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Helping Those in Need During the Holidays

Once again the Emergency Assistance Program was very busy this past Holiday Season. Families in need always find it difficult to stretch their limited budgets and providing holiday meals and gifts is nearly impossible, especially during these tough economic times. Catholic Charities of Columbia and Greene Counties was happy to bring back holiday meal baskets this past year in addition to the “Adopt A Family” program for gifts at Christmas time. What a success! Catholic Charities’ Food Pantry in Hudson supplied 84 Thanksgiving food baskets and 55 Christmas meal baskets. Assistance provided to Columbia and Greene County residents is growing indeed, and families and individuals are ever more grateful for the help to make the season a little brighter. Imagine a ray of sunshine when your world is falling down around you. Families are having



Young and old are welcomed volunteers. Two kindergartners bundled up in the rain, unload supplies donated at the “Stuff the Bus” event hosted by Fidelis.

a hard enough time keeping their homes warm and lighted, much less having a full holiday meal or gifts for their children. Each and every family who received assistance this past year were so thankful, and many were even tearful as they accepted meals and gifts.

Catholic Charities couldn't have done this alone. It is with great thanks that we recognize the many individuals, businesses, organizations and parishes that responded so generously to the increasing need for assistance. We would like to extend our gratitude to Keith and Janet Sherin for their generous donation and efforts in orchestrating a significant monetary match from the General Electric Foundation. We also thank Lucy Rees and the Hudson Jr. High School National Jr. Honor Society; staff Lisa Dolan, **(continued page 4)**



Hudson Intermediate School students, pictured above, collected and delivered a bus load of boxes to the Hudson food Pantry. Working together the students and staff were able to unload the bus in a short period of time

Letter from the Executive Director, Tom Gillespie

In the midst of snow, sleet, and freezing rain, one wonders why we live in the Northeast. For me, the answer is simple. This is my community. I was born and raised here, I have family and friends in the area and after exploring other work places joined Catholic Charities of Columbia and Greene Counties 30 years ago. Community is where you are welcomed, are provided support and understanding, where someone is always there to listen and help when needed and where you will be called upon when another needs your help as well.

Catholic Charities is an integral part of the Columbia and Greene communities for many residents. We offer a place for those who seek shelter from life's various storms: providing a warm lobby to sit and read in, a bite to eat from the food pantry or WIC, information on where to turn in crisis, a safe haven to visit with family, and tools to be strong under peer pressure. Creating a community is the mission of the Kinship Caregiving program where children displaced from their original community, biological parents, are integrating with other families members to build a stable life together.

We also offer a place to help others, the kind of help that fills you from the inside knowing you did something really special and very important. County residents, board members, and staff joined together to give to others last October for the first Catholic Charities'

collaborative auction. Over \$7,000 was raised for the Emergency Assistance program. Such a large event needed the support of a whole community and participation by numerous community members such



Staff proudly display our "team" shirts at the Catholic Charities Diocese of Albany annual picnic.

as St. Mary's Church who offered space for the event, the Christian Service Committee of St. Mary's that provided refreshments, donations from countless

businesses and individuals of items to be auctioned, board members, staff, and friends to run the auction including Anthony Patsky and Michael Fallon, and supporters from the community that attended and purchased items. Thank you to all of you for being a part of the Catholic Charities' community.

This edition of the newsletter is filled with ways the Agency, staff, residents, volunteers, and clients are a part of the community, our community. Thank you does not seem to be strong enough to convey the deep appreciation felt by having everyone contribute to our community, but it is the clearest. So, thank you for being in my community.

Creating Warmth For Others

Winter brings shorter days and a chill in the air. For some the chill extends indoors as they simply do not have enough money to cover the increase in household costs to cover heating their home. With the use of electric



heaters and curtains families try to conserve their heat and make the last oil shipment last as long as possible. Last year, Parishes in Greene County asked their parishioners to contribute to a special collection to help combat the rise in requests for heat assistance through our emergency assistance program. The idea was well received and the timing, Ash Wednesday, was exactly when things were tight. This year the generosity of the Ash Wednesday collection will be expanded to parishes throughout Greene and Columbia Counties.

Beyond Money, Safety In Visits

Money does not fix everything. The effects of a separated family due to domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, or substance abuse and use cannot be alleviated with financial assistance. Rebuilding of trust is needed and can only occur in the presence of safety.



