

Appeal aids those in financial crisis

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News & Analysis
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Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

For the past 35 years, the *Catholic Courier*/Catholic Charities annual Christmas Appeal has helped people in financial crisis throughout the Diocese of Rochester. The goal of the 2004 appeal, which will begin shortly after Thanksgiving, is \$54,000.

The appeal is a cooperative effort between the *Courier* and diocesan Catholic Charities. Proceeds are allocated to the emergency funds of various Catholic Charities agencies, which use the proceeds to help individuals and families around the diocese meet their basic needs. Recipients are in financial crisis and often are ineligible or waiting for assistance from other sources.

"We've sponsored the Christmas Appeal all these years because we know how important appeal funds are to the Catholic Charities agencies and their clients — especially at Christmastime, but all year round as well," said Karen Franz, the *Courier's* general manager and editor. "The stories of prior years' recipients — many of which have been printed in the *Courier* — certainly speak to the profound need for emergency-assistance funding in our community, and the *Courier* staff is proud to help our readers reach out to the many area residents in need."

In the past, appeal proceeds have been used to help single parents purchase food, diapers and medicine for their children and to prevent families from becoming homeless. Grants from the Christmas Appeal have enabled families to have their gas and electric service restored, or to purchase dishes after their belongings were destroyed in fires.



File photo

Cathy Wiedemer (right) has helped Anna Noto with household errands since reading about Noto's needs in a *Catholic Courier* Christmas Appeal article published more than 30 years ago.

More than 750 individuals donated a total of \$49,120 to the 2003 appeal, according to Donna Stubbings, appeal coordinator and circulation manager for the *Courier*. Individuals donated amounts ranging from \$2 to \$5,000, with \$25 being the most common donation, she said.

This year's higher goal is due to increased need in the area. While there is always a need for Christmas Appeal funds, that need is especially large this year because of the current economic situation, including the rising cost of gasoline, according to Jack Balinsky, diocesan director of Catholic Charities.

"Especially at a time of continuing cutbacks in government funding such as we've seen in Monroe County, there is ever more a need for private philanthropies to respond to the

needs of the poor," Balinsky said.

The *Courier* gained 70,000 new readers after its format change last spring, and appeal organizers hope a significant number of these readers will become appeal donors.

Proceeds from the 2004 appeal will go toward the emergency funds of the following agencies: Catholic

Family Center, Catholic Charities Community Services, Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes, Catholic Charities of Livingston County, Catholic Charities of Steuben County, Catholic Charities of Chemung/Schuyler, Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga, Catholic Charities of Wayne County, Kinship Family and Youth Services, Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation and diocesan urban ministries.

Prior donors will receive appeal mailings shortly after Thanksgiving, Stubbings said, and the *Courier's* December monthly and weekly issues will contain feature stories about individuals and families who've been helped through the Christmas Appeal. These stories will be accompanied by coupons encouraging readers to contribute to the appeal.

Franz thanked *Courier* staff members — especially Stubbings — for volunteering each year to handle the tasks of appeal administration, from generating labels and stuffing envelopes for appeal mailings to recording donations and sending out hundreds of acknowledgement letters. "Without their efforts, the appeal would not be a success," she said.

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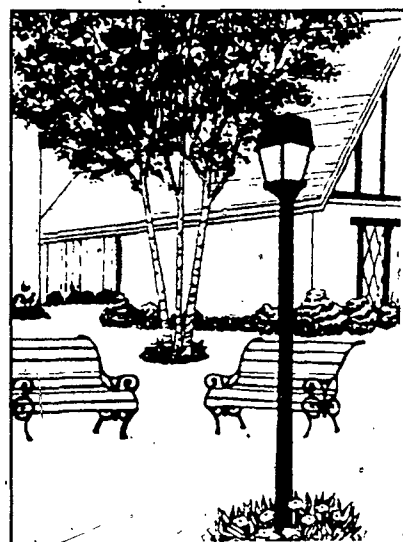
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