



# CCIA Chronicle

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## Deacon Claude- Man on a Mission

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Health clinic opens!
- Hours of operation, page 4
- Volunteer profile, page 4
- Sound off, page 2

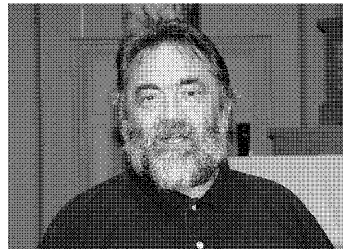
### ARTICLES WRITTEN BY:

- Matt Wood
- Kathy Meridith
- Kathy Chapman
- Steve Uebbing

*In late fall nearly four years ago, representatives from churches within the community of Canandaigua gathered. To this point, most churches identified needs and acted to meet these needs based on divine guidance and church population—a recipe that produced many great programs to touch lives of people through tangible expressions of God's love. This group, however, dared to find what they had in common and challenged each other to respond—as a collective. This was the birth of Canandaigua Churches In Action.*

Deacon Claude Lester faintly smiles as he considers the early days of Canandaigua Churches In Action, or CCIA. He balances his words between excited whisper and confident narration—the bedtime story

of a grandfather who finds joy in the telling. And who could tell it better? After all, Deacon Claude can still recall the informal conversations with members from different congregations that soon led to meetings, questions, and discussions about the common vision God planted in local churches.



“Some of the greatest growth has been when we dare to find what we have in common,” he offers while explaining the CCIA survey created to poll all

participating church congregations and identify target areas of community need—information that determined Main Street as a physical location for its visibility and accessibility. “God speaks; we have to respond.”

Most times, response is a measure of faith that propels vision into action, no matter how daunting the obstacles ahead. Deacon Claude remembers volunteering to take the roadblocks away—data input, printing, organizing—and to attend every meeting as a liaison in the early stages of the group's development, an action that surely led to the group's invitation for him to

...continued on pg three, see Deacon.

## Health Clinic Opens

Over two years ago, the CCIA executive committee held a retreat at Le Tourneau to determine the future focus of our efforts. Our goal was simple. We wanted to show the love of Christ through our actions to help those in need.

We were already helping hundreds if not thousands of people with our food and clothing programs. We had good peo-

ple running efficient and effective programs that filled the gap with food and used clothing. The Board felt our next effort had to be in the area of health care. The group had completed a survey of people using the food and clothing programs. The findings were disturbing. Only 19.8% of those responding to the survey said they went to a doctor's office for their health care.

We felt our calling was clear. We realized that we could not accomplish our goals ourselves. Realizing what we needed, we approached Thompson Health and asked them to partner. This idea seemed to fit in perfectly with Thompson's mission as it relates to the community. They put significant resources into obtaining the necessary state approvals and partnered

...continued on pg two, see Clinic.

# Sound Off



Jennifer Fuller encountered and recognized faces of poverty in Canandaigua. While volunteering in the Canandaigua Churches in Action complex on North Main Street, the 18-year-

old Canandaigua resident saw people she knew, people who were waiting to get help. "I realize what I have day to day and what they don't have. There are people out there who don't have food or clothing," she remembers of the May event involving young people from the Canandaigua First United Methodist Church.

The youth participated in "Sound-Off," an annual event aimed at raising awareness about "the plight of the poor in this country," says John Kinney, youth ministries coordinator at the church. For some 18 hours, these young people existed without cell

phones, computers, I-pods, radios and televisions. "We turned off electronics and turned on knowledge of poverty," explains Morgan Carr, 15, of Canandaigua, another participant. All agreed that poverty is not at the top of the thought list when Canandaigua is mentioned.

But the young people discovered that poverty does exist here. "That made me feel extremely bad — seeing little kids coming in with their parents," says Jennifer of the people she saw seeking assistance. Yet there are also people willing to lend a hand to those in need. Says Jennifer: "It gives you hope that people are helping ... and those helping are very caring people." "I didn't even know where and what CCIA was. It's right next door," acknowledges the Idaho-born Virgil Seaborn, 17, who moved to Canandaigua last year. He is sitting in a room at the Methodist church as

he recalls the "Sound-Off" experience. "Next door" is where the young people went to sort and fold donated clothes at St. Vincent de Paul, sort and stack donated food at the food pantry, and help in other ways.

This experience was a learning one for him and others. "They learned to do without what they otherwise might take for granted," notes Kinney. "They were humbled when they worked at the pantry and clothing areas. It was eye opening for them to see people they knew who were in need of the various services offered." Reflects Morgan: "It was a very humbling experience to realize that there are people who can't afford new clothes or they might not be eating tonight because they don't have food." "I learned," adds Virgil, "that I have more than some people, but ... everybody is the same ... God created us all the same way."

*"We turned off electronics and turned on knowledge of poverty."*

*-Morgan Carr*

## FREE CLINIC HOURS

### Week A

Tuesday 12-8pm  
 Wednesday 8-4pm  
 Friday 8-12 noon

### Week B

Wednesday 8-4pm  
 Friday 8-12 noon  
 Saturday 12-8pm

## Clinic ... continued from page one.

with us in every phase of the work.

We found the perfect place for our clinic, down the hall from our food and clothing operations at 120 North Main. With the help of several volunteers and their talents, we were able to get the space in working order. Care is provided by helping clients access the health care system.

Clients are treated the same as any other patients in one of Thompson's physician practices. The clinic provides generous discounts based upon financial capability. We then assist the patient with our own charity and assist in making sure our patients are obtaining the government health care for which they are eligible. We also make sure our patients are aware that we can pro-

vide spiritual support or referrals to other agencies and physicians.

