

DAMIAN
Care
Center

- operated
in kitchen
basement
area
1992-3

Memo 3/28/92

To: Members of the Parish Council

From: David P. Reid *dp*

Re: Proposal to have a medical clinic in St. Peter's Kitchen

1. History For many years, medical doctors have wanted to do offer some preliminary medical screening for the guests who come to the Kitchen. Studies around the country have shown that such is important. Without meeting their needs where they congregate, poor people go without medical help. For a variety of reasons we have resisted getting into this service. However, the poor keep getting sick and members of the Catholic Physicians Guild keep asking us.

2. Insurance Part of the resistance has to do with medical insurance. This time around that question receives very positive answers:

- a) The Guild members carry their own insurance.
- b) St. Mary's Hospital is prepared to consider our place as one of its outreach clinics.
- c) The Kitchen could get a rider on its policy.

The best approach is perhaps St. Mary's. In any case, the issue has been explored in conversations with Patrick Madden, the President of St. Mary's and Sr. Eileen, the Chairperson of St. Mary's board. There is no doubt that we shall be adequately covered.

3. Facility Since the renovation of 1989, it was always intended to re-do the office space in the SPK. A number of persons volunteered to do the renovation and Habitat took it on as an enterprize during their off winter months (as also the renovation of the toilets). The work that has been done to date renews the office space and makes it also suitable for medical care. We have opened talks with Housing Opportunities, the entity that leases the entire building and from whom we sub-lease the Kitchen, about permission to tap into their sewer lines for the use of a small wash-up area in the same office space.

4. Prospectus As everyone knows medical care in the USA is in crisis. Many are without insurance. Many carry very curable diseases but receive no help. The area where we live has the highest infant mortality rate for the State of New York. The city has the highest incident of sexually transmitted diseases. Offering free medical care under the umbrella of a Catholic hospital seems to be a good response, part of our responsibility to respond to the actual situation in which we are. There is nothing irreversible about the proposed step. If it works, great. If it does not work out, we shall have lost nothing. For every one taken care of and even conduited to more permanent care in the hospital, we have the satisfaction of doing a miracle. We shall have safeguarded all from the spread of communicable diseases.

5. Evaluation Yes, we are challenged and celebrated in this offer by the members of the Catholic Physicians' Guild. The challenge is in line with what we are already doing and God has never failed us in the ten years that the Kitchen has operated. We are celebrated in that people perceive our genuine desire to be stretched for the good of others. The service will be itself an advocacy for better health care for all of us. There will be a constant review undertaken by the St. Peter's Kitchen Advisory Board and reports made to this Council.