CCS Takes Part in Cheese Distribution

By Ann Vanderlisle
Church Today Writer

ALEXANDRIA - Catholic Community Services (CCS) was one of three Alexandria agencies responsible for the recent distribution of USDA cheese in Rapides parish as a result of President Ronald Reagan's authorization to provide the foodstuff to needy households across the nation.

CCS also distributed cheese in Sabine parish.

Other distributing agencies in Rapides parish were the Salvation Army and Cenla Community Action Committee, Inc.

CCS was contacted by the Louisiana Department of Education Food Bureau in a letter dated Jan. 7, inquiring of the department's interest in distributing the cheese.

No longer a direct service agency, CCS immediately contacted churches to determine interest in assisting with the distribution. When parish responses were affirmative, CCS met the Jan. 20 deadline for application.

Official approval of the application was signified by the office's receipt of invoices on Feb. 4. By this time, CCS had been notified of its allotment and all systems in the participating church parishes were in place.

Church parishes or organizations which undertook the distribution for CCS in Rapides parish included the St. Vincent de Paul Society of St. Rita's Church, Alexandria; the St. Nicholas Society of Sacred Heart Church, Pineville; the Knights and Ladies of St. Peter Claver, St. James Church, St. Juliana Church, and Holy Family Church, Alexandria; the Social Action Committee of Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria; and St. Francis de Sales Church, Echav.

In Sabine parish distributions were made through either the parish churches or organizations connected with St. Ann's Church.

The number of needy households receiving the donated cheese, the number of persons per household able to receive, and the quantities distributed were recorded by each center of distribution, per instructions from the Dept. of Education Food Bureau, and were to be made available upon request.

The participating agencies were responsible for determining if requesting households were needy according to criteria established by the agencies.

Methods used to determine eligibility for receipt of the cheese varied from parish to parish. Most parishes had lists of needy families and elderly receiving baskets from the parish at such times as Christmas, Thanksgiving, or Easter.

In Zwolle, the St. Vincent de Paul Society of St. Joseph Church worked with the local welfare office, as well as from their own church list in determining recipients.

Families which had recently experienced fires or disaster were among high priority recipients in the distribution handled by the Knights and Ladies of St. Peter Claver.

Non-Catholics, as well as Catholics, were serviced by the parish.

Many of the distribution centers took time to deliver to the homes of recipients unable to gain transportation to distribution points.

Coordinating the CCS effort were Sue Gorna, social worker, and Julie Cowan, parish social ministry worker.

According to Ms. Cowan, the management of the enterprise by the participating parishes and organizations was "very capable."

"If you let people do these things," she said, "you find that they really do them because they want to."