

Jettie Greene named Social Services Director

LAKE CHARLES -- An effervescent smile and a contagious laugh are things you notice immediately upon meeting Jettie Greene, the new Director of Social Services at the Catholic Service Center of the Diocese of Lake Charles. The Service Center is located at 1112 Bilbo Street.

"I am very excited to be here and I have so many ideas," Greene said. "I guess the first thing I wanted to do is to see what the needs are from the various church parishes. I have already had a chance to meet with some of the St. Vincent de Paul volunteers to assess some of their needs."

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is composed of women and men who seek their personal holiness by works of charity. This is one essential way that the Society, therefore, differs from other charitable associations or agencies. Their principal objective is not the spiritual advancement of their members as such, but the doing of good for someone. In the Diocese of Lake Charles there are a number of parishes with a St. Vincent de Paul Society.

"I sent a letter to every pastor in the Diocese requesting information on what types of social service assistance their parishes were providing to people who came to them," she continued. "The response has been tremendous. Once they respond, I create a flyer and send it back for their approval. Once it has been approved we will send it out."

"The brochure provides a list of what the parish has to offer in a social service setting, aid that the parish can offer in addition to agencies within the civil parish or city where the parish is located, agencies that can address needs of people who may come to the parish church for assistance."

The list is not all-inclusive but it is derived from suggestions provided by the pastor or administrator of the parish.

In her visit to the northern parishes, including Sacred Heart of Jesus in Oakdale, St. Paul and St. Joseph in Elton, and St. Joan of Arc in Oberlin, Greene got a feel for what the

needs of the people might be.

"I found out the need might be a little different than what I thought it would be," she said. "I thought we could go up there and have a day each quarter or each month and address the needs of the various parishes. But, I found out that it might be beneficial to coordinate our efforts by having the applications available in the parishes. The parish would take the application, decide if the person qualifies for assistance and what amount. The parish would provide that assistance out of parish funds and then forward the application to the Service Center for reimbursement to the parish."

The Service Center continues to provide financial assistance for rental and mortgage payments, utility bills (gas, electricity, and water), funeral expenses, and occasional bus tickets for people whom may be stranded in this area.

"Just recently we had a family of four - parents and two kids - who had been staying on the beach," Greene said. "A police officer brought them to the office and we were able to help them get back to the Lake Jackson, Texas, area. The man had come to Southwest Louisiana for a job and it didn't exist, stranding the family. They were actually living on the beach. We got the call and were able to help them the same day. Situations like that we work on a case by case basis."

"Then last week the director of Elderly Services for the Sheriff's Department came to us and we worked with them to get utilities paid for an elderly citizen."

Greene noted that it is a good feeling to be able to provide assistance to someone for whom you may be the last resort.

"Many of our clients in our initial contact are upset and crying because they don't feel they have a way out," Greene said. "It is so rewarding because by the time they leave, I get a hug and they are very grateful and thankful that we were there to help them."

The help with rental or mortgage payments and utility payments is only available



Jettie Greene at her desk

to those people who qualify once every 18 months.

According to Greene, the Service Center is not financially capable to give continuing assistance over a long period of time. "We are a temporary solution to emergency situations that families may face from time to time."

"People who come to the Center must have sufficient income to cover regular expenses and that income must be within federal poverty guidelines in order for us to help them with utility and rental or mortgage payments," Greene said. "We also look at whether the person has gone to other agencies or been repeaters in our system. We want to be fair to everybody but there is only a limited supply of money. We want to make sure that people who really need it can be helped."

"Potential clients must have documentation, a photo ID, their utility bill, and proof of their most recent rent (or mortgage payment), when they come to us," she continued. "They must also tell us if they receive food stamps or other assistance, we ask that they bring proof of that, and also if they have been on Section 8."

"We have to establish a need for the assistance before we offer it. We discriminate against no one; anyone can come - Catholic or those of other faith traditions, those of any race, creed, national origin, or political affiliation."

As for providing food, the Center will try to provide food baskets to those who qualify on a monthly basis. "We can certainly refer them to other agencies in the City of Lake Charles, Calcasieu Parish or in other areas

of Southwest Louisiana as well."

The Center's office hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, though it is closed for lunch from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Appointments, which are required, can be made by calling the Center at 439-7436 from 8:30 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. "We don't accept calls for appointments on Mondays or Fridays because of other duties and we limit the calls we accept from 8:30 to noon," Greene said. "When someone calls they talk to an intake officer and have a pre-assessment completed before an appointment is scheduled. It's all done over the phone. Even if they pre-qualify for the appointment, that doesn't guarantee that we can help them."

The Center receives more than 1,000 calls per month, according to Greene, and everyone is returned in a timely fashion. "Only about one-eighth of those calls are from people who qualify for assistance. Our calls increase when other agencies are unable to help due to financial constraints. Recently one agency had such a situation and our call volume increased."

