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Dejana Foundation Funds Renovation on Fatima Outreach Facility.

By Debbie Greco Cohen

For years, Our Lady of Fatima has been operating their Parish Social Ministry out of what was originally a single-car garage. Their food pantry consisted of bookcases, metal cabinets and whatever else would hold the non-perishable items from food drives and other donations. Their office furniture was a mixture of odd desks, chairs, and other donated odds and ends. And, the doorway between the building's two rooms was too narrow to allow visitors to access the food pantry with a baby stroller.

Sister Kathy and her paid and volunteer staff didn't mind as long as they could continue to serve the entire Manorhaven community, regardless of whether or not they worship at the Parish. Yet, with the configuration and awkward equipment in the facility, the space wasn't being optimally utilized. That was until the Peter and Jeri Dejana Family Foundation stepped in and offered to fund a complete renovation of the interior of the facility.

The walls were either repaired or replaced, a door between the facility's two rooms was removed, and the entryway leading to the food pantry was widened for easier access. More efficient and quieter air conditioning systems were replaced and new shelving was installed in the pantry. The main office now has custom built-in furniture to take better advantage of the space and allow for seating for consultative services and other meetings. New carpeting, molding and paint completed the renovation.

"We cannot believe how much more space we have for food and other pantry items, meetings, and people in general," said Sister Kathy. "The generous support of the Dejana Foundation will also enable us to expand the services we can offer to the community now that we have more usable space."

"It is our great pleasure to be able to help as wonderful a program as Our Lady of Fatima Parish's Social Ministry," added Peter Dejana. "It is extremely rewarding to know that our donation will help so many deserving people in so many important ways."

Their Social Ministry goes far beyond providing desperately needed food to lower income families. As a licensed social worker, Sister Kathy also provides advocacy and social services to any resident of the Manorhaven community in need, along with financial assistance, where possible. Additionally, she and her staff and volunteers offer case management services, helping with employment, ESL, school supplies, food for Thanksgiving, and help for families at Christmas.

For more information about the Peter and Jeri Dejana Family Foundation, call Grant Distributor Jim Avena at 516-637-4065.

And, if you're interested in either volunteering or donating food or money to help Our Lady of Fatima's Social Ministry, please contact Sister Kathy at 883-3903 or kathsom@aol.com.