

transforming *transitions*

The newsletter of the St. Paul's Center for homeless mothers and their children in Rensselaer County
P.O. Box 589 • Rensselaer, New York 12144 • 518.434.2910 • www.stpaulscenter.com

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In this, our first issue of the St. Paul's Center Newsletter, I write to you with a sense of amazement and appreciation for all that has been accomplished during the initial 20 months of the Center's operation. It has been an exciting time of new experiences, growth, and awe as I witnessed the accomplishments of so many people committed to caring for others, and the incredible courage and resilience demonstrated by our residents who have experienced so many challenges in their lives. During this past year, the Center has made a difference in the lives of the many homeless women and their children who have stayed with us.

The vision of establishing a homeless shelter within the City of Rensselaer started with the generous donation of the church building that was formerly St. Paul's Lutheran Church. The congregation of St. Timothy's Lutheran Church has been a source of constant support and encouragement, and has been the wind beneath our wings—from all of the efforts to write the grant that allowed us to renovate the church building, to providing supplies and support to the shelter and to the moms who have transitioned to their own apartments.

We have deep appreciation for our state funding partners, particularly the Homeless Housing and Assistance Program, which shared our vision and supported us with the construction and renovation grant and technical expertise during the early phase of the project. And with tremendous gratitude we thank both Senator Joseph L. Bruno and Assemblyman Ron Canestrari for their support of our efforts over the last three years. There are so many other donors - SEFCU, Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, area churches of all denominations, Seton Health, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and many generous individuals without whom we would not be able to do the good work we do.

Our main partner, though, is the Rensselaer County Department of Social Services. The commitment and follow-through of Commissioner John Beaudoin and his dedicated staff have made the difference in the Center's success. Great thanks to the city of Rensselaer as well, for the city employees who worked with us during our startup and first year of operation, and to our neighborhood families who have embraced us. We look forward to continuing these successful community relationships for years to come.

Soon after beginning operations, we quickly identified the call for further services and new staff, and so we set about obtaining additional funding. The Troy Savings Bank Charitable Foundation answered this call with a generous \$15,000 grant for our Bridges Program (see related story p.3).

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Meet the E.D.



David being directive at the Bowlathon

David R. Rossetti, our Executive Director, came to the St. Paul's Center in May 2006 and was instrumental in getting the programs up and running for the opening of the shelter in October 2006. His creativity, enthusiasm for his work, and compassion for those he serves is what drew the board to hiring him. He is a dynamic and delightful partner in the work of the St. Paul's Center.

David received his undergraduate degree from SUNY Buffalo and his Masters of Science in Social Work from SUNY Albany. He comes to us with great range of experience as a therapist and a program director and has worked at the Berkshire Farm Center, Family and Children Services, Parsons Child Care and Family Center, Matrix Health Systems (VT), and Four Winds Hospital (Syracuse). Before coming to the Center he was the Clinical Director at the Family Counseling Center in Gloversville. He maintains a private counseling practice as well.

David is more than just an Executive Director. He goes above and beyond what is required in helping the families at the shelter succeed. The Center is very fortunate to have such a talented and caring individual as the supervisor of all Center activities.

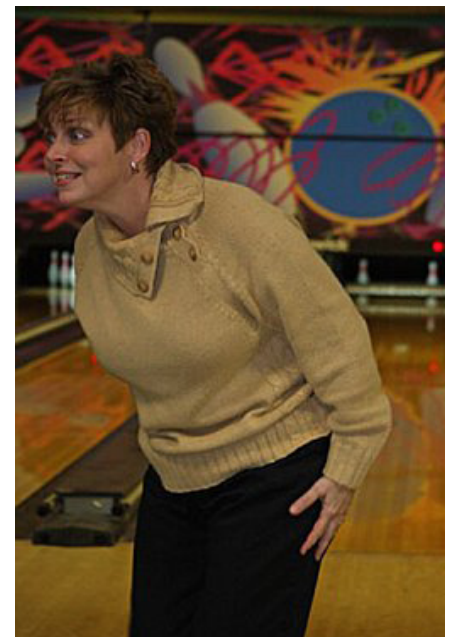
President's Message (cont'd from p.1)

