

*Providing help.  
Creating hope.*

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

*from our  
executive director*

The news of economic distress is swirling around us with the winter winds, and our Catholic Charities programs are providing increasingly more nurturing support for the many new families walking through our doors who have never had to ask for help before.

The past year was our busiest on record. We provided more services to more households than ever. As an example, typically about 200 families visit our clothing closet each month. In October over 450 families came seeking clothing. Our Personal Needs Product program provided support to over 830 unique households in 2008 in our Ithaca office alone, up from 655 households in 2007. Our satellite Personal Needs Product sites in Caroline and Danby provided over 1000 personal care product packages to rural families in Tompkins County in 2008.

Our Emergency Services program, which provides funding to households needing emergency utility payments to keep heat on, gas cards and bus passes for transportation, security deposits for safe housing, and emergency prescriptions, provided support to 200 families

*continued on page 2*

Catholic Charities  
  
Tompkins/Tioga

Spring 2009

*news and notes*

### **Free, HUD~Certified Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Counseling**

Catholic Charities is providing mortgage foreclosure prevention counseling to help homeowners in Tompkins County explore alternatives to foreclosure and avoid the loss of their homes. For more information or to make an appointment with our housing counselor, Jane Galvin: Call Catholic Charities 734-9784 extension 132.

### *In This Issue*

Board Member Insight	3
Volunteer Recognition	4
2008 Supporters	5-8
Health Coverage	8
Meet The Staff	9
In Memory of Cecilia	10
Immigrant Services	
Annual Celebration	11
Free Tax Preparation	12
Help that Works	12

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### **Family Empowerment**

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### **Immigrant Services**

Sue Chaffee

### **Justice & Peace Program**

Eddie Reagan

### **NOEP**

Ellin Corrigan

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Our Emergency Services program, which provides funding to households needing emergency utility payments to keep heat on, gas cards and bus passes for transportation, security deposits for safe housing, and emergency prescriptions, provided support to 200 families in 2008, an increase of 20% over 2007. The need for emergency services is never quenched—the number of families we assist is directly proportional to the amount of funding we receive from our funders for this purpose. We often must turn families away when our funding is depleted.

In 2008, 370 households contacted

*continued on page 4*

## *from a cctt board member's perspective*

Karl Pillemer has been a member of the CCTT board for the past five years. He has served as Vice President and President, as well as working on the fund development and planning committees. Karl is a faculty member at Cornell University in the Department of Human Development, where he focuses on gerontology. He has been involved in a number of other local community organizations



### **What led you to become a member of the board?**

*Over the years, I became concerned about the problem of poverty both locally and nationally. I'm a little embarrassed to admit that I had no idea how extensive poverty was in Tompkins and Tioga Counties until I began to look into it. Because our region has been fairly prosperous, it can be easy to ignore the challenges low-income people face. I saw CCTT as a major vehicle for improving the economic condition of local residents, devoted to both meeting immediate needs and also looking for fundamental solutions. Many families who come to CCTT have already visited a multitude of other agencies and have been unable to find support they need elsewhere.*

### **What do you enjoy about serving on the board?**

*First, it's an agency that really uses the board. We get involved in helping the agency grow and exploring new opportunities. So board members feel like their time is well spent. But probably the greatest pleasure of being on the board is working with*

*the CCTT staff. These tireless workers spend their days (and sometimes evenings) assisting the most vulnerable members of our community.*

### **What surprised you most as a board member?**

*I had the misconception—one that's shared by others—that CCTT is specifically for Catholics. Nothing could be further from the truth. The staff works with all people and are not restricted to a specific segment of the population or religious background. The other surprise is what the agency manages to do given its limited resources. CCTT's work is supported by a group of highly committed volunteers, who in my opinion are true local heroes. I'd encourage the community to help support this great organization, whether financially or with their time.*

## *director continued*

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## *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.

## *volunteer recognition*

The 3rd Annual Volunteer Recognition was held Wed., Dec. 10, 2008 at Catholic Charities. The Volunteer Recognition is sponsored by the Board of Directors and is an informal event that honors our dedicated volunteers. Every year, one volunteer is recognized from each of the Catholic Charities programs.

This year's honored volunteers included Margaret Dean for the Samaritan Center, Kevin Rowe for the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP), Margaret's Circle for the Justice & Peace Program, Emma Banks for the Immigrant Services Program and Barbara Mingle for SmartBuy.

Please join us in honoring our wonderful volunteers. We would not be able to meet the needs of our clients without their dedication.