For those who qualify, assistance with prescription medication may also be available. "We provide prescription assistance but we don't help with narcotics, pain medication, stimulants, or hormones," Greene said. "For blood pressure medicines, diabetes drugs, and the like, we can provide help in acquiring those for qualified individuals."

The medicine guidelines are different. "A person can qualify every six months for those individuals who don't have insurance or are underinsured. The amount of assistance varies depending on the type of medication and the person's income."

Of the many people helped over the years it is gratifying for some to return, once they have steadied their lives, and give back to the programs of the Center.

"Just recently, a lady come in and dropped off \$50 because we had helped her in the past with \$50," Greene said. "She didn't want to stay long and she didn't want a big to-do about it. She received the assistance when she had a need and wanted to give it back. It was really great to see that. She didn't think it was that big of a deal but we really did. That was great to see that she wanted to give back."

For Jettie Greene and the other staff working at the Catholic Service Center, "All are welcome in this house!"

"The need is the thing," Greene concluded. "We are here to serve people from all over the Diocese of Lake Charles, north or south, east, or west. We are excited about expanding the program to fill the needs in the parishes. During the year we hope to address as many needs as possible."



Some of the students from St. Michael/St. Katharine Drexel Parish in Sioux Falls, SD are pictured at St. Mary of the Lake Parish in Big Lake.

South Dakotans' June mission trip recounted

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following was written by Rhonda Kelsey, one of the leaders of the group of young people and adults from St. Michael/St. Katharine Drexel Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota who visited Southwest Louisiana on a mission trip in early June to aid in the continuing cleanup from Hurricane Rita, for their church bulletin.)

After months of e-mails (with Denise Donahoe, Director of Religious Education of the Diocese of Lake Charles), planning, fundraising, and preparing, 30 students and 13 adults from St. Michael and St. Katharine Drexel set out for a nine-day mission trip to Louisiana following morning Mass on Saturday, June 10th. The group went out to offer service by presenting a four day Vacation Bible School to the children of St. Mary of the Lake and by clearing debris and repairing homes in the Gulf Coast region of Lake Charles, La. that had been affected by Hurricane Rita last September.

After 19 hours travel time and an overnight stay in Shawnee, Okla., behind them everyone was eager to do their part on Monday, June

12th. Prepared for heat, humidity, and bugs with lots of sunscreen, water, and bug spray they were met with down home southern hospitality of the people they came to serve.

From getting up at 6:00 am to be ready for the days work and not getting in bed till 11:00 to 12:00 pm after a late night game of football, volleyball, cards, or a walk around the retreat center we will all cherish our time spent in Louisiana.

Typically when one offers service to others, they generally get as much or more from the experience than the people they served. This was true for all of our participants. Many made new friends, gained self-confidence, and/or learned a deeper meaning of life.

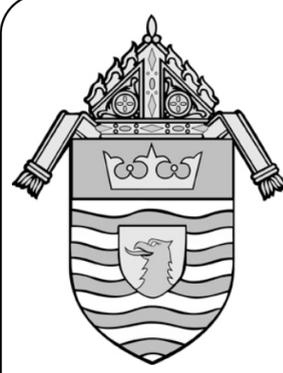
The two-day trip home seemed to pass quickly as everyone anxiously shared their memorable moments. No sooner did we embark on our travels home than the subject of returning to this same area next year came up with eagerness to serve and receive their new friends in Louisiana.

The people in the civil parish (which would be a

county in South Dakota) of Cameron are on a five-year plan of rebuilding. This year, this area of more than 9,500 before "Rita," now about 400, is still in the clean up stage. The bulldozers have come through and picked up the large debris and placed it in one of many landfill sites. Many of the people living in this area have lived there all their lives. Some of them lost all they had in 1957 at the young age of 20 or 30 when Hurricane Audrey swept through their area. For the second time these people are starting over but this time they are in their 70s and 80's. Next year we hope to return and help these people with the rebuilding process in the area of Cameron, Louisiana.

Much thanks goes to Denise Donahoe and the Lake Charles Diocese, Lisa Lannin and the families of St. Mary of the Lake Church, the Saint Charles Center, St. Theodore Church, Julie Burleigh, Cameron Service Director, and the people of Cameron for their southern hospitality to us South Dakotans. We hope to see you all next year!

(This page paid for by the Diocese of Lake Charles.)



OFFICIAL APPOINTMENT

The Reverend Msgr. Harry D. Greig, Diocesan Administrator, makes the following appointment, effective August 1, 2006, based upon the recommendation of The Very Reverend Joseph G. Gachand, M.S., Vicar Provincial: The Reverend James M. Winiarski, M.S. is appointed Administrator of Our Lady of LaSalette Church, Sulphur, La.



Bookkeepers from the various parish churches in the Diocese of Lake Charles recently attended the annual seminar sponsored by the Diocesan Fiscal Office held at Tabor Retreat House at Saint Charles Center. New protocols were discussed along with items regarding insurance and other topics. Rev. Msgr. Harry D. Greig, Diocesan Administrator, gave the opening prayer and is shown while speaking to those assembled.