



# #Catholic TRANSCRIPT

The Newspaper of the Archdiocese of Hartford

Vol. 12, No. 9 • September 2008 • ©2008 The Catholic Transcript, Inc.

## Transformed church serves family purposes

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NEW HAVEN – In a remarkable transformation, the Archdiocese of Hartford reopened the former St. Donato Church, closed three years ago, as the new home of the Catholic Charities Family Service Center during ceremonies Aug. 12.

“It’s beautiful,” said Mary Altieri, 94, who had been a parishioner of St. Donato’s since 1936, and who still remembers hearing the news at Christmas in 2005 that the largely Italian parish with dwindling numbers of parishioners would close.

“I was so afraid they were going to tear it down,” she continued, “but it’s gorgeous.”

As Archbishop Henry J. Mansell blessed and dedicated the center during an open house and ribbon-cutting ceremony, guests toured the two-story, 6,000-square-foot facility – newly refurbished at a cost of \$1.7 million – that includes 15 offices, meeting rooms, a kitchen and an elevator.

“We know the sacred character of this building over the years, but we also know ... that the services we’re providing [through Catholic Charities] are sacred services,”

said Archbishop Mansell.

Representatives from organizations that partner with Catholic Charities, as well as pastors and parishioners from nearby St. Rose and St. Francis parishes in the city’s largely Latino Fair Haven section, were on hand to view the modernized facility. It will house family services for children as well as mental health and substance abuse services for adults.

The Archbishop shared the ribbon-cutting ceremonies with Rose Alma Senatore, chief executive officer of Catholic Charities; and Michael C. Culhane, chairman of Catholic Charities’ board of trustees.

Janet Freimuth will serve as director of programs for the New Haven office, as well as for the Catholic Charities offices in Meriden, Ansonia and Milford. Also on hand for the ceremony were Auxiliary Bishop Peter A. Rosazza and Senate Majority Leader Martin Looney.

Architects took care to combine the integrity of the structure of the church with the renovated interior. In fact, Ms. Senatore noted that the church’s Stations of the Cross are still intact behind the walls.

“It’s gorgeous,” said Mrs. Alt-

ieri, after visiting the building that was her church for over 60 years. “I can sleep better tonight.”

“We moved the center here to be part of a human community, which is very, very important to us,” said Ms. Senatore. “This is truly a community made up of a lot of cultures. This will give us a major presence in New Haven that we didn’t have before.”

The center replaces a previous New Haven office that had been located on Orange Street since 1923. That office eventually will be sold.

Oddly enough, Ms. Senatore said, when parishioners sifted through records in the attic of the former church, they discovered that 501 Lombard St. – the address for St. Donato’s and now the new center – was the original address for Catholic Charities when it first opened in New Haven in 1919.

Catholic Charities operates 42 offices in the Archdiocese with 500 employees who serve 30,000 clients. It also maintains Centro San Jose in New Haven for migration and refugee services and Project Apoyo, which offers support and education to Latino offenders.

Catholic Charities has been a licensed, accredited social service



**OPEN HOUSE** – Janet Freimuth, director of programs for Catholic Charities Family Service Center in New Haven, addresses guests during ribbon-cutting ceremonies on Aug. 12 at the New Haven office, the site of the former St. Donato Church on Lombard Street. Looking on at right is Rose Alma Senatore, CEO of Catholic Charities. (Photo by Mary Chalupsky)

arm of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Hartford for more than 90 years.

Its services include pregnancy counseling; services to the elderly;

youth services; family and individual counseling; migration and refugee services; and residential and support services for people with cognitive difficulties.