

50 Chestnut Street  
Rochester, New York 14604  
July 28, 1986

Christine Schramm  
Chairperson, Building Committee  
St. Augustine Parish

Dear Chris:

Enclosed is a summary of our proposal for the use of St. Augustine Convent as a shelter for women and their children. We would like to house 12 women there for emergency and transitional shelter. We expect to offer support services to the women. To rehabilitate the convent, we have applied for Housing Homeless Assistance Program money; to run the program itself we would depend in large part on Department of Social Services reimbursement.

We decided to request funding from HHAP late in June, 1986. The proposal was due July 1, 1986. We will know in October, 1986, if we have received the grant. Money would be released early in 1987 if we receive the grant. We understand that we are one of a number of persons/groups interested in this property. This summary constitutes our formal request to your committee to consider this as a use of the convent.

On Friday, August 1, 1986, Michael Asbury, field representative of the HHAP office will be in Rochester to evaluate the sites which were used by various organizations submitting requests for HHAP funding. Would it be possible for Mr. Asbury to go through the convent with our architect, Mr. Vincent Phillips and some staff people from Catholic Family Center? We would like to have your realtor, or some one from your committee with us. I do not know the exact time, as I am waiting for confirmation from Mike. If it is all right with you, I will keep a key until Friday, although we (the sisters) will have left on Thursday.

We at Catholic Family Center look forward to meeting with representatives of St. Augustine Parish to talk more about our proposal when your committee is available and ready to receive the interested groups.

Thank you for allowing us to present this material to you and God bless your efforts on behalf of St. Augustine Parish and its mission and good stewardship.

*Sister Eileen Conboy*



## WOMEN'S PLACE

Women's Place, a safe house for women and children, will provide emergency and transitional shelter for women and their children under the age of three. Women may stay in the transitional phase of Women's Place for up to a year, and in the emergency phase for three weeks. The house will be supervised and staffed twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. Shelter, meals, individual and peer group counseling will be given on site. Referral to education and employment resources will be made. Health care in all aspects will be another referral as well as parenting skills and awareness of personal growth.

The basic philosophy of Women's Place is that each woman has the power within herself to make positive life choices and to come to know that more options really exist. Women's Place will blend providing a "family" home with asking the women to give back to the "family" home. Each woman will be expected, within a three week period, to decide on a plan for herself, assisted by staff. Some women will need motivation to achieve a stage of readiness to make choices while other women will be at the point of readiness and need information and support to make choices that effect a life change. Each woman will move toward a goal of fuller actualization of her potential, to have positive control over her life.

We plan on networking with other women's residences when their resources are more appropriate. Women's Place will not allow drug/alcohol use on its premises, but would allow drug/alcohol abusers to be housed and support them in their movement toward being drug/alcohol free. Based on this, Women's Place will have a direct linkage with Restart and its proposed house for in-patient rehabilitation treatment for homeless women.

## DESCRIPTION OF NEED

The Rochester-Monroe County community is an urban area with a population, per the 1984 census report, of approximately 711,100 people. People who are homeless, as in many communities, are among the total population. The housing Council of Rochester and Monroe County, in 1983, estimated the need of housing and support services for 200 homeless and 135 homeless people requiring transitional living. The study states "multi-problem adult populations had the hardest time being relocated."

There are indicators that resourceless women have an especially difficult time securing housing and support services. In 1984, the Monroe County Department of Social Services effected 238 placement of single women in emergency situations. The Department estimates the 238 placements were for approximately 200 women who were primarily 18 and above in age. The Parish Network for Homeless Persons, a volunteer group providing an overnight bed, noted in the November 1984-April 1985 report: "there has been an increase in the number of women on the streets this year and many have been using the church shelters." In its first year of operation, the winter of 1982-83, no women were housed in the church shelters. The past winter, eleven women were housed in the church shelters.

Through Project MORE, through our work with the abused elderly and through our work with troubled family members, we realize that there is a population in need of housing and support services. We estimate that 250-300 women need emergency and transitional shelter each year. This estimate does not include women leaving institutions such as mental health settings, prison or jail, who need shelter as part of their plan for re-entry into the community, nor the women who do not access formal service systems and thus are unknown to planners and service providers.



The need for housing for women must be interfaced with the existing resources. There are a total of 39 emergency beds and 84 transitional beds in the community. These beds are for the most part designated for particular populations. Alternatives for Battered Women (22 beds) serves only those battered by spouse or boyfriend. Melita House ( 11 beds) serves women who are pregnant. Bethany House ( 5 beds) takes any woman and her children, on a first come, first serve basis. ( They turn away about five women each day on average.) Sojourner Hall has beds for eleven adults and their children. They have a waiting time of three to five weeks. The YWCA has twelve emergency beds and thirty seven long term beds; they do not take children. The remaining beds are for alcoholic rehabilitation.

Two factors keep women from being eligible for these shelters. One is their children and the other is substance abuse. The policy for most existing shelters is no drugs/alcohol use on the premises and people who come in under the influence of drugs/alcohol are asked to leave. Although we are not advocating drug/alcohol usage, we will not deny entry to substance abusers because we realize a woman's drug/alcohol abuse is part of her struggle. Women's Place will have a direct linkage with Restart, a drug information, referral, assessment and treatment program of Catholic Family Center and will network with other such programs in the community.

