activities for residents.

"We wanted something that could be ongoing and that we could be committed to, not just one time only," said Orman, adding that there's already a sizable waiting list of volunteer families.

Clothing drives and collecting school supplies, particularly for CFC programs involving women and children, are among other projects staged by the parish over the past couple of years. Although Orman said Holy Ghost targets a number of charitable agencies, CFC is especially near and dear. So it seemed quite fitting that in June 2003 CFC presented Holy Ghost with the "Faith Community of the Year" award; the plaque hangs near the church's side entrance. To keep this strong volunteer connection going, Ruth Fischer, volunteer coordinator for CFC's Homeless and Housing Services, spoke at all Holy Ghost liturgies Oct. 25-26 to sign up even more participants.

Ruth Putnam, diocesan Works of Love coordinator, said Holy Ghost is a great example of the trickle effect than can occur as a result of a Works of Love project.

"To get that message out to the broader audience, that really is the goal," Putnam said. "Once people know what they can do, then they're eager to get involved. Once the relations are established, such as at Holy Ghost, wonderful things can happen."

Orman acknowledged that Works of Love has been a catalyst in Holy Ghost's growing relationship with Catholic Family Center. "It was something that got us started," Orman said. "I'm not sure I would have had the connections I've gotten (at CFC) if it wasn't for Works of Love."



Leila Navidi/Catholic Courier

After Mass on Oct. 26, Ruth Fischer, a representative of Catholic Family Center, encourages worshippers at Gates' Holy Ghost Church to consider volunteering.

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