### "A Lenten Retreat on Christian Nonviolence"

Rev. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy

March 6 (7:30 - 9:00 PM) &

March 7 (9:00 AM - 4:30 PM)

St. James Catholic Church,

Trumansburg

Fr. McCarthy, a former lawyer, is the founder of the Program for the Study and Practice of Nonviolent Conflict Resolution at Notre Dame & the co-founder of Pax Christi - USA.

For information, call 387-6781.

Sponsored by St. James Parish and Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga

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## ***In Memory of***

Darlene J. Adams  
D. I. Aguilar  
Ann Antil  
Donna C. Benedict  
Carmela Caputo  
Rawlins Colquitt  
Sandra Curtis  
Brien Field  
Harvey Fireside  
Eva Firra  
Elmer A. Ford  
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Anna Komanecky  
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Edward & Mary Kelly  
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George Miller  
Cecila Montaner-Vargas  
Janice O'Dell  
Gertrude Oliver  
Manuela Overbaugh  
Daniel C. Peake  
Ted Price  
Ed Rader  
Elizabeth Gray Robinson  
P. Robinson's Mother  
Henry Roges  
Mickey Shultz  
James C. Smith  
Teresa Spencer  
Rose Szymanski  
Linda Turco  
Natalia Vlasov  
Whiting Family

## ***In Honor of***

Marie & Dave Corina

Evelyn Cox  
Mrs. Rizz Arthur Dean  
The Doyle Family Members  
Mary Greene  
Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Hass  
Dr. Meade, Jane Olsefski,  
Dr. Thananart  
Bob & Edie Oliver  
Edie Reagan  
Elizabeth Gray Robinson  
Sr. Romana  
Henry N. Ricciuti  
Sr. Edna Slyck  
Mary Streeter's Bible Group

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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.

## ***Affordable, Quality Health Coverage***

As layoffs continue to mount amid the recession, more workers statewide suddenly find themselves unemployed and without essential health insurance coverage.

Fidelis Care, serving more than 443,000 members in 42 counties across New York state, is now on-site at Catholic Charities, 324 W. Buffalo St., Ithaca to offer health insurance enrollment opportunities for Tompkins County residents seeking affordable, quality coverage.

Every Wednesday and Friday from 9 am to 3 pm, a Fidelis Care representative is now available at

Catholic Charities to answer questions and enroll eligible residents in free or low-cost health insurance. Fidelis Care offers New York State's Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus and Medicaid programs.

All children under 19 living in New York are eligible through Child Health Plus, while adults ages 19 to 64 may qualify for low-cost health coverage through Family Health Plus.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call Jon Antis, Fidelis Care enroller at (607) 339-7847.

## *meet the staff*

### **Michelle Brichacek**

Michelle joined the staff of Catholic Charities at the end of January as Samaritan Center Coordinator.

Michelle was born and raised in Little Falls, MN. She moved to Duluth, MN to study at The College of St. Scholastica where she received her undergraduate degree in Social Work. While living on the North Shore she wed her husband, Matthew. Shortly thereafter, they ventured out to Ithaca. Michelle starting working at The William George Agency for Children's Services (WGA) ending her employment there as a Cottage Director.

Michelle has a Master of Social Work from Syracuse University.

Quilting, making pies and jams, and assisting those in need are things that Michelle enjoys doing. "Having the opportunity to work at Catholic Charities is a 'great blessing,'" says Michelle.

### **Sue Chaffee**

In January, Sue joined the staff at Catholic Charities as the coordinator of the Immigrant Services Program. Born and raised on a farm in Van Etten, NY, she relocated to Florida to pursue studies in photography at the Southeast Center for Photographic Studies, and later earned her master's degree at Florida International University in comparative sociology/anthropology where she concentrated her studies on immigration. She has over 15 years experience working with, advocating for, and researching immigrant/refugee families.

Sue was hired by Miami-Dade County's Department of Justice Assistance to supervise their Refugee Family Services Program. She started the Task Force on Domestic Violence in the Haitian Community and also played a major part in getting Florida's domestic violence hotline available in Creole.

In 2000, she returned to upstate New York to be close to her family. Sue resides in Spencer with her 12 year old son, Philip, who is an avid soccer player, and their dog Buddy. She enjoys throwing pottery in her studio, and is passionate about Caribbean cooking, photography and gardening.

### **Melodie Mansfield**

Welcome back! Many of you may remember Melodie since she was a volunteer at Catholic Charities for 18 months before joining the staff in January as our front office coordinator. She also distributes our personal need items and assists participants.