Catholic Charities' Facilitated Supervised Visitation Program provides that safety. Program staff, referred to as "Monitors", provide for the emotional, mental, sexual, and physical safety of children that have been affected by unfortunate

events while allowing them to have positive contact with approved individuals, usually a biological parent. Supervised visitation is ordered by the family court system when it is determined it is in the best interest of the child to maintain safe contact with the parent. Secure, regular contact helps relieve the anxiety many children feel when separated from their parents. Children may feel responsible for their removal or worried about the health of their parent. Many children are confused and don't understand why they are not living at home anymore, some recognize their inner need to have another person in the room in order for them to feel safe, and others are still developing an emotional attachment to the parent. These are

strong emotions that affect the development and growth of every child.

Our program recognizes the importance of listening to the signs and signals from the children. A clear set of guidelines have been established for the children's and parent's safety. Changes in technology have resulted in modifications and additions to the rules to continue for the safest and most secure environment possible. For example, with an increase in burnable CD's for music and movies, only commercially produced material with an age appropriate rating may be exchanged in a visit.

Regular visitation allows parents to correct past mistakes without halting the healing process or stalling the relationship that was forming with their children. There are many factors that determine when and if a child returns home and it may take some time for permanency to occur. In the meanwhile, the Facilitated Supervised Visitation Program prevents further injury to children and provides a safe setting for everyone as they cope with the emotional effects of the past while looking positively to the future.

The program is offered through direct referral with the Columbia or Greene Counties Department of Social Services.



Aiming High

An Ethics Help Line is the newest tool created by the Corporate Compliance Department, Catholic Charities Diocese of Albany, to ensure program regulations are met. The help line provides for confidential reporting of staff concerns in a number of areas including respect for client's rights and maintaining confidentiality. Throughout the year Catholic Charities of Columbia and Greene Counties has been working with the Corporate Compliance Department to improve standards and procedures and to upgrade the quality of programming. Staff and Board members recently participated in a training conducted by the Corporate Compliance Officer to introduce the Ethics Help Line and to reinforce the importance behind the Agency's standards and procedures as a means to provide for higher than standard programming and services.

Sister Maureen Joyce Honored



Catholic Charities USA is celebrating 100 years of community service by recognizing 100 instrumental individuals throughout the country. Sister Maureen Joyce, Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany, was chosen as the second in the country to be honored with a Centennial Medal on January 11th at the St. Vincent DePaul Church in Albany. Sister Maureen Joyce provides a clear vision and definition of the Catholic Charities mission to serve and advocate for the less fortunate, by example and her able leadership. Sister Maureen Joyce has been recognized many times over her twenty years as the CEO as her commitment and dedication is unwavering and successful in bringing a change to the lives of others.

Prevention and WIC Programs Team up

With many smiles and enthusiasm, Prevention and WIC staff greeted families as they handed out water bottles, hats, cookbooks, bracelets, small toys and literature at the Radio Disney Movie Event held at the Hudson Middle School in November 2009. The handouts and literature are tools used to heighten the awareness and availability of the two programs at Catholic Charities.

Both programs strive to strengthen the personal and communal growth of their clientele and collaboration between the two programs is a natural fit.

“Raising your Children Drug Free” is a Prevention parenting class offered to parents in or with children on the WIC program that is tailored for that specific age group. It was offered for two consecutive classes in the summer of 2009 and will be offered again in 2010. Parents that attended the program noted how useful the information was and how com-

fortable the Prevention Educators made them feel in talking about this subject. The program has also been adapted to fit the needs of parents enrolled in the Parenting Education Class offered with referral from Columbia County Department of Social Services.

This spring, the Prevention program will expand their internal collaboration to join the Kinship Caregiving Program to offer educational groups and activities for youths living within a kinship family structure.

The Prevention staff continually works in the community with children, families and educators to fulfill their mission to build children’s self-esteem and to help them make healthy choices and utilizing the Catholic Charities’ team is one tool that is tapped.

The upcoming New Year is filled with innovative ideas and plans in which Prevention and other Catholic Charities program clients will harvest the benefits.

Helping Those in Need During the Holidays (cont. from page 1)

Theresa Moran and children at Hudson Intermediate School; students at Taconic Hills Central School; the Sunday School and Vacation Bible classes of St. Mary’s in Hudson; and the children at the Hudson Youth Center. Special thanks to all those who “adopted” families for gifts, and all parishes in Columbia and Greene Counties who gave so generously this season and throughout the year. Without you, Catholic Charities of Columbia and Greene Counties would not even come close to having the means to help those in need.

