



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

## Aubertine: Grant Helping Bridge Gap for St. Lawrence, Jefferson County Families

DARREL J. AUBERTINE September 27, 2010

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Senator secures \$20k for Catholic Charities in Ogdensburg for program helping working families

OGDENSBURG (September 27, 2010)—State Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine has teamed up with Catholic Charities of Ogdensburg to help struggling working families make ends meet through a \$20,000 legislative grant for the “Bridging the Gap” program in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties.

“We are very grateful to Senator Aubertine for providing us and the people of Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties with this grant,” said Trenton Clark, St. Lawrence County area director for Catholic Charities of Ogdensburg. “We are able to serve substantially more families in our Bridge the Gap program because of this grant. The aid will go directly to families who are low income working families and unable to find other means of support because they are working.”

Sister Donna Franklin, diocesan director for the Diocese of Ogdensburg, said the program provides help for the underemployed, unemployed and also retirees. The program provides help with counseling and every day bills, including insurance co-pays.

“One of the things that’s most important about the Bridge the Gap program that Senator Aubertine has provided funding for, is that over the years, it has prevented homelessness and hunger,” Sr. Franklin said. “It’s the one program in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties that is focused on the working poor who do not have anywhere else to turn.”

She said the program serves about 10,000 people in each county with counseling and/or financial assistance. The counseling programs are particularly important because often the people this program helps are not used to having to ask for assistance and can become depressed about their circumstances. This helps them deal with their distress.

“This program is there to funnel funds to fill the gaps where we can keep people from falling into debilitating poverty,” Sr. Franklin said. “We’re extremely grateful to the Senator for his support. This

program keeps people involved in the economic system of their community and that has a domino effect that helps businesses, landlords and more. That benefits everyone in the community. Without support from the Senator there are people who would not have been served, but are now still in their homes, weren't hungry or cold in the North Country winter, and were able to get their prescriptions in a timely manner."

The Senator secured the grant to offset costs associated with the program in the 2009-10 budget and worked to ensure these funds made it to Catholic Charities despite attempts to undercut grants like this one in the budget process for 2010-11.

"Too many families struggle to make ends meet every day with an income that does not meet their needs. The Bridging the Gap program through Catholic Charities in Ogdensburg really does help people in the North Country who have jobs and might not be eligible for government programs, but still need a helping hand," Sen. Aubertine said. "I'm proud to have worked with Sister Donna Franklin and Trenton Clark to help these families in Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties who too often slip through the cracks."