Working together for countless hours with seemingly inexhaustible energy and an incredible commitment, the Board of Directors and the Executive Director were able to meet and exceed all of the Center's operational, administrative, and fiscal goals for these first 20 months. With grateful admiration, I thank each member of the board for rolling up their collective sleeves and pitching in wherever and whenever needed. And a special thank you to our Executive Director, David Rossetti, for his commitment, talent, leadership and heart; as well as to the entire staff, who work so hard to further the mission of the Center.

So, whether you offered words of encouragement, made a beautiful quilt for a mom or child, donated household supplies for an apartment, lent a helping hand in moving furniture, or provided a monetary gift, you have contributed to the Center's success and have given hope to those that have been homeless, and for that you have my deep and abiding gratitude. I urge you to remain involved—the moms and children at the Center need you. On behalf of the Board and the Staff of the St. Paul's Center, I wish you a happy, healthy, and peaceful year.

Sharon L. DeMartini

Sharon's term of office as President ended in April 2008. We thank her for her tireless, inspired and loving leadership during the entire start up phase of the Center. We couldn't have done it without her!



Although rarely showing her frustration, getting a split at the February 2008 Bowlathon fundraiser did prompt this look on Sharon's face at Spare Time Bowling in East Greenbush!

DONATE: Furnishings, gift cards, wish list items
Adopt a family at the holidays

PARTICIPATE: In our fund raising events
Bowlathon (winter)
Murder Mystery (summer)
Boscov's Charity Day (October)

VOLUNTEER:

To pick up furniture and/or help families move to new apartments

SPREAD THE WORD:

About the good work we're doing and encourage friends and family to contribute
Invite us to speak at your organization

HOW
CAN I
HELP ?

2007 statistics of interest

To help you better understand the families we serve....



Mothers served - 60

- Age 19-24 - 25%
- Age 25-30 - 30%
- Age 31-39 - 25%
- Age 40-48 - 20%

Children served - 129

- Under 1 - 10
- 1-5 yrs old - 43
- 6-12 yrs - 45
- 13-17 yrs - 29
- No data - 2 (mother pregnant)

Ethnicity

- Black or African American - 34 - 56.7 %
- White - 20 - 33.3%
- Multi-racial - 2 - 3.3%
- Native Hawaiiin or Pacific Islander - 4- 6.7%

Marital Status

- Single - 48 - 80%
- Separated - 5 - 8.3%
- Married - 4 - 6.7%
- Divorced - 3 - 5.0%

Highest Level of Education

- 5th or 6th Grade - 2 - 3.3%
- 7th or 8th Grade - 2- 3.3%
- 9th or 10th Grade - 3 - 5.0%
- 11th Grade - 20 - 33.3%
- 12th Grade - no diploma - 2 - 3.3%
- H.S. diploma - 12 - 21.7%
- GED - 9 - 15%
- Post secondary School - 1 - 1.7%

Episodes of Homelessness Prior to this Occurence

- None - 19
- 1 episode - 18
- 2 episodes - 14
- 3 episodes - 6
- 4 episodes- 1
- 6 episodes - 1
- 7 episodes - 1

Discharge Reason

- Completed Program - 40
- Criminal activity/destruction of property/violence - 1
- Disagreement with rules/person (left on their own) - 4
- Non-compliance - 8
- Other - 7

Wish List

The needs of the families we serve go beyond the shelter walls. Once they move to their new apartments, they need to furnish them. Donations are greatly appreciated.



Thanks for your generosity and consideration.

