

**A MARDI GRAS TO REMEMBER
Feeding the Hungry and Fighting Poverty
on Long Island**

AN INTERFAITH YOUTH REFLECTION

Tuesday, February 5th, 2008
7:15-9:45 PM

**Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church
1434 Straight Path, Wyandanch**

Sponsored by MICAH*: A Campaign to End LI Poverty
(Mobilized Interfaith Coalition Against hunger)

Hosted by the Youth Ministry and Public Policy Education Committee of OLMM:

This evening of Prayer, Music and Reflection will explore:

- Who is poor on Long Island?
- Where do our poor neighbors live?
- How can we help poor people out of poverty?
- How do poor families survive Long Island's high cost of living?

Directions to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church: From Southern State Parkway, exit at Straight Path north. The church is about 3 miles north on your left. From Northern State or the LIE, exit at Rte. 231 south (Deer Park Ave.) Proceed about a mile south of the LIE to Straight Path which intersects diagonally on the right (Across from the Upper Tabernacle Church.) Go south on Straight Path about 5 miles, crossing the railroad tracks. The church is ahead on your right.

REGISTRATION

Return by January 31st to: PSM, Catholic Charities, 90 Cherry Lane, NY 11801 OR
call (516)-733-7037 OR Fax (516) 733-7098 or e-mail:
robinson.mary@catholiccharities.cc

Name _____ Parish _____

Persons attending _____

**A Mardi Gras to Remember
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Agenda

- 7:15 – 7:25** Welcomes and Opening Prayers:
Richard Koubek, Catholic Charities, MICAH
Rev. Tom Goodhue, LICC, MICAH
Fr. Bill Brisotti, Pastor, OLM
- 7:25 -7:35** Music/dance by the Vanettes (to be confirmed)
- 7:35 – 7:55** Witness Talks: What LI Youth Have Done for Their Hungry and Poor Neighbors (includes two brief videos)
- Syd Mandelbaum: Rock and Wrap It Up
 - Tom Smith, Diocesan Youth Director, Diocese of Rockville Centre
 - Peter White: Students for 60,000, Northport HS (?)
- 7:55 – 8:25** Who is Poor on LI? (Richard Koubek)
- 8:25 – 8:35** Witness Talk (Gerald Ryan Outreach Coordinator Noel Campbell and perhaps a client)
- 8:35 – 9:00** Breakout groups: How do we help the poor on LI?
- 9:00 - 9:15** Group reports/summary (Richard Koubek)
- 9:15 - 9:20** Closing musical selection (Vanettes?) and blessing
- 9:20 - 9:45** Fellowship and sign-up opportunities for youth groups

HIDDEN POVERTY: THE MAIN CAUSE OF HUNGER ON LONG ISLAND

WHO ARE LONG ISLAND'S POOR?

- The US government defines poverty as a family of four earning less than \$20,600 a year.
- Using this “official” definition, only about 5.6% of LI families are “poor.”
- But, Catholic Charities, Adelphi University’s *Vital Signs* study and others estimate that it takes about \$40,000 a year for a family of four to live a life of minimal dignity on L.I. Families earning less than \$40,000 are actually poor here because of our high cost of living. (See the budget on the reverse side)
- About 21% LI families are struggling at less than \$40,000 in a region where the median household income is \$93,000.
- Many of these working poor people have to choose between paying their rent and feeding their children each month. This is why a LI Cares/Island Harvest study found over 259,000 Long Islanders sought help at a food pantry in 2005.
- People earning less than \$40,000 tend to work in service or office jobs. They make up about a quarter of the LI workforce.
- Yet, despite their low salaries and daily struggles, these working families are entitled to very few government services. Food stamps, Medicaid (health insurance for the poor) and most other supports are cut off when a family earns about \$24,000 a year.
- People earning up to about \$50,000 can get some government services:
 - Government subsidized child care BUT they have to pay about 20% of the costs out of pocket.
 - A Section 8 voucher (in which the government pays 70% of their rent) BUT there are long waiting lists and few available rental apartments.
 - Child Health Plus government subsidized health insurance BUT there are some premium costs and adults are generally not covered.
- While LI white unemployment is only 3%, black unemployment is 6% and Hispanic unemployment is 9%. About 16% of LI blacks are officially “poor.”

