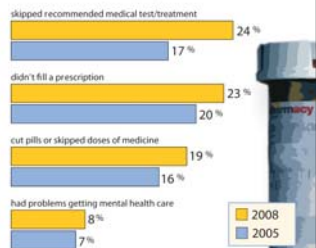


Health Care Dilemma

Percentage of people who say they or a family member have done the following in the past year because of cost:

Iowa Woman Old Hand
at Surviving Disasters

ELKADER, Iowa (CNS)—When it comes to surviving disasters, Rachel Engelhardt is an old hand.

In 1985, a fire caused by spontaneous combustion in her attic chased her out of her house. But after renovations, she came back. In 1991 and 1993, floods lapped up her basement steps and forced her to abandon her house. And still she came back.

Now, after the 2008 Iowa floods, Engelhardt admits they're the worst she's ever seen, but she's still coming back.

"This old house had been home since 1965," she said. "So in the few years I have left, I want to spend them here. When you're 82, you don't know how many years you have left."

A year after her husband, Lester, died in 1964, Engelhardt moved to Elkader with her two children and into the two-story house on the corner of Mechanic and Main. She's worked the last 24 years at the local grocery store, and the last five years as maintenance person at St. Joseph Church.

According to Engelhardt, her lifelong Catholic faith has also helped lift her spirits.

"After Lester died, it seemed like the good Lord's hand was always there for me," she explained. "All I had to do was reach out, and he'd say, 'Well, Rachel, this is what we're going to do.' And we did it, together."



(CNS photo/Joseph O'Brien, The Witness)

Rachel Engelhardt sits in the hallway of her house in Elkader, Iowa, July 19. The Turkey River flooded her 100-year-old house June 9, reaching a 42-inch-high water mark, indicated by the exposed wall studs of the house.



Top Knight

Rockford Man Receives
Illinois K of C Honor

BY AMANDA HUDSON
News editor

ROCKFORD—Ed McMahon, a member of the Knights of Columbus Council 7624 at St. Rita Parish, has been named the Illinois State Knight of the Year.

He was honored with the award — given to just one of the 71,000 Knights in the state each year — at the Knights of Columbus Illinois State Convention in May.

Each of the 300 K of C councils in the state can submit the name of a person who is qualified to receive the honor, says McMahon. A state committee determines each year's honored knight.

"I found out about it three days prior to (the convention)," he adds with a chuckle, "so they made sure I'd be there."

He took his wife, Geraldine, to the convention, too.

A past-Grand Knight, McMahon has traveled over 32,000 miles over the past 19 years as a Conferring Officer for the State of Illinois, one of 10

Knights in the state to run the ceremonies for the major (2nd and 3rd) degrees of the organization.

He's conferred over 200 major degrees, sometimes driving over 600 miles in a day.

"There are a lot of little communities in southern Illinois where the KCs are the religious and social centers of the town," he says. "The men are really dedicated and are like the right hand of their pastor."

Actually, McMahon sees all Knights as being a "right hand" for their pastors, doing a lot of behind-the-scenes work. "If a priest needs help, we assist," he says. "If there's a disaster, we assist with manpower and funds."

In addition to his work as a conferring officer, McMahon has been involved as a lecturer and instructor for over 25 years with the Red Cross and volunteers with Special Olympics, his own council and at St. Rita Parish — his parish since 1968.

He received the Knight's State Medallion in 2004.

Unloading Clutter Can Lighten Mind and Closets

BY BRANDY WILSON
Catholic News Service

People's clutter can say a lot about their mental health, researchers said at a June symposium on hoarding at The Catholic University of America in Washington.

Social workers, mental health professionals and emergency medical technicians, who were among the people at the conference, shared stories and solutions for helping compulsive hoarders.

"It's easy to look at a hoarder's life and judge, but it's more helpful to come together and help," said Jennifer Berger, a lawyer with the AARP Legal Counsel for the Elderly in Washington and one of the symposium panelists.

According to the Obsessive Compulsive Foundation Web site, as many as 1.4 million people in the United States are compulsive hoarders.

The condition, defined on the site by Smith College professor Randy Frost, is an obsessive need to acquire and save objects without discarding anything, accumulating so much that living spaces cannot be used for what they're intended and the clutter causes impairment or distress.

But the hoarder isn't always the distressed one. Excessive hoarding can create public safety or health concerns, like fire hazards, pest infestations and other unsanitary conditions.

"We sometimes have to go to court at the request of neighbors who say we can't live like this," said

panelist Ana Channell, property manager for William C. Smith & Co. in Washington.

Researchers and mental health professionals in the field are trying to raise an awareness that the condition is a mental health one and quell the preconception it is merely disorganization or laziness. Even the homeless hoard.

"You can't paint all hoarders with the same paintbