

*Providing help.
Creating hope.*

324 W. Buffalo St., Ithaca, NY 14850 / 272-5062

*from our
executive director*

Winter can be a difficult time for those in need in Tompkins County. People who work two and three jobs are unable to purchase needed items for their families. As winter progresses and heating bills accumulate, families must often make choices like deciding between buying food or paying for heating oil to fill the tank. This year promises to be a difficult one. The news is filled with talk of recession. Gas prices are making it difficult for those who live in rural areas to get to work, to the grocery store, and to the doctor.

In Tompkins County, our United Way has studied poverty in our county, and in its 2005 Compass II Report estimated that over 6000 residents (9%) live below the poverty line and 26.7% of county households have incomes under \$25,000/year. It is a daily struggle to make ends meet when incomes are that low.

Those who live in poverty are many and diverse, and include:

- people living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty who have limited educational opportunities and little access to jobs that pay livable wages;

continued on page 2

Catholic Charities

Tompkins/Tioga

Spring 2008

news and notes

The staff of Catholic Charities would like to extend a special *Thank You* to the students of Immaculate Conception School for their generous donation of Gift Boxes at Christmas time. Each participating student created a wrapped, gift box—full of hand-picked goodies—for another child.

The gift boxes were donated to the Samaritan Center and were distributed to families in need for Christmas.

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board of directors *director continued*

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Those who live in poverty are many and diverse, and include:

- people living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty who have limited educational opportunities and little access to jobs that pay livable wages;
- the working poor who struggle to hold down two and three jobs and still cannot feed their children or find affordable housing;
- the homeless. Many suffer from mental illness and cannot find mental health services, others are veterans who fought for our freedom;
- young families who have fallen

continued on page 4

new board chair announced

Mary Berens became the new Board Chair for Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga on January 1, 2008. Berens, a member of the board since January 2003, succeeded Karl Pillemer. Pillemer had served as Chair since June 2005.

Berens has worked for Cornell University for over 30 years. Currently, she is a Senior Campaign Officer in Alumni Affairs and Development. Mary is a parishioner of the Cornell Catholic Community and a dedicated volunteer for several community organizations.

Why did you choose to be on the Board?

I believe strongly in the objectives of Catholic Charities and I welcome the opportunity to directly assist many of the most vulnerable people in our community by providing volunteer and financial support for the programs offered by Catholic Charities Tompkins/Tioga. When organizations like CCTT meet their objectives, Ithaca becomes a better place for us all. It's hard to pass up an opportunity to work with such a dedicated and talented staff and Executive Director.

What do you find most exciting and inspiring?

The incredible, unwavering commitment and compassion of the staff and volunteers along with the knowledge that the intangible support provided by CCTT really does provide assistance that makes a difference to individuals in our community.

Photo courtesy of Stephanie Green



What do you wish to achieve as Chair?

I would like to increase the community's understanding of the objectives and work of Catholic Charities. Human beings are compassionate by nature. When they understand the need and how their support can make a difference, many of them will engage with the work of CCTT. This year we plan to work more closely with local parishes.

What are the biggest challenges facing Catholic Charities?

The ability to 1) secure an adequate and dependable level of funding to meet the needs of individuals supported by Catholic Charities programs and 2) inform residents of Tompkins and Tioga Counties about the basic human needs that exist in our area.

director continued

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new levels of giving

The Samaritan Society is formed to support CCTT.

Over 50 people gathered at the home of Catholic Charities' vice chair Will and Carol Cooke on February 10th to celebrate the inauguration of the Samaritan Society of Catholic Charities Tompkins / Tioga and to pledge their volunteer, spiritual and financial support to the most vulnerable members of the Tompkins County community.

By fostering and recognizing support given by individuals, businesses and non profit groups, we hope to better meet the challenges of the growing numbers of individuals supported by CCTT programs through the ability to secure an adequate level of reliable funding for these programs. These are the objectives of the Samaritan Society of CCTT.

More information on the Samaritan Society will be available in future newsletters.