We are blessed to have such generous and conscientious donors, not only of financial supports, but volunteers giving of their time as well. Catholic Charities is always in need of volunteers, especially throughout the year beyond the Holiday Season. Please contact our office if you are interested in helping us fulfill our mission of serving, empowering and advocating for persons in need.

Flexibility Means Success

Hiking, swimming, and climbing on a ropes course are a few of the summer activities the children in The School and Community Services Project participated in last summer. Throughout the year, theater experiences are offered to the Hudson City School District youths and for a second consecutive year, students were accompanied to the Trans Siberian Orchestra at the Times Union Center in Albany. Recreational activities such as the above combined with counseling and case management allow the staff and children in the program to be successful year after year. The School and Community Services Project (SCSP), a school based prevention/intervention program, remains flexible and as a direct result is so successful.

In the past program year, 79% of the 150 program students achieved academic success and 88% of the students met behavioral goals. Financial assistance is needed at times to help the children achieve their goals and the Catholic Charities' Emergency Assistance program is a useful resource.

Last year one child needed funds to cover a doctor's fee for a physical; the physical then made it possible for the child to participate in the summer employment program where the child could build skills and earn money for his family. Families participate in the holiday food baskets and Adopt-a Family gift program in November and December. Others have been given assistance in funds for medications, eyeglasses and obtaining needed clothing.

SCSP is a joint program operated by Catholic Charities of Columbia and Greene Counties, Columbia County Mental Health Center, and Twin Counties Recovery Services, Inc. It is funded by the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services and local school districts serving the Hudson City School District, the Taconic Hills Central School District and the Ichabod Crane Central School District.



WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

Each day, more and more of our neighbors feel the reality of poverty. Catholic Charities provides help and creates hope. Your donation empowers Catholic Charities to serve people of all faiths each year. Catholic Charities is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Your donations are fully tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.

Monetary Donation Opportunities: *You may contribute by check to*

Catholic Charities of Columbia & Greene Counties

431 East Allen Street,

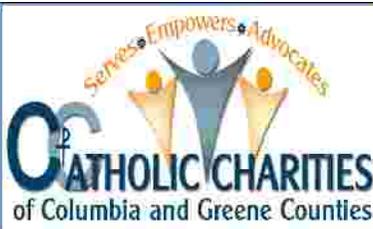
Hudson, NY, 12534

Or go to <http://www.ccrda.org/donate.htm> to contribute by credit card either by a one-time donation or by setting up a recurring donation monthly, quarterly or annually

Volunteer Opportunities: Join our highly motivated qualified staff and volunteers to help those less fortunate.

Clerical, Gardening, Fundraising, Board Participation, Emergency Assistance/Food Pantry and Maintenance

Call Vanessa Vogel at (518) 828-8660 or email vvogel@cathcharcg.org



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
431 EAST ALLEN STREET
HUDSON, NY 12534
Phone: 518-828-8660
Fax: 518-828-4016

CATSKILL OFFICE
82 WOODLAND AVENUE
CATSKILL, NY 12414
Phone: 518-943-1462
Fax: 518-943-9054

Where Do I Belong?

Creating a community and a sense of belonging is the goal of Catholic Charities of Columbia and Greene Counties' newest program, Kinship Caregiving. Children living with grandparents, aunts and uncles, older siblings, other relatives or "fictive" kin may feel lost or disconnected from society due to their unique situation. But in reality, they are not unique as there are 400,000 children living with other relatives in New York State with over of 1,000 of those children in Columbia and Greene Counties. Caregivers are dedicated individuals who have stepped in to serve as surrogate parents when the biological parents are unable to raise their children.

Building this community requires support services for the new family unit to become stabilized. The Kinship Program focuses on strengthening the family relationships emotionally and legally, aiding families in obtaining necessary financial resources, providing opportunities for peers and caregivers to connect with others through support and educational groups, and assisting caregivers and children in accessing other needed services.

Ultimately, children are able to remain with family and out of foster care. Catholic Charities Caregivers Support Services in Albany has a proven track record of success in this area and was instrumental in the creation of services for our counties. Going an extra step, we are collaborating with Catholic Charities of Schoharie County to offer a unified tri-county program.

Initial funding provided by the United Way of Columbia and Greene Counties and the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation allowed the program to pilot in the summer of 2009 in Columbia County. With the contract awarded from the Office of Children and Family Services we began expanding the number of families and service area to Greene County and Schoharie Counties in December 2009.

Please contact the Hudson office for more information or to seek services.

