

CCHD grants empower poor to effect change

Michele Granruth walked out of prison with nowhere to go and no plan.

“So, I made a deal with God,” she said, speaking to attendees of the annual Catholic Campaign for Human Development Awards Luncheon at Baltimore’s St. Francis of Assisi Aug. 25.

“If he could change my life so I wouldn’t have to go to prison anymore, I would help one person every day,” she elaborated. “So, I’ve continued to do (that) these last 20 years.”

Granruth’s organization, The Ragpicker Inc. was one of 12 total honored with national and local grants at the luncheon. Her group received a technical assistant grant to help ex-prisoners and homeless people learn skills, such as painting, to emerge from their poverty in Baltimore City. Individuals are provided a roof over their heads, a purpose in their lives and counseling to overcome problems.

“It’s become very large and we can’t do it on our own anymore,” Granruth said. “With the economy being the way it is, there is no money out there for funding. We thank you very much. This is a big thing for us. This is the first time we’ve ever gotten any help.”

That gratefulness came from many groups receiving aid at the luncheon.

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development is an effort by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to address poverty by assisting groups working to address the root causes. During a November 2010 collection, \$211,800 was

collected in parishes across the Archdiocese of Baltimore. The 2011 grants total of \$319,000 was the highest in Baltimore's CCHD history, coming from \$287,000 nationally and \$32,000 locally.

Auxiliary Bishop Denis J. Madden, a longtime supporter of CCHD's efforts, offered a prayer and welcome to attendees.

"Looking around this room and seeing all this great spirit and great workers working for social justice, peace and to eradicate poverty, it is very, very encouraging," he told the group. "You are deserving and all of us are enriched and inspired by your work to bring peace and justice to this world of ours."

Supporting local efforts at the luncheon were Father Ty Hullinger, pastor of St. Dominic and the Catholic Community of St. Anthony of Padua and Most Precious Blood and Vincentian Father Sylvester Peterka, pastor of St. Cecilia and Immaculate Conception, all in Baltimore City.

Sean Wendlinder, a regional grant manager for CCHD at the bishop's conference, has been working with some of the recipients in recent months and said he was looking forward to scheduling more site visits.

"Our mission is to provide funding for groups of low income and poor individuals and families who are coming together empowered and self-determined to create change in their community and eliminate poverty," Wendlinder told those gathered. "The mission of USSCB and CCHD is founded on the principles of the church's Catholic social teaching."

Wendlinder said the teachings discuss how we are to live in society and in community with one another, how to work for the common good and to promote the rights of workers, human dignity, the importance of the family in society and strengthening the human person.

“You all are our partners,” he said. “You all are the rubber hitting the road. You provide the opportunity for us to put social teaching into practice. I applaud your work.”

Closing the day, longtime CCHD Baltimore director Monsignor William Burke told the crowd how happy he was with their efforts.

“The idea,” he told them, “is to build communities of peace and justice.”

National Grant recipients: People Acting Together in Howard, \$60,000; Youth as Resources, \$57,000; City Wide Education Group, \$40,000; Out for Justice, \$30,000; Arundel House of Hope, \$25,000; Bridge, \$25,000; Communities Unlimited, \$25,000; Immigration Outreach Action Center, \$25,000. Local Grant recipients: The Ragpicker Inc., \$5,000; Pleasant View Gardens Resident Council, \$6,000; Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative, \$11,000; Proyecta Esperanza, \$10,000.