

Cate's Kids Back to School Program

This year's *Cate's Kids Back to School Program* was coordinated by Mercy Associate **Eileen Guiry**. Eileen oversaw the donation of thousands of dollars in clothing and school supplies, which were distributed to the children of families in need. **Linda Vigers-Amyot** and **Sue Ikenhofer**, also Mercy Associates, were invaluable in assisting Eileen in this effort.

Because of the generous contributions we received, 103 children were served by the program, a 300% increase over last year. The children were from our client families and referral requests from The St. Paul Center in Rensselaer and Emmaus House in Albany. Executive Director Richard Zazycki stated, "Seeing first hand the happiness and joy of children coming into Circles for their backpacks and school supplies was a most gratifying experience".

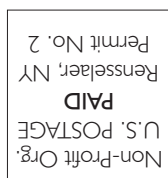
In addition to the supplies donated by many Mercy Associates, money received enabled the volunteers to make purchases that could be matched to expressed needs. **Sister Rita Carr** from the Mercy Motherhouse ran a raffle which raised several hundred dollars for back-to-school supplies. The Sisters' efforts were responsible for more than half of the cash donated to the program. As Eileen remarked, "it is always so wonderful to have the support of the Sisters at '634'. As was true for Catherine McAuley, "they serve the poor for God, not for thanks."

Clothing, paper, binders, pens, dictionaries and so many more needs face families in preparing their children for a return to school. For an underserved population, the cost of these items can be overwhelming. The Cate's Kids Back to School



Circles staff receptionist Debbie Wilson readies one of the many backpacks donated for students.

Program is one more way in which Circles of Mercy carries out its mission to serve individuals in need, especially women and women with children. •





SPONSORED BY
THE SISTERS OF MERCY
NORTHEAST COMMUNITY

Mission Statement:

Circles of Mercy honors the dignity of each person, offers hospitality and provides services to instill hope and empower individuals to reach their full potential.

FALL 2007

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Director:

Richard Zazycki

Hours:

M-F, 9 a.m.– 4 p.m.

Programs:

- Mentoring
- Tutoring
- Computer Training
- Support Groups
- Parenting Classes
- Self Enhancement Groups
- Professional Clothing
- Advocacy
- Catherine's Closet

• • • Celebrating 10 years of providing hope, hospitality and empowerment to individuals in the Rensselaer Community, especially women and women with children. • • •

Connections

A Burst of Activity

This is a busy time of year for us at Circles of Mercy. While the Christmas Adopt-A-Family program is going on, we are doing the groundwork for another year of Income Tax preparation as part of the VITA Program.

Our Adopt-A-Family program began in November and will continue through Christmas Eve. Our goal is to provide our client families with clothing, toys, and whatever other essentials they may need. Last year we were able to assist 68 families, 80 adults and 155 children, by providing each person in the family with at least one Christmas gift. We expect the need to be even greater this year.



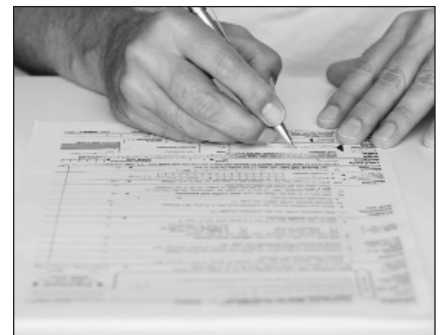
Even Santa needs helpers! Volunteers wrap gifts for the Adopt-A-Family Christmas season.

If you would like to help us and make a donation, please contact the Circles of Mercy office. Our clients need you.

Together we can help them to have a Christmas they will remember!

This will be the fourth year that Circles of Mercy serves as a site for the Internal Revenue Service's VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program. Marilyn Hart will once again be our site coordinator. To qualify for this program family income must be under \$40,000. Each year our participation in this program grows. Last year we prepared 257 tax returns. That was 20% of the Rensselaer County total. The average adjusted gross income was \$16,497 and the average refund including all tax credits was \$1,108.

Since the program keeps getting larger, we are in need of additional volunteers. If you are interested in helping us do income taxes, training is provided. Don't be intimidated. The program is designed to do basic taxes, not the most complex. People who have done this in the past enjoy our low stress environment. Volunteers help each other. If they feel they do not have adequate knowledge, they are able to pass the client to someone more experienced. Our staff could also use volunteer assistance with answering calls, scheduling appointments, greeting clients and confirming appointments.



There is great satisfaction in being part of this program. People are so grateful not only for having their taxes done, but also for the money it saves them. For people on a limited income it is a hardship to pay for tax preparation at one of the nationally advertised companies. •

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CATHERINE'S CLOSET

THRIFT SHOP

11 Washington Street
Rensselaer

Open Monday - Friday
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Clothes & Household Goods

Connections

A newsletter to promote the mission and values of Circles of Mercy, a program sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy.