WHERE DO POOR PEOPLE LIVE ON LI?

- Poor people are highly concentrated in a small number of communities and are often hidden from the rest of LI.
- But working poor people can be found in almost every LI community.
- LI is the most racially segregated region in the US.
- Because of racial discrimination, 90% of blacks (both poor and middle class) live in only 20% of LI communities. Hispanics are also highly segregated.
- LI is the 7th least affordable place to live in the US.
- We are not supposed to spend more than 30% of our monthly income on housing. Using this formula, you would have to earn \$25 an hour (\$52,000 a year) to afford a typical two-bedroom LI rental apartment (\$1320/month).
- About 26% of LI families are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Many, especially renters, are spending 50% of their income on housing.
- LI needs almost 100,000 new units of affordable rental and ownership housing.

ARE POOR CHILDREN PROPERLY EDUCATED ON LI?

- LI school districts are highly segregated by race and class. Over 50% of African American and Hispanic children are concentrated in just 13 of the 125 LI school districts.

- Poor school districts spend less on the education of their children. Compare:

	<u>Manhasset</u>	<u>Wyandanch</u>
○ Spending per pupil	\$22,000	\$16,000
○ 10 th Grade English Class Size	15	29
○ Median Teacher’s Salary	\$76,500	\$53,000
○ Grads Attending 4yr College	83%	48%

CAN A LONG ISLAND FAMILY OF FOUR GET BY ON \$40,000 A YEAR?

Here is a budget for a Long Island family of four to live “a life of minimum dignity.” This is a family defined as “low income” by Adelphi University’s *Vital Signs* study, but **not considered “poor”** using the Federal government’s \$20,600 definition of poverty. Does an annual income of \$40,000 provide this family a “life of minimum dignity?” What other expenses, such as recreation, cable TV, etc., are not included in this budget?

Budget for a Family of Four To Live a “Life of Minimum Dignity” on LI

<u>Budget Item</u>	<u>Monthly Expenditure</u>
Food	\$420
Rent (2 bedroom apartment, with utilities)	\$1,304
Telephone	\$65
Auto maintenance: gas, insurance, repairs, loan	\$434
Clothes	\$140
Miscellaneous: household, personal hygiene, bedding, etc.	\$350
Federal/state taxes	\$670
Monthly Total:	\$3,333
Annual Total:	\$40,000

The family in this budget has their utilities included in the rent, has health insurance and has access to free child care. What if their circumstances changed and they had to pay for these additional expenses? **Where will this family find an additional \$1,020 a month if they had to pay: \$250 a month for their utilities; \$400 a month for health insurance; \$370 a month for child care?**

(Source: *Poverty Amid Plenty: What We See on Long Island* published by Catholic Charities and the Adelphi University School of Social Work, 2001. Budget adjusted to 2007 dollars.)

<p>WHAT IS THE <i>MOST IMPORTANT AND REALISTIC</i> PATH OUT OF POVERTY? Which ONE of the following would you choose to help poor people on Long Island? WHY?</p>

1. Unionizing workers in order to improve their salaries and benefits?
2. Providing incentives (tax credits or subsidies) for businesses in poor communities?
3. Organizing poor communities so they can have the political power needed to influence school district, town, county, state and federal officials?
4. Building more affordable housing?
5. Working to reduce racial and class segregation on LI housing?
6. Providing more state educational aid for poor school districts (even if wealthier districts get less aid)?
7. Providing government supports to the working poor families earning under \$35,000 such as health insurance, college tuition assistance, free childcare, lower taxes?