

ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY PARISH

AGENCY DESCRIPTION

St. Thomas of Canterbury Parish was founded sixty years ago (March 4, 1916) to serve Catholics in the north half of Uptown. It's boundaries being roughly Wilson Avenue (4600 N) to Foster Avenue (5200 N), Lake Michigan to Magnolia Street (1300 W). A parochial school was started that very same year and continues to this very day with an enrollment of approximately 185 students from kindergarten through sixth grade.

After the second World War and continuing to the present day the neighborhood has seen a steady influx of immigrants from the rural areas of our country (Appalachians and American Indians) and immigrants from beyond our shores: Slavic Europeans, Latins, Asians, etc. In addition, due it seems to the large number of hotels, apartment hotels, etc., large number of Senior Citizens, released mental patients, handicapped, etc., have joined the influx. The development of local medical institutions, has brought thousands of hospital and nursing home beds to our neighborhood. Last, but by no means least, the Wilson Avenue strip has drawn increasing number of homeless men with drinking problems to the area.

Needless to say the traditional parish approach to aiding those in need (The Vincent de Paul Societies, etc.) was insufficient to meet the huge social care needs of the neighborhood. With this in mind the parish, some ten years ago, organized a social care program. It was the first of its kind for Catholic Parishes in Chicago and became the model for Catholic Charities outreach program now in hundreds of parishes.

Through the years, these programs have been refined as follows:

1. Senior Citizen Programs

- This office deals with the needs of Senior Citizens, the Handicapped Shutins and those confined to Hospital or Nursing Homes. For a more complete description of the services provided confer the job description of Senior Citizen Coordinator.
- The office oversees the Canterbury Golden Agers, a Senior Citizens Club with its own officers, etc., which meets weekly in the Parish Hall.

2. Social Care Program

- This office runs a Food Pantry that serves 250 families a month. Acts as ombudsman with agencies regarding, welfare, unemployment compensation, Department of Children and Family Services, Family Court, immigration, etc.
- For a more complete description of services provided confer the job description for Social Worker.

3. Counseling Program

- Indepth professional counseling particularly but not exclusively centered on families. The source of referrals generally coming from our other programs and our parish school where the need for more professional assistance is required. Some fifty families are now being counseled.

4. Language Program

- Classes in English are provided every weekday evening for Spanish Speaking, Burmese and Vietnamese.

5. Vietnamese Aid and Culture Program

- Provides social get-togethers for Vietnamese
Average attendance 650.
- Publishes Monthly Vietnamese Magazine
Articles, Poems, Information, etc.
Circulation 750.
- Provides Settlement services for newly arriving families (2 or 3 a week)
- Provides Counseling and Social care (e.g. food, furniture).

6. Youth Services

Two neighborhood Youth Programs began as Parish Projects but now are separate private not-for-profit agencies providing services for neighborhood youth.

1. The Centre, Inc. - A drop in center and multi-service center for neighborhood youth.
2. Prologue Alternative High School - An alternative high school for drop-outs.

We still provide counseling, recreation programs, camping trips, etc., for neighborhood youth. Also we have a Big Brother program accepting referrals from Juvenile and Boys Court.

7. Summer Programs

Each summer we provide supervision for 20 or so teens enrolled in NYC or similar programs. In addition this summer we plan to be a summer nutritional site serving breakfast and lunch to neighborhood children.

It has been a policy of our agency to aid and provide expertise in helping worthwhile projects get on their own two feet and become independent of the Parish. We have helped and been involved in the formation of numerous groups now functioning independently, e.g.,

Uptown Peoples Action Program
Uptown Senior Citizens Organization
The Centre, Inc.
Prologue, Inc.
The Peoples Music School
National Day Labor Institute

Organization

Each program has a program head and numerous volunteers, professional (nurses, doctors, lawyers) and non-professional.

Father Michael Rochford, Parish Administrator supervises the programs, payroll, bookkeeping, etc.

Source of Funds

All programs are dependent upon donations to the Parish through the Sunday Collection, magazine advertisements and from wealthier parishes. Now and then we have secured a foundation grant for specific programs.

All our programs and services are available to people of the Uptown area without regard to race, creed or color.

Our staff is able to converse in Spanish, French, and Vietnamese.

April 15, 1976

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

SENIOR CITIZEN COORDINATOR

To coordinate parish senior citizen and handicapped services which includes:

Oversee parish senior citizen club.

Supervise senior citizen CETA workers (3).

Supervise and develop volunteers to aid seniors and handicapped in following activities :

1. Visits to shut-ins in nursing homes, hotels and apartment buildings.
2. Visits to neighborhood hospitals.
3. Referrals to appropriate government and private agencies.
4. Phone check up on sick and shut-ins.
5. Shopping for shut-ins.
6. Providing transportation for clinic visits, etc.
7. Canvassing buildings for seniors and handicapped in need.

Aid in placing seniors in appropriate housing and/or nursing facilities.

Ombudsmanship with agencies for seniors.

Accept senior citizen referrals in our neighborhood from downtown agencies e.g. Catholic Charities, Travelers Aid, Mayor's Office On Senior Citizens.

Conduct seminars for seniors and volunteers.

Counsel seniors with problems.

Aid, counsel and encourage terminally ill.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

SOCIAL WORKER

Operate and run the Parish Food Pantry serving 250 families a month.

Interview and service those coming for aid.

Solicit food sources and keep lines of communication open with current sources.

Be an ombudsman with governmental and private agencies for clients.

Provide consumer education, budget and referral information to clients.

Work with multi-problem families.

Supervise volunteer aids.

Relate and represent pantry to city wide food pantry and hunger organizations.

Purchase necessary foodstuffs for day to day operation of pantry.