

## Group launches annual appeal

### Catholic Charities sees urgency in its mission as local poverty grows

One out of every six Americans now lives in poverty—perhaps the biggest threat to physical, emotional, mental and spiritual family health in the Archdiocese of Newark, the Garden State and the nation. The face of poverty is familiar. The poor are members of our family, our friends, our neighbors.

Ongoing sluggish economic conditions and high unemployment rates magnify the concerns for family health. Today more than 46 million Americans meet the federal government's guidelines that determine poverty—for a family of four, poor means having an annual income of \$22,350 or less.

On the precipice of launching its 2011 annual appeal to support emergency shelters, family healthcare services and transitional housing Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Newark is redefining its mission to better explain just how dramatic the poverty crisis is in the four counties of the Archdiocese of Newark.

Redefining the group's mission is more than just a marketing campaign. The mission to assist the less fortunate has become more urgent because of recent cuts in government funding. As a result, finding better ways to communicate the mission is more critical.

When Catholic Charities opened its first shelters for the homeless in 1986, local governments fully supported their operating costs. Now, as a result of a 13-percent cut from state and local governments, Charities must raise over \$500,000 a year to meet the demand for emergency shelter.

"We are working to help people understand that there is even more of a need to give now than ever before," explained Dr. Philip Frese, chief executive officer of Catholic Charities. To continue its work Catholic Charities' goal is to raise \$500,000 this year through its annual appeal. For more information or to make a donation to the annual appeal, contact Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Newark Annual Appeal, 590 North 7th St., Newark, New Jersey 07107 (phone: 973-639-6531) or visit the organization's Web site ([www.ccannj.net](http://www.ccannj.net)).

The first step in developing the 2011 annual appeal strategy and communicate its mission, according to Dr. Frese, was to bring to fruition various initiatives being developed by the organization. Catholic Charities recently named Wendy McNeil as the person to implement those initiatives.



Dr. Philip Frese

McNeil, a development consultant, recently was tapped as the point person to develop and launch Catholic Charities initiatives for the 2011 annual appeal. Under her direction and through a variety of social media and marketing tools, McNeil will lead a new education and communication "re-branding" program to help Catholic Charities illuminate its mission, programs and goals.

Since 1997, McNeil, who has an extensive background in marketing and fund raising, has worked as a consultant with a focus on major gifts and capital campaigns. Her previous position was at Covenant House, New York.

"When we examined everything Catholic Charities does, we realized that Catholic Charities is about alleviating the harmful effects of poverty," she said. "Whether it's about caring for those who are HIV-positive or for those who are homeless or for children suffering from abuse and mental illness, Catholic Charities is charged with serving the least of our brothers and sisters with respect and dignity."

Catholic Charities is developing new ways to better engage its supporters through online communications and social media. This includes a redesigned Web site, a Facebook page and a Twitter account. "Of course, we will continue to use effective traditional methods to contact our audience," McNeil said. "The revamping of the Web site and the creation of a social networking presence will enhance our efforts, especially in these difficult times."

American author James Baldwin once wrote that "anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be poor." It is also expensive to care for the poor. This year, Catholic Charities estimates it will spend \$4.1 million to operate its emergency shelters and transitional housing facilities. McNeil said a family living in New Jersey must earn \$51,044 a year in order to afford the fairmarket rent of \$1,276 a month for a two-bedroom apartment. "That means an individual making \$7.25 an hour, the minimum wage, must work 135 hours or have three and a half full-time jobs a week in order to afford a modest, two-bedroom apartment," McNeil explained. "Is there any wonder that the homeless population is increasing?"



Wendy McNeil