#### STAFF

To meet the crisis, emergency need for the homeless women as well as to insure safety, the staff of Women's Place will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Staff will need to have a knowledge of human behavior such as drug/alcohol abuse, victimization etc. as well as conflict resolution. Staff and residents will need to ensure an environment which is safe, non-judgemental, and accepting of others while not necessarily accepting of other's behavior(s). The acceptance of a person does not mean the acceptance of behaviors that are self or other destructive. Not all women will find this environment acceptable. For those who choose to stay, Women's Place will offer an environment that allows time to handle the stresses of their lives while providing a way to master the resources necessary for a fuller life.

#### SITE

We have proposed the site for Women's Place to be located in St. Augustine Convent, 146 Hobart Street. This convent provides a safe, pleasant homelike atmosphere in a residential neighborhood. It has space for common activities as well as private rooms for sleeping. There is space also for counseling. The building is located near St. Mary's Hospital, a satellite office of Department of Social Services, DePaul Mental Health Clinic, as well as public transportation. On the parish complex itself there are meetings of A.A., N.A., Al-Anon, single parents and other support groups.

#### HHAP FUNDING

On July 1, 1986, Catholic Family Center submitted a proposal to Housing Homeless and Assistance Program (HHAP) for money to rehabilitate the convent. The rehabilitation needed involves bringing the building up to present fire and safety codes, repair of the roof, the heating system, electric and plumbing systems. The grant we are asking for includes architect's fees, some start-up money and a contingency fund. We will know in October, 1986 if we will receive the money, and it will be released in the early part of 1987, if we are awarded the grant.



# SAINT AUGUSTINE'S CHURCH

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410 CHILI AVENUE  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14611  
Telephone: (716) 328-2442

March 30, 1987

Sisters of St. Joseph Infirmary  
4095 East Avenue  
Rochester, N.Y. 14610

Dear Sisters,

I realize that I'm a bit tardy, but I just want to express my gratitude to you for all your prayers to help the City Council members make the right decision for the rezoning of our convent building and a small portion of our property. This change was necessary to accommodate the building for twelve homeless women and five children under three years of age.

There was a little struggle over the issue between Catholic Family Center, who will purchase the building this summer with a New York State grant, and the Nineteenth Ward Neighborhood Association. It centered around the number of people who would be housed there on a small area of land. With much dialogue the problem was solved in favor of the change which rezoned the property to make it possible to be used as a place for homeless women and their little ones.

If this had not been approved, the grant money would have gone back to the State and the women would not be helped by this project. Our parish would not have suffered because we had other offers also. Although this was best for us, the need to help the homeless was a greater priority.

Thanks again for your prayers. By the fall it ("Women's Place") should be established. May the Lord be with you.

Sincerely yours,

*Father Bill Trott*

Rev. William Trott

## **Plan for converting convent moving ahead**

Plans to house homeless women in a former convent at Chili Avenue and Hobart Street will move ahead with the resolution of a month-long debate over zoning.

The Rochester City Council last night agreed to a modified zoning plan for the proposed "Women's Place" shelter proposed by the Catholic Family Center. It would provide shelter for up to 12 women and five children.

Originally scheduled for a council vote last month, the zoning change sparked questions from the 19th Ward Community Association, which worried that the site might later be converted to other uses. A vote was delayed so that the area to be rezoned could be made smaller.

The Catholic Family Center will renovate the convent with a \$258,725 grant.

**Police photo**





CATHOLIC  
FAMILY  
CENTER of  
the DIOCESE  
of ROCHESTER

WOMEN'S PLACE  
146 HOBART STREET  
ROCHESTER, NY 14611  
436-5452

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES  
50 CHESTNUT STREET  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK  
14604-2359

April 17, 1989

Rev. William Leone  
St. Augustine's Church  
410 Chili Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14611

Dear Father Leone:

It is with gratitude and joy that Women's Place will open its doors to homeless women and children by May of 1989.

Women's Place will provide emergency and transitional shelter for women and women with preschool children in a family type atmosphere. Professional and trained volunteer staff will be available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. The staff has a broad knowledge of human behavior, infant and child care, drug and alcohol abuse, victimization and conflict resolution. Each woman will be assessed on a physical, spiritual, psychological and sociological basis. During this assessment period the women will have time to stabilize, sort out the stresses and re-direct their lives.

The basic philosophy of Women's Place is that each woman has the power within herself to make positive life choices and come to realize that more options really exist. With assistance from staff the women will be expected to develop a plan of action that will promote self-sufficiency and a fuller actualization of their potential. Linkage with other community resources such as educational and job training programs, drug/alcohol treatment, and day care centers, will be a part of the transitional process.

The acquisition and rehabilitation phase of the project development was funded by grants from the Homeless Housing and Assistance Program of New York State, the Wilson Foundation and private donations. Monroe County Department of Social Services will provide money for placing women and children in the shelter. The operational phase, like the development phase however, depends on the financial support of private individuals and groups. We are seeking donations from others at this time. If your parish contributes to worthy causes beyond your faith community we would appreciate your support.

Catholic Family Center is providing the place and staff to address the needs of homeless women and children in our community. We need and welcome your help to really make Women's Place a home and a place of growth.

Your concern for these women and children is appreciated - thank you.

Sincerely,

*Sister Eileen Conheady*

Sister Eileen Conheady  
Director, Women's Place