The clinic can be reached at (585) 396-0190.

# Deacon

... continued from page one.

serve as interim leader of CCIA.

Sitting in front of stained glass windows, Deacon Claude describes finding the start up money, which allowed CCIA to rent space on 120 North Main Street to house its programs that provided food and clothing. "The Daily Messenger picked up the story of churches working together, and the property manager at 120 North Main actually found us," he chuckles. "Part of the whole attitude behind this is talking about Christ's love and sharing Christ's blessings—no church politics. This isn't a new church. This is a joint venture."

Churches in Canandaigua are responding—together.

"There is a unity that God wants us to find in our diversity, and that is to be One," Deacon Claude encourages. "We have many examples of faith, courage, and trust. Now, we're being called on to give our brand name to the situation."

As CCIA looks at this present and to the coming future, the organization gives thanks for the successes of its food and clothing ministries, but recognizes many unmet needs in this community, targeting health care as its next mission. Working with Thompson Hospital, CCIA has opened a health clinic, conveniently located within its Main Street headquarters, to provide medical services to needy families—a vision for which Deacon

Claude has persevered.

Though he recently yielded his directorial duties, choosing to remain active as a in-the-background supporter rather than leader, Deacon Claude reflects on his memories of CCIA, his passion evident in his words. "I was able to use my gifts as a person in a more universal church. It will always be one of the times in my life that I can say I was doing it right."

***"God speaks,  
we have to  
respond."  
-Deacon  
Claude.***

# Liz

... continued from page four.

Separate rooms for summer and winter clothing allows for easier sorting and selection. Any clothing deemed unsuitable is donated to the St. Pauly Society and is sent to third world countries where the need is even greater. As Liz explained, no donation goes to waste.

To make a donation, you may drop clothing in the box behind the building or to receive a tax receipt, bring your donation into the room during hours of operation. In addition to clothing, household items such as sheets, towels and pillows are also

Not surprisingly, Liz's passion for service extends beyond the Clothing Room. She has been an active Literacy Volunteer for three years, currently working with two pupils. One of her pupils just received his American citizenship. A proud moment, not only for him, but for his teacher as well! You can also find Liz working at All Things Art and singing with the Finger Lakes Chorale.

As Volunteer Coordinator for the Clothing Room, Liz's job is to ensure adequate staffing during hours of operation.

Currently, about 24 volunteers work at the center. "Always room for more!" she will tell you. In fact, Liz will be glad to train anyone who wants to join in this ministry. The time commitment is up to each volunteer and could be anywhere from two to six hours a week. Liz's infectious laugh and outgoing personality promise an enjoyable experience for trainees. She would be happy to tell you about the rewards of Literacy Volunteers, too. For more information you can call Liz at (58) 394-3980.



***"There is always room for more!"***



## Canandaigua Churches in Action

120 North Main Street  
Canandaigua, NY 14424

**We will treat everyone with the love,  
respect and compassion of Christ..**

## Ministry Contact Phone Numbers

Offices are located on the ground level of 120 North Main Street, Canandaigua, NY

On street parking adjacent to entrance door #1

Designated parking lot and handicapped accessible parking at entrance door #5

Canandaigua Churches in Action\_\_\_\_\_ (585) 396-2242

Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes\_\_ (585) 394-0190

CCIA Food Pantry\_\_\_\_\_ (585) 394-7450

CCIA Food Pantry @ Zion Fellowship\_ (585) 394-7450  
(5188 Bristol Street Ext., Canandaigua)

Care Net\_\_\_\_\_ (585) 393-0437  
(after hours—1-800-395-HELP)

Crosswinds Downtown\_\_\_\_\_ (585) 393-4310

St. Vincent de Paul\_\_\_\_\_ (585) 394-3980

# Volunteer Spotlight

When Liz Messmer moved to Canandaigua three years ago after 24 years as a teacher for the Department of Defense in England, she joined St. Mary's parish and sang in the choir. But as an active woman with a desire to help people, she felt an obligation to do more.

St. Mary's, under the auspices of the St. Vincent DePaul Society, was operating a Clothing Room. Liz offered her services. The Clothing Room has since moved to 120 N. Main St. under the CCIA umbrella and Liz has recently been named Scheduling Coordinator.

As Liz explained, other agencies accept donations of clothing for people in need, but the St. Vincent DePaul Clothing Room is the only one to offer all clothing free of charge to anyone who needs it.

And the need has been growing. Liz mentioned that on a recent Saturday the room served 31 people, many with kids in tow. She's seen many repeat customers, including some who have not visited the Clothing Room in several years.

The room is open to the public Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00PM to 2:30PM and on Saturdays from 10:00AM till 12 noon. Two volunteers are on hand during these hours to help clients and do the "desk work" as Liz calls it. In between times, volunteers come in to sort clothing by size and stock the shelves. As Liz pointed out, "These folks just seem to know what has to be done. Some even take the clothes home for laundering if needed!"

When clients come in, their names

are recorded on a 3x5 card, along with names and ages of all family members. Clients can browse the shelves to see what is new. Their selections are recorded on the cards and the information is saved for their next visit. This tracking system allows the staff to better understand their clients' needs. Liz explained that they would like to have this data computerized, not only for ease in looking up clients but also to coordinate with the food voucher room next door.

When asked what kinds of donations are needed Liz said, "Everything!" Currently, the need for kids' clothes sizes 0 to 4 years along with larger women's clothing (size 2X and up) is especially acute. As donations come in they are sorted by size and season.

...continued on pg 3, see Liz.

TO VOLUNTEER  
AT THE CLOTH-  
ING ROOM  
CALL:

(585) 394-3980