Eleanor Guerin, RSM, Editor
Joanne Scheibly, Editor

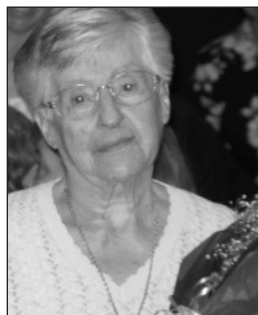
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Spotlight



Hilda Talentino

At our June Gala, nonagenarian **Hilda Talentino** received our first annual *Sister Gail Rieth, RSM, Volunteer Service Award*. Hilda was recognized for donating her time by volunteering every Friday at Circles, working in Catherine's Closet. Our staff and other volunteers are continuously impressed by her ability to work and volunteer at the golden age of 98 years. A retired community health nurse from upstate New York and a world traveler, Hilda has inspired all who know her with her tireless efforts, wonderful perspective on life and her dedication to serving others.

We would also like to acknowledge **John Houghtaling** for his generosity to Circles of Mercy. Johnny's Deli & Market, on Washington Street, kept our staff and volunteers in sandwiches and other lunch fare for many months. Johnny also generously provided food donations for Circles fundraising activities and refreshments when needed for our special occasions at very reasonable costs. Sadly, the deli and market closed this past summer. When he was closing his business, Johnny donated well over a \$1,000 of non-food items like paper products, plastic ware, diapers, wipes and a large assortment of personal care products to Circles. They are now available to clients as needed.

John is currently hard at work at the River's Edge Tack Shop, 238 Broadway, in Rensselaer. We thank him for his charity and kindness to Circles of Mercy and wish him the very best. •

"Hope and Empowerment": A Client Story

Over the past year we have been mentoring a young mother with a child. She had dropped out of high school in order to complete her pregnancy. She initially became acquainted with us while visiting our thrift shop. After becoming a client, we assisted her in accessing social service benefits and programs here at Circles. As the result of several conversations we referred this young mother to Questar III, our local BOCES program, to get her GED. After successfully completing that program, we assisted her in applying to the LPN program offered by Educational Opportunity Center in Troy. She continues with that training today and looks forward to being employed in the near future as a licensed practical nurse. She needed encouragement and support to help her to believe in herself and to guide her to the right programs so that she can become self-sufficient.

This client wants to give back by helping to care for others as she was helped and supported when she needed it. Everyday here at Circles of Mercy, we try to live the mission and vision of Catherine McAuley, the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy. This story is a small example of how we instill hope and empower clients to reach their full potential. •

"The Lord and Master of our house is a faithful provider."

— Catherine McAuley

Director's Report

Recently **Jack Sweeney**, the Chair of our Finance Committee, and I reviewed our financial picture. Since our continuing fiscal challenge is in the area of revenue generation not expense control, we would like to briefly share some thoughts with you.

We operate with one full time employee, me as Director, and **Debby Wilson**, our part-time receptionist. We also must pay the rent and utilities for our operational spaces on Washington Street in Rensselaer, which houses our office, computer training and meeting area and Catherine's Closet our clothing thrift shop.

We have been blessed by having a banner year in all of our special fund raising events. The June Gala, A Taste of Mercy, and the Freihofer's Community Walk in memory of **Sister Gail Rieth** were very successful. However, as wonderful as this support has been, these events only

provide a portion of the funds we need to keep our doors open. Recognizing this reality, we recently launched the first of what will be our Annual Fund drive. Knowing your interest in Circles, we believe you want to see that our many services and programs continue to be provided each day here in Rensselaer. Please consider becoming a Circles Annual Fund supporter. We promise that we will always use your contribution with great diligence and care. Please make a donation of \$15, \$25, \$50 or whatever you can afford, to help us continue the Mercy charism. Your financial gift will help us provide direct life skills to those struggling each day to make ends meet.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for your interest in our ongoing efforts to provide hope, hospitality and empowerment to those needy individuals, especially women and women with children, who come

through our doors daily. As many of you know, Circles of Mercy is celebrating ten years of providing services to the Rensselaer Community.

The Mercy mission of Sisters of Mercy foundress Catherine McAuley, includes: dignity of the person, compassion, hope and hospitality, stewardship, leadership, and collaboration, with a special concern for the poor and disadvantaged. In order to carry on and make sure that "Spirit of Mercy" is alive, well and growing here at Circles, we depend upon your continuing financial support. "Our Circle continues to grow, ever widens, is never ending and is always in need of friends." •



Richard Zazycki

Be a Christmas Angel



As we move through the holiday season, let us be grateful for all that we have and generous to those who have much less.

Yes, I want to be part of Circles as an angel of Mercy!
Enclosed is my donation in the amount of _____

I request to make a donation:

IN MEMORY OF: _____

IN HONOR OF: _____

Please check if you desire the donation to be acknowledged in a future newsletter.

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Please make checks payable to Circles of Mercy.
Mail to: Circles of Mercy, 11 Washington Street, Rensselaer, NY 12144