Baby Items

Bottle Nipples
Sippy Cups
Diapers (Sizes: 3,4,5)
Wipes

Household Items

Pots and Pans (sets)	Shower Curtains and Hooks
Plates, Bowls, Glasses etc. (full sets)	Mixing Bowls
Silverware (full sets)	Vacuums
Can Openers	Cleaning Products
Knife Sets	Mops/Brooms
Cutting Boards	Clocks
Coffee Pots	Toasters
Curtains, Curtain Rods, & Brackets	Microwaves
Oven Mitts	Twin bed sheet sets
Cooking Utensils	

Miscellaneous

*Furniture: Beds, Couches, Shelving Units, Tables & Chairs, Dressers etc.
*Washers/Dryers
Used Cell Phones
GIFT CARDS – Target/Walmart etc...
Cash Donations

** Please contact the Center about donating larger items at 434-2910.*

NOTE: So many people ask us if we need toys and clothes. While we do from time to time ask for these items for special occasions (holidays, birthdays), we have found that the volume that comes in is overwhelming. We do not have the ability to sort, clean and store these items. We hope you will understand and will donate these items to other local agencies. Thanks.

ST. PAUL'S CENTER "BRIDGES PROJECT" AWARDED GRANT FROM TROY SAVINGS BANK CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

In November 2007 the St. Paul's Center received a \$15,000 grant from the Troy Savings Bank Charitable Foundation for "The Bridges Project," a Center initiative designed to provide support to mothers transitioning to permanent housing.

The Troy Savings Bank Charitable Foundation was established by the Troy Savings Bank in 1999, and now operates as an independent private foundation following the merger of the bank in 2004. The Foundation has a strong interest in combating homelessness, with an emphasis on those initiatives that help homeless individuals and families develop skills needed to maintain permanent housing.

Foundation Executive Director Leslie Cheu said, "The Troy Savings Bank Charitable Foundation recognizes that homeless mothers and their children often face special challenges in finding and maintaining affordable housing. Through The Bridges Project at St. Paul's Center, these young mothers will receive guidance, assistance, and encouragement as they move from the shelter to permanent housing. We hope that others will join with us in supporting this worthwhile program."

The Bridges Project was conceived as the need emerged to maintain connection and a sense of community with the mothers after they transition to permanent housing. Mothers feel perhaps for the first time in their lives that there are caring individuals prepared to help them establish an independent and nurturing home for their children. This has involved not only assisting the mothers in finding housing, but helping them to furnish their new homes and providing support as issues arise. The Center's board is committed to continuing this outreach, and is grateful for the Troy Savings Bank Charitable Foundation's support at this critical juncture in the program's development.

"We were delighted to learn," said former Center Board President Sharon DeMartini, "that the Troy Savings Bank Charitable Foundation, a prominent charitable leader in our community, has recognized the importance of supporting women and their children as they transition from homelessness to permanent housing and an independent future. We are indeed very grateful to the foundation for their generous award as it will help us implement this important initiative." The timing of the award was particularly noteworthy as November was National Homeless Month.



Thank you to our funding partners.

We couldn't do it without you!



Meet the Board

Sister Mary Rose McGeady

The St. Paul's Center is blessed to have as a Board Member, Sister Mary Rose McGeady, D.C.. Sister Mary Rose comes to us with a lifetime of commitment to children witnessed through her life's work.

Sister earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from Emmanuel College in Boston and a master's in clinical psychology from Fordham University. In 1973, Sister Mary Rose became the director of mental health services for Brooklyn Catholic Charities, responsible for opening mental health clinics, day treatment centers, workshops and alternative living programs. From 1981 to 1987 she was provincial superior of her congregation's Northeast Province, based in Albany, and then returned to the Brooklyn Diocese as associate executive director of Catholic Charities, responsible for mental health services and programs for youth and families as well as elderly, homeless and disabled persons.

In 1990 she was tapped for the presidency of Covenant House, the Manhattan based home for runaway teens which was on the brink of reputation and financial ruin. The agency needed a miracle and that miracle was Sister Mary Rose. Under her leadership she implemented job training and life planning programs, as well as numerous community centers all designed to aid in the survival of her lifelong priority: children.