Melodie lives in Newfield and has two children—a 13 year old daughter, Mackenzie, and a 22 year old son, Nathen. Her passions are gardening, baking and puzzles.

# *in loving memory of*

## **Cecilia Montaner-Vargas, November 2008**

### **Mid November Mass**

*By Emma Banks*

Today we gather  
With our late autumn  
moods  
In our somber coats  
And damp mittens  
We huddle, away from  
the cold.

With a loss so fresh  
And deep in our hearts  
We try and keep some  
warmth alive.

We lost her too soon.

Today, the priest called  
her a Saint  
A true child of Christ  
And whether or not we  
believe  
There's someone  
watching over us  
We all believe  
In the goodness that  
was Cecilia.

And on this gray  
November day  
We remember veterans  
Who fought for us so  
long ago  
And we remember her  
Who fought for those  
who could not fight for  
themselves.

There is too much loss in  
this world

But in her honor  
In the humbleness of  
knowing her  
We will not lose hope.

Because she was  
pure energy  
Passion  
A rock steady reminder  
That the world deserves  
better.

And so we will stumble  
bravely on.  
We lost a beautiful soul  
A pure heart  
And an unapologetically  
wonderful woman.

So with our heads  
bowed  
And our hands clasped  
We kneel for forgiveness  
In front of a lord  
We do not all believe in  
But with her in  
our hearts  
We ask for mercy.

Later, we file out  
Of the heavy double  
doors  
Hugging shoulders  
And touching hands  
Into a grey  
November day.

We look at each others'  
tear-streaked faces  
Hoping we can find  
solace

Comfort or relief  
Despite all those things  
left unsaid.

She left us a torch  
To carry dutifully on  
Believing so strongly in  
the goodness in all of us.

And so, leaving the  
church  
We all silently vow  
To continue so much  
work  
Left undone.

Her loss is cold comfort  
But her life was a  
bright light  
A spark of inspiration.

Tomorrow we will  
do better.



## *immigrant services annual celebration*

On November 15th, our Immigrant Services Program had a very successful fundraiser. We were able to honor the work of our recent program director Cecilia Montaner-Vargas and rallied support for the bright future of the program. We raised almost \$1500, including a very generous \$1000 donation from the Community Foundation of Tompkins County which inspired the creation of our new fund in Cecilia's name.

We hosted over 50 guests for a night of dancing, food, and reflection. Many wonderful community members spoke including René Funke, Samaritan Center Director; Linda Prieto, current Immigrant Services Program Coordinator; Christine Sanchirico, Executive Director, Catholic Charities; Mary Jo Dudley, Cornell Farmworker Program; Nathan Shinagawa, Tompkins County Legislator; Dan Lamb, District Representative for Congressman Maurice Hinchey; and Sue Kittel, Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency Community Development Deputy Director.

This night was made possible by the generous support of DJ Carlos Porras who provided music and organized the venue. The Hilton Garden Inn provided a lovely space for our event. We also appreciate the contributions of food from ABC Café, Manndible Café, Gimme! Coffee, Pancho Villa Mexican Restaurant, Vegan Epicure, Wegmans, Ithaca Bakery/Collegetown Bagels, Pizza Aroma and the Cornell University Public Service

Center. The Cornell Tradition Program provided financial support. Thanks also to Squeaky Clean Car Wash for the free car wash raffled off at the event.

Michele Rodriguez and Stephanie Torres, two stellar student volunteers, helped organize the event along with Emma Banks, the Immigrant Services Program Intern.

According to Sue Chaffee, Immigrant Services Coordinator, it's been a humbling experience to work in the Immigrant Services Program and to carry on the vision of its former director, Cecilia Montaner-Vargas, who passed away in November 2008. "In my first few weeks at Catholic Charities it has become very evident of the solid relationships Cecilia had in the community with her colleagues, friends, and especially her clients and I know they miss her dearly. Although I didn't know her personally, I feel like I am now continuing the work that she was so passionate about and feel very privileged to have that opportunity."

## *free tax preparation*

The Earned Income Tax Credit 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 can claim as much as \$6,721 in Earned Income Credits and up to \$1,330 per child in child tax credits.

### **You Earned It ... So Keep It!**

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 every Tuesday, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, now through April 7 at Catholic Charities, 324 W. Buffalo St.

**For more information and to make an appointment, call 2-1-1.**

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. \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

*(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 \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

*All gifts to Catholic Charities are tax deductible.*