

—Christmas Appeal—

Need sparks relationship

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

When Cathy Wiedemer picked up an issue of the *Catholic Courier-Journal* in the winter of 1972, she didn't know that a short paragraph buried in its pages would soon change her life.

At that time, the *Catholic Courier* was still known as the *Courier-Journal*, and the *Catholic Courier/Catholic Charities Christmas Appeal* was known as the *Courier-Journal Christmas Fund*. Each holiday season, the newspaper ran a list of the "neediest cases" in the diocese, along with a short paragraph describing each case and what the people involved needed. Wiedemer, who was then a stay-at-home mother with three young children, read about Anna Noto. Due to physical and emotional problems, Noto was unable to leave her house and needed someone to do her grocery shopping.

Wiedemer decided to help Noto. Now, more than 30 years later, she is still helping Noto, who has become a part of her family.

Wiedemer, a parishioner of St. Joseph's in Penfield, remembers the first time she met Noto, who told her, "Well, you'll think I'm crazy, but you'll come to love me."

"She is crazy, but I do love her," Wiedemer said.

Twenty-five years ago, Wiedemer's sister, Barbara Englert, also began helping with Noto's shopping. The sisters now take turns helping her with shopping, occasional laundry and anything else that needs to be done.

"I could never be where I am without these two girls. They're my fam-



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

Anna Noto (left) reaches out Nov. 24 to greet longtime friend Cathy Wiedemer at Noto's Rochester apartment. Wiedemer has been helping Noto do shopping and other household chores for the past 30 years, and the two say they have become like family.

ily," Noto said.

"Anna has also had a relationship with my kids, too," Wiedemer added, saying that Noto has watched her four children grow up. Framed photographs of Wiedemer's family grace the tabletops in Noto's small apartment.

Noto, who will turn 80 in January, has been a widow since 1979, when her husband of 33 years, Nick, died. She lives off of his Social Security benefits and rarely leaves her apartment, where she is "the queen of the floor," according to Wiedemer.

"Anna is one of the most upbeat people I've ever met," Wiedemer said. "Every time I walk out of here I'm smiling. She has this real gift to make you feel good. Anna inspires friendship."

Wiedemer said Noto also has a very simple, beautiful faith, which

inspires others and guides the way Noto lives her life.

"My main thing in this world is focus your eyes on the Lord," Noto said. "He died for us. Listen to God. He's the boss, not computers. When I do my hand laundry, it's hard, sure, but hey, look what he did for us on the cross."

Wiedemer said that spending time with Noto makes her see things in a whole new way and puts her life in perspective.

"It certainly has added a lot to my life," Wiedemer said. "She's given me more than I've given her."

Although Noto said her life has been hard, she never lets herself wallow in self-pity or wonder what might have been.

"I'm spunky," she said. "Now I'm in my twilight. My candle ain't gonna burn out yet."

Prior recipients

Caseworkers from Catholic Charities agencies submitted examples, including the following, of how Christmas Appeal funds are used year-round:

★ A man awaiting health insurance received \$54 to purchase insulin.

★ Twenty-nine dollars was used to purchase special formula for an infant with several medical needs.

★ A terminally ill man who needed phone service due to his medical condition received \$93.62 to restore his phone service.

★ A young man starting a job at a restaurant received \$50 to purchase appropriate clothing.

★ Three young people whose father was recently laid off and whose family was experiencing great financial hardship received \$75 so they could purchase swimsuits and towels in order to attend day camp.

★ A senior citizen who had just lost her husband and who was dealing with grief and financial hardship received \$186 to avoid having her utilities shut off.

• A physically disabled woman who was taken in by her family due to a loss of income received \$69.99

to purchase a bed.

★ An elderly woman on a fixed income did not have proper refrigeration for more than five years. She received \$139.99 to purchase a refrigerator.

★ After a child in Pennsylvania was found in an abusive situation, \$83 was used to bring the child to Rochester to be placed in his mother's custody.

★ A young woman and child who had a fire in their home received \$70 for emergency shelter.

★ An elderly woman who lost some items in a basement flood received \$45 to purchase blankets for the winter.

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