“Thank you, staff of Catholic Charities, for all you do and especially for calling upon us to help you in the mission of the Catholic Charities Ministry to the people of Tompkins & Tioga.”

from

*Carolann Darling, Youth Minister,
St. Anthony's, Groton*

and from

All Saints, Lansing & Holy Cross, Dryden

For monetary donations and items for youth in need from HS Youth Mass.

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Our objective is to recognize every supporter. If we've inadvertently left your name off the list of donors, please notify CCTT so that we can recognize you in a future newsletter. We greatly appreciate you and your support.

pnp changes

Personal Needs Program Changes to Meet Needs

Since its inception, the Samaritan Center has provided participants with personal hygiene products every other month. Participants choose from a laundry list of items.

Because of rising costs & declining donations, the program was modified in January. Now each participant receives a package of basic hygiene products—laundry detergent, dish soap, shampoo, toilet tissue and one additional item from the supply stock.

René Funke, director, streamlined the program so they could serve more people more often. By offering fewer essential items, she hopes that soon participants will be able to receive hygiene packages every month.

The personal hygiene products program is one of the cornerstones of the Samaritan Center, with nearly 45% of the households accessing this service up to six times a year. But demand is greater than ever. 623 households or 1,474 individuals were served in 2007.

To donate hygiene products, please call 272-5062. Donations are always welcome and are greatly appreciated.

building repairs

An Old Building Gets Some Help

Catholic Charities Tompkins/Tioga is located in a beautiful old building, once a convent, on Buffalo Street in downtown Ithaca. Unfortunately, the building is often in need of repair. We want to give special thanks for the following donations of materials and labor to keep the building in good shape for our work:

New kitchen floor (currently in process):

Dianne Orcutt

New refrigerator for our kitchen:

Tom Colbert

Painted the conference room walls:

Members of The Vineyard Church of Ithaca

Gardening:

Bertha Gutierrez

Replaced kitchen window:

George and Ginny Field

The window was replaced *in honor of* the Aguilar family: Domingo, Lucy and children — D.I., Carmen Brewer, Ginny Field, Rene, Lisa, Rita Boothroyd, and Tina Matychak.

Ginny Field remembers having piano lessons in the front room, taught by the Sisters who once lived here!!

We need you!! If you have experience in construction, painting, windows, masonry, etc, and have time and energy to donate, please to give us a call!

volunteer spotlight

Kathy Tyler



Kathy has volunteered at Catholic Charities in several different roles, including front desk receptionist,

working for the Samaritan Center's Personal Needs Product Distribution, and most recently as finance assistant to the Executive Director, where her work is greatly treasured.

About six years ago, Kathy first became aware of Catholic Charities' need for volunteers and decided to contribute her time during Lent. Once Kathy retired from her job as a nurse, she became more involved. Kathy usually volunteers four hours a week, but during busy times, she gives as much as is needed.

Kathy is married and has grown children. Now that she and her husband are retired, they travel as much as possible. Her flexible volunteer job allows her to contribute her time and talent to Catholic Charities while continuing to enjoy her retirement.

To inquire about volunteer opportunities at Catholic Charities, call Chris Sanchirico, Executive Director at 272-5062.

programs

Tompkins County

Samaritan Center

- Clothing Closet
- Personal Needs
- Smart Buy

Immigrant Services

Justice & Peace Ministry

Family Empowerment

Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP)

Smart Buy is a monthly food buying program that can help you stretch your food dollars. Anyone can order & save. Call Paulette for more information

our mission

The Mission of Catholic Charities Tompkins / Tioga is to help build communities that care for all people by reducing poverty, promoting healthy individual and family life, collaborating with faith communities, and advocating for social justice.

family empowerment services



Community Connections is a mentoring program that advocates for families/individuals and assists them in creating roadmaps & promoting collaboration as they travel through Child Protective Services (CPS) and other child welfare systems.

Community Connections started when community members in the Neighborhood Project of Dept. of Social Services (DSS) identified parent mentoring as a service gap for families involved in a CPS investigation.

What we do: help you understand what is happening; guide you through the Child Protective Services process; make sure you know your rights and your responsibilities; assist you in connecting with community resources; respect your family's goals.

Catholic Charities has a contractual arrangement with DSS to develop and to implement the mentoring

program. Services are provided by Tommy Miller and one staff member, and they are on call 24/7 with limited resources. Sixty-five families received services in 2007.

Community Connections is available to:

- ♦ Adults residents of Tompkins County who are persons responsible for children who are reported to the Child Abuse Hotline.
- ♦ Adult residents of Tompkins County who are persons legally responsible for children who are reported to the Child Abuse and Maltreatment Hotline and are placed in Foster-care.
- ♦ Families involved in the Family Resolution Project's Family Team Meeting process.

What we believe: all families have strengths; parenting is challenging; all of us need help from time to time; families are empowered by knowing the outcomes of their choices; we respect all who are concerned with the well-being of families & children within our community.

Parent Partners are here to offer you a helping hand.

Parent Partnership

The program forges partnerships with parents of children with emotional and behavioral challenges who are at risk for out-of-home placement.

Our goal is to increase community support for families facing challenges and

opportunities of developing intervention plans for their child.

We believe that partnerships between parents and providers are important when making decisions regarding their children. With your permission, a Parent Partner will contact you to discuss your thoughts about your child's situation.

A Parent Partner will review the decision-making process with you and support your active role. If you wish, we will help you to develop questions and to determine the most effective way to get answers. A Parent Partner will stay in touch with you throughout the decision-making process.

The program goals are: to increase the involvement of parents in exploring treatment options for their child(ren); to enable parents to share experiences & concerns; to develop a range of mechanisms to enable parents to participate in the process; to support a strengths-based team process in partnership with families, respecting differences as well as constraints that may exist for any of the parties.

Miller acknowledges that the program's accomplishments are a result of forging partnerships with families, individuals and networking with a very long list of community providers. An example of this collaboration is when Tommy Miller was presented with the Corrine Galvin Award on behalf of Community Connections and its staff. The Dept. of Social Services (CPS unit) nominated the staff of Community Connections for this award.

meet the staff

Tommy Miller

Director, Family Empowerment Services, Community Connections & Parent Partnership, Catholic Charities.

Tommy is also a Facilitator for Franziska Racker Center (Family Resolution Project) & Facilitator/Co-Parenting Educator for Tompkins County Coop Extension.



He has 30 years of travel/working in the Human Services Field & Juvenile Justice System. Tommy recently completed a 25-year tour of duty in the Juvenile Justice System as a Youth Worker/Training Coordinator.

During this time he completed a seven year tenure with the American Red Cross as an Intensive Case Manager. Additionally, he has 15 years of consultant work with Cortland County Community Action Program — planning, implementing & coordinating urgent programs.

free tax preparation

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is the federal government's largest anti-poverty program, raising nearly five million people - half of them children - above the poverty line each year. Qualifying taxpayers in NYS can claim as much as \$4,720, but up to \$1 million is lost in Tompkins County every year because taxpayers don't know that they qualify for the credit.

In partnership with Alternatives Federal Credit Union (AFCU), Catholic Charities will now be offering free tax preparation at their offices to ensure that our community has greater access to this credit, and to provide an alternative to high

cost preparation services and predatory loans. This new program will leverage the power of tax time by helping working families take advantage of financial opportunities and look toward the future.

A certified AFCU volunteer will be available to offer free tax preparation to qualifying taxpayers at Catholic Charities, 324 W. Buffalo St., 9:00 am to 12:00 pm every Tuesday, from now until April 8.

For more information and to make an appointment, call Shelby at 272-5062 x27

Translator Interpreter services are also available.

Help that Works ... Hope that Lasts.

Yes, I want to support the work of Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga.

Enclosed is my donation: \$1000 \$500 \$100 \$50 \$25 Other \$ _____

_____ I have enclosed my check payable to Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga.

_____ Please bill my credit card: VISA MASTERCARD

Card # _____ Exp. date _____

Signature _____

Name(s) Mr. Ms. Mrs. _____

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(We like to thank our donors publicly when possible. To keep your gift anonymous, check here)

My gift is in memory of in honor of _____

Please send acknowledgements to: Name _____

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Please send to: Catholic Charities Tompkins/Tioga, 324 W. Buffalo St., Ithaca, NY 14850

All gifts to Catholic Charities are tax deductible.