

Catholic Charities: Providing HOPE for 100 years

Guest Editorial by Deacon Steve Schumer

Over the past several months, the Western New York community has been reeling with losses and tragedies, each one reminding us how fragile life is. But in spite of, or because of, these adversities, signs of hope, strength and unity have continued to emerge rather quickly.

Consider the recent blizzard where we saw countless acts of selflessness and heroism by first responders, volunteers and just everyday folks who stepped up and helped – and even saved – their neighbors.

At Catholic Charities, we thrive on the hope we see every

day. In a mother who escaped a violent situation for her and her children. In a young man who started a new life in America after fleeing Afghanistan. We see hope in people of all ages and of all faiths – from the support our foster grandparents give, to teens spreading awareness about the importance of good mental health. Hope is everywhere. It is at the root of what we do.

During and after these overwhelming events that have shaken our community, Catholic Charities has been here as a beacon of hope. Our counseling services, food pantries, and basic needs and housing assistance of-

fer crucial support. We are here for the most vulnerable among us and for anyone in need. We are here for the community. We are here for you.

In fact, Catholic Charities has been a beacon of HOPE here for 100 years. In October 1923, Catholic Charities was born out of the Diocese of Buffalo from a collection of institutions serving the very young to the elderly. During its first year, Catholic Charities served about 12,500 people. Last year, Catholic Charities' programs and services supported more than 134,000 individuals, families and children.

We are inspired by our centen-

nial year, and recently launched this year's annual Appeal, with a goal of \$9.5 million. Support of the Appeal will help ensure critical programs and services administered by Catholic Charities and many diocesan ministries through the "Fund for the Faith" – so needed in our community – will continue to be available. The Appeal is always needed. Some years, like this one, it is particularly meaningful.

The annual Appeal has been an integral part of Catholic Charities' century-long history. In the 98 years of the Appeal, close to half a billion dollars has been raised. That figure alone

illustrates how vital the annual Appeal is.

When you donate, you play an essential role not only in the growth and success of Catholic Charities, but in the Western New York community at large. Your gift provides more than just a meal for a family, or the stability of a home for someone in need. It provides hope.

Donations to Appeal 2023 can be made at ccwny.org/donate through June 30. Thank you for your continued support.

Deacon Steve Schumer is president and CEO of Catholic Charities of Buffalo.

NYSEG, RG&E offer safety tips ahead of extreme cold

New York State Electric & Gas (NYSEG) and Rochester Gas and Electric (RG&E) are reminding customers to take measures to stay safe and warm with extreme cold weather moving into New York this weekend. Temperatures are expected to plunge into the single digits through Saturday. Temperatures will be especially dangerous during the overnight hours, potentially falling below zero. More mild conditions are forecast for Sunday.

NYSEG and RG&E warn that the risk of fire, carbon monoxide poisoning, and other hazards can increase during frigid weather. The companies urge customers to take measures to stay safe during the cold snap.

"With the forecast signaling extremely cold temperatures beginning Thursday evening, we encour-

age our customers to take some simple, practical steps to keep their friends, family and homes safe throughout this cold snap," said NYSEG and RG&E President and CEO Trish Nilsen. "We're preparing for the weather, and we advise you to, as well. These cold temperatures can become dangerous quickly. We want customers to be aware of the proper safety precautions to take."

NYSEG and RG&E offered the following tips:

Home Generators

Any generator that plugs into a home's electrical system must be installed by a certified electrician. Always follow the generator safety guidelines, such as those listed in this publication when operating a generator. Generators should be placed outdoors and away from

doors and windows to prevent exposure to carbon monoxide.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors should be located on every level of a home, outside all sleeping areas. Test them monthly and replace the batteries at least twice a year. If you suspect a natural gas leak, get up, get out and get away. Then immediately call NYSEG at 800-572-1121, RG&E at 800-743-1702 or 911 from a safe location.

Appliances

Never use a stove or oven to stay warm. Only space heaters intended for indoor use should be operated indoors or in enclosed spaces, in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Space Heaters

Use only space heaters that have

been tested and certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory. Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions, and never use a device designed for outdoor use indoors. Place the space heater on a level surface away from foot traffic, at least 3 feet from combustible materials. Inspect the cord for fraying and, after plugging it in, periodically feel the cord near the outlet to make sure the plastic is not getting hot. Do not run the space heater cord under a rug or carpeting, and never use an extension cord for a space heater. Keep children and pets away, and turn off the space heater when leaving the area.

More space heater safety information can be found on the U.S. Department of Energy website, at <https://energy.gov/energysaver/>

portable-heaters.

Heating, Hot Water, Plumbing

Customers should keep exhaust vents, gas meters and regulators clear of snow and ice as they clean up after winter storms. Snow, ice and other debris can block exhaust vents for furnaces, water heaters and similar appliances, potentially causing toxic fumes and poisonous carbon monoxide to build up indoors.

Water pipes that are exposed to cold temperatures may freeze and burst. Don't ignore drips or odd noises from your heating system. Wrap exposed pipes in the basement with pipe insulation to help them retain heat and avoid freezing.

Report a Power Interruption

To report a power interruption, contact NYSEG at 1-800-572-1131 or RG&E at 1-800-743-1701.

AAA offers auto tips ahead of arctic blast

Motorists may experience car battery problems as temperatures drop

By AAA of Western and Central New York

An arctic blast is expected to grip the region at the end of this week with frigid temperatures and wind chills. In some areas, temperatures are forecasted to drop below zero degrees. The cold spell is expected to begin Friday and last through Saturday. AAA is preparing for an increase in call volume, especially for dead batteries, as temperatures fall.

Motorists who need assistance should request road service via the free AAA mobile app or AAA.com to avoid waiting on hold amid high call volume over the telephone.

Extremely cold temperatures in the forecast will cause many car batteries to fail, especially if they are not driven over the weekend. Driving your car is the best way to maintain its charge.

Call volume on Monday, Feb. 6, is expected to be high, as many people will choose to stay home over the weekend – and find dead

car batteries on Monday morning upon return to work. Motorists should keep this in mind, and they shouldn't wait until the last minute to make sure their vehicle car starts. If possible, park inside a garage where it is warmer.

Did you know that a car battery loses a third of its power in freezing temperatures? Why? Because, as the air outside cools, the oil in the vehicle thickens, making it harder to turn the engine over.

Motorists should be aware of signs that show a car's battery is nearing the end of its life. Here are some things to look out for:

- ✓ Vehicle cranks slowly when trying to start;
- ✓ Grinding, clicking or buzzing when the ignition is turned on;
- ✓ Vehicle has stalled;
- ✓ Headlights dim when idling, but brighten when the driver revs the engine; and
- ✓ Battery is more than 3 years old

To avoid being stranded due to a battery problem, have the battery inspected at every oil change to make sure the cable connections are clean and tight, and the hold-down hardware is secure. Once a battery reaches 3 years of age, have it tested annually. AAA surveys find that two-thirds of American drivers have never proactively had their car battery tested. A test will identify if the battery has deteriorated to the point where replacement is recommended to

prevent an unexpected failure. In most areas, members can use AAA Mobile Battery Service to have a battery tested for free and replaced (if necessary) at their home or work. Learn more at www.AAA.com/Battery.

As upstate New York's largest member services organization, AAA Western and Central New York provides more than 862,000 members with travel, insurance, financial

and automotive-related services. Since its founding in 1900, AAA has been a leading advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. Visit AAA at www.AAA.com.



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