In retirement, Sister Mary Rose graciously and eagerly agreed to be part of the Center's first full board, after her presence in the area was noted by founding board member Marjorie Hopkins. With her wit, wisdom, insight, energy and love, she has been a guiding force for all board members and when we get caught up in administrative minutia, she lovingly but firmly reminds us to "Remember our mission. We must always think of the children. What is best for the children?"

FIRST ANNUAL JOHN BEAUDOIN COMPASSION AWARD

When the Board of Directors decided to create an award to be given to a person who had done the most for the Center in the past year, the first name that came to mind was that of Rensselaer County Social Services Commissioner John Beaudoin. It was the Commissioner himself that identified homeless mothers and their children as a top priority for his agency and wrote a letter of support for the NYS grant that funded the conversion of the old church into a 19 bed shelter.

He attended and spoke at our ground breaking in October 2005 and again at our grand opening celebration in October 2006. From its conception to its completion, the Commissioner has been our most ardent cheerleader.

The Commissioner retired at the end of June from *40 years* as the Commissioner of Social Services. We could not think of a better way to thank him for all his support than by naming our annual award in his honor. He has been a caring community partner in all areas related to families in need, and will be missed. The award was presented on July 30th at our Murder Mystery fundraising event at Casey's Banquet House in Rensselaer.

Emily's Story

Emily is a young mother who stayed at the shelter last fall. The staff helped set her up in an apartment, secure a day-care placement for her son, helped her obtain full-time employment and explore education options. She recently called Erica, the shelter's Transition Client Advocate, for some assistance with her utility bill. We learned that since leaving the shelter in October, Emily has maintained her apartment and job, the day care situation is working well for her son, and she was able to enroll in classes to pursue her Certified Nurses Assistant degree. She had always expressed a desire to return to school and is looking forward to furthering herself through education.

The stability of her situation is a testament to the help she received while at the shelter. She also knew that after she left, although she was out on her own, she had St. Paul's Center staff behind her for support.

Best Wishes to Jane McDermott

With both sadness and best wishes for her success, we say goodbye to Jane McDermott who has been the Client Advocate at the Center since March 2006. She has taken a position with a local paving company.

Jane started as our Administrative Assistant but "because of her natural ability to engage and relate to the women at the shelter" she was moved into the Client Advocate position by the Executive Director. "Jane will be greatly missed and there will be a void in the halls of the shelter," David Rossetti said.

In her letter to the board, Jane said, "The job is really bigger than any one person can handle but everyone here at St. Paul's works as a team." She praised David's leadership saying he puts the "human" in human services and characterized her decision to leave as a difficult one. "I will miss the staff here; we are a hardworking and close-knit group of people."

She said, "I feel I have made a positive impact on many women and children during my work here." We agree. Jane brought an energy and enthusiasm to everything she did at St. Paul's. She has offered to continue her dedication to our mission by assisting with special events or display opportunities. We all wish her the best of luck in her future and extend our appreciation and respect for all she has done for the Center and the mothers whose lives she touched.



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

WITH THE STRONG BELIEF IN THE DIGNITY AND VALUE OF EVERY HUMAN LIFE, THE MISSION AND PURPOSE OF THE ST. PAUL'S CENTER IS TO PROVIDE A WARM, NURTURING, HOME-LIKE ENVIRONMENT WHERE EACH MOTHER WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME EQUIPPED AND EMPOWERED TO MAKE A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENT LIVING AND TO A BETTER LIFE FOR HERSELF AND HER CHILDREN.

The St. Paul's Center
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ST. PAUL'S CENTER

for Homeless Mothers and Their Children

The St. Paul's Center serves mothers and their children regardless of age, race, religion, ethnicity, country of origin or sexual orientation. There is no proselytising nor is there any expectation that residents participate in religious services.

DAVID R. ROSSETTI, LCSW-R, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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BUILDING BRIDGES TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE