



The Mission

"Care With Dignity, Life With Hope"

Catholic Charities

Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York
www.catholiccharities.org

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RIGHT AT HOME... RIGHT IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Following the exposure of abuses and neglect of consumers at the Willowbrook State School, Catholic Charities responded to the need for community residential placements for developmentally disabled adults and opened **Christopher Residence** in 1974. This first Catholic Charities residence, certified through the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, (OMRDD) became home to twelve developmentally disabled adults.

The OMRDD motto, "Right At Home - Right In the Neighborhood," was the driving force behind the establishment of community residences across Long Island. From the beginning, there were fundamental differences between Catholic Charities' community residences and the larger, institutional residences of yesterday. They were designed to be less like impersonal facilities and more like families. Our residences made priorities of ensuring the safety and comfort of residents, encouraging them to reach their highest level of functioning, and affirming their dignity. Some recent anniversaries bear witness to the long-term success of these homes in accomplishing these objectives. Catholic Charities opened **Alhambra House** in Huntington Station in 1978, home to eight young developmentally disabled adults who previously lived

at the Suffolk Developmental Center or at home with aging family members. **Neumann Residence** in Manhasset, which opened in July of 1977, became the first community residence on Long Island for developmentally disabled adults who are also deaf. Eight dually diagnosed individuals quickly made this house their home. Both homes recently celebrated their 25th anniversary.



One resident, George, moved into Neumann residence in 1978 and still loves his home as much today as he did then. He recently celebrated his 82nd birthday.

Like any family, individuals living in Catholic Charities' residences have their own jobs, routines, likes, dislikes, hobbies, and individual personalities that are nurtured in the warmth of a loving home that permits them experiences and opportunities for personal growth.



Caritas Residence in Aquebogue, which just celebrated its 10th anniversary, opened in 1992 to meet the

increased needs of developmentally disabled adults allowing them to age in place and remain with their Catholic Charities family. It was designed to meet declining cognitive and physical functioning levels, as well as increased mobility impairment, and medical needs of the residents.



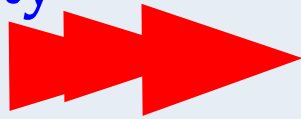
Of all our residents, Norma has made the most moves since October 1992 when she moved from her brother's house to Caritas. In 1993, she wanted to try "independent living" and moved to **Msgr. Helfrick Residence** which opened in 1993. Norma was well-known at Chinese auctions, fire house dinners, and "lunch out" around Center Moriches. In February 1997, she wanted a change in housemates and moved to **Mako Residence** where she stayed until September 1998. At that point, she wanted to be closer to her nephew and his family, so she moved to **Msgr. Fagan Residence** in Elmont. Because of a medical condition, she moved back to the slower pace of Caritas in November 1999. She says "This is home! I'm staying here."

Photo ID: Top left: George with staff member; right: Norma; bottom left: Caritas residents.

Project Liberty

The Story So Far

by Peter Nichol



As we approach the second anniversary of September 11th 2001 it is, perhaps, an appropriate moment to reflect upon the achievements of Catholic Charities Project Liberty. It is appropriate but it is also a moment of some sadness as Project Liberty nears its end.

Project Liberty was conceived as a response to the horror of the destruction of the World Trade Center, the loss of almost three thousand lives, the dislocation and evacuation of many thousands more, the economic devastation caused by the estimated 100,000 jobs lost in an instant. Many, many more were affected as the consequences rippled out.

As the massive rescue and recovery effort gathered momentum, the resources and experience of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) were central. They had learned that when the dust has settled after a disaster there are serious emotional needs that, if left unaddressed, can become long term barriers to individual recovery. This is where Project Liberty was born.

FEMA donated what was the largest ever single mental health grant to New York State to establish a program to provide crisis counseling, education, and outreach to those affected directly or indirectly by the events of September 11th and the aftermath. On Long Island this translated into the contracting of a dozen or so mental health providers in Nassau and Suffolk counties to establish Project Liberty Services. Catholic Charities was awarded contracts in both counties and, uniquely among providers, was able to establish a coordinating function to ensure the systematic provision of services across the Diocese.

Project Liberty was designed to be the follow-up to immediate needs addressed during the rescue and early recovery stages. By January 2002, teams had been established based in the Medford and Mineola Mental Health Clinics of Catholic Charities. Eventually, the two teams would grow to employ a total of 26 full- and part-time crisis counselors and outreach workers.

Essentially, Catholic Charities Project Liberty is an outreach program, focusing on educating the general public and connecting those who could benefit with one-on-one or group counseling. We knew very early that the logical place to center such an effort was the parishes. Working closely with Parish Social Ministry, the teams made presentations to almost every parish in the Diocese, informing parishioners and other community members about the signs and symptoms of critical stress and what can be done to address it.



At the same time, Catholic Charities Project Liberty reached out to those needing help through an ambitious advertising campaign in The Long Island Catholic and extensive publicity through Telecare, the diocesan cable television station.

Initially, we were anticipating a flood of distressed individuals reaching out for help in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. In fact, we saw the need for services develop more gradually and subtly, with a momentum that built as the first anniversary approached. There are a number of reasons for this.

- As is often the case, individuals and families took time to show the full effects of exposure to the traumatic events of 9/11. In some cases months or even years pass before stress symptoms appear.
- Secondly, the economic effects and the stress associated with job loss became more apparent as time passed and affected families' resources were exhausted. These effects were magnified by an economy in recession, making the likelihood of employment more remote.
- Finally, some workers involved in the Ground Zero recovery effort did not begin to try to deal with their own feelings until it was completed. That difficult task lasted much of the first year after September 11th.

During this time, Project Liberty counseled a growing number of individuals and continued to build relationships with the community through a variety of parish-based activities.

As the first anniversary approached, we expected increased activity as the media replays compounded the emotional difficulty naturally associated with the anniversary of a tragedy. We also knew from experience with other major traumatic events that children were affected in ways that differed significantly from adults. For example, research two years after the Oklahoma City bombing found disturbingly high rates of stress symptoms among children as far as 100 miles from the site of the bombing.

This was directly due to the amount of media exposure, and we knew that media coverage of 9/11 was much more pervasive and disturbing. More research within New York City confirmed fears of serious, wide-reaching stress reactions among the region's children.

We worked closely in 2002 with the Education Department of the Diocese of Rockville Centre and Telecare to produce a set of videos. The videos were used extensively to help children, parents, and faculty in the 59 parochial elementary schools in the diocese to deal with emotions rekindled by the one-year anniversary of 9/11. Entitled "Putting the Pieces Together," the program won a Telly Award for outstanding non-network television.

Another year has almost passed. The number of individuals counseled has fluctuated, with noticeable increases prior to the war in Iraq. This was not surprising. We know that the impact of traumas and crises is cumulative. Our ability to deal with difficult or horrifying events is affected by our previous exposure to such events.

We will continue to see numbers of individuals with serious problems resulting from September 11th for years. However, we have seen that most people are remarkably resilient and, given some tools, can recover from the most difficult of experiences. As we enter the final phase of Project Liberty, our emphasis is on helping people to develop such tools of resiliency. We have developed workshops on stress management and reduction, recognizing and developing support systems, and maintaining balance in life. All of these skills can strengthen an individual's ability to cope with crisis. In addition, through a grant from Catholic Charities USA, our Parish Social Ministry program will continue to provide emotional and financial support to those impacted by the 9/11 disaster.

Catholic Charities Project Liberty Facts

Parish Involvement:

1. Presentations were made to Parish Outreach and/or Rectory Staff in 118 parishes in the Diocese.
2. In 68 parishes Project Liberty was involved in additional activities, such as a pancake breakfast, blood drive, parish festival, or a special commemorative or memorial mass.
3. Project Liberty Counselors saw clients in 81 parish locations.
4. Individuals were referred directly to Project Liberty by Parish Outreach Coordinators in 43 parishes.

Counseling and educational activities (through 4/30/03):

1. About 350 individuals were counseled in a total of more than 1,200 individual sessions.
2. More than 400 educational presentations were made to almost 10,000 participants.
3. There were around 7,000 phone contacts and about 5,500 in-person contacts.

Recent Grants

For the fifth consecutive year, the **Maternity and Early Childhood Foundation (MECF)** has

approved a grant to support mentoring services at Regina Residence. The \$38,000 grant for the 2003-2004 program year brings the total support to more than \$160,000 since 1999.

Through the mentoring program, supportive volunteers meet regularly, one-on-one, with the pregnant and parenting young women at Regina. From the mentors, the young mothers and mothers-to-be learn positive, constructive approaches to work, parenting, and other life challenges.



The **Lavelle Fund for the Blind** has committed \$60,000 to continue the Parish-based Outreach Services for Visually Impaired Persons on Long Island for an additional year. Through these outreach services, dedicated parish volunteers identify visually impaired persons in their communities, connect them with services, and welcome them into the life of the parish.

The **Allene Reuss Memorial Trust** has granted \$20,000 to Catholic Charities Visually Impaired Persons Center in Lynbrook, NY. The VIP Center, which has served people with visual impairments for decades, provides a hot, nutritious, congregate meal once a week. Social events, dedicated volunteers (some with 25 years of commitment), and discussion groups help to alleviate the isolation experienced by some visually impaired persons on Long Island. The Reuss Trust grant will be used to develop fundraising efforts at the center that will contribute to its financial self-sufficiency. The resulting income to the program will help to ensure that the VIP Center continues contributing to the physical, mental, and emotional health of its participants for a very long time.

Golf Outing Update

In the last issue of *The Mission*, we announced the First Annual Catholic Charities Golf Classic, scheduled for October 6, 2003, at the Huntington Crescent Club. This groundbreaking event will honor Mr. Frank Lourenso, Chairman of Middle Market Banking for JPMorgan Chase. We are happy to report that this first-ever fundraising effort is meeting with success, with major sponsorship from JPMorgan Chase, Barbara Gannon, Grant Thornton LLP, KPMG LLC, and Mutual of America. The total amount committed to date is approximately \$70,000. We can accommodate only a few more golfers, but there are plenty of sponsorship opportunities remaining. For more information, visit us at www.catholiccharities.cc or call (516) 733-7028.



Around and About Catholic Charities

- On May 15th, the **New York State Council of Catholic Charities Directors** gathered together in Washington, DC to host a Congressional Delegation Breakfast in the Capitol building. Brought together by the New York Archdiocese Catholic Charities and Representative Charles Rangel, eight Catholic Charities diocesan directors advocated for legislation to support services for families, especially single parent families: immigrant legalization issues, affordable housing, Medicaid, TANF, and the CARE bill. Following the breakfast, 16 of the delegation from New York met with **Jim Towey, Director of Faith Based and Community Initiatives**. Following the breakfast, they held "off the floor" meetings with **Senators Clinton and Schumer**. The focus remained on the five priorities but with greater emphasis on the \$20 billion relief for states provision in the proposed tax cut bill.



- **Project Independence** has reported initial success since it began earlier this year. Five individuals and four families that were either homeless or facing eviction now have apartments. **Jean Andrews**, housing manager, meets regularly with all the participants in Project Independence to monitor their progress and assist them in setting goals for their future.
- Catholic Charities was awarded a grant in the amount of \$396,000 from the **Federal Home Loan Bank** and the **Astoria Savings Bank** to build a 33-unit senior citizen housing complex in Ridge, **St. Mark's Village**. This money will be combined with a **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** grant of \$4,111,600 to construct affordable apartments.
- **Catholic Charities Mental Health Outpatient Services** staff are collaborating with **South Nassau Communities Hospital** in a demonstration program called "**Home Ground**." **Deacon George Reich**, a retired NYPD detective, is developing a component of that program, under a federal **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** grant. Home Ground provides spiritual outreach to engage and assist firefighters, police, EMT's, and construction workers and their families who have been affected by 9/11 and its aftermath.
- At our annual staff day, Catholic Charities recently recognized four staff members because of their unfailing dedication to those they serve and for their perseverance and ability to meet and overcome the challenges of everyday life with care, concern, and compassion. Congratulations to **Lidia Arroyave** of our Finance Department, **Sue Bouffier** of Franklin Square Senior Center, **Steve Hornick** of the Food and Nutrition Program, and **Susan Intraiva** of the Teaching Family Homes Program. Thank you for the commitment to our mission that you demonstrate every day.
- Congratulations to **Kathy Ayers-Lanzillotta**, our Chemical Dependency Services Administrator, on being awarded the Rose DeBellis Award for community service for her outstanding dedication to the treatment and prevention of chemical dependency.



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Photo ID:
*The 16 delegates,
including eight diocesan
directors of Catholic
Charities join Senator
Clinton in the Capital
Building.
Laura A. Cassell,
Chief Executive Officer
of Catholic Charities.,
Diocese of Rockville
Centre is fourth from the
left in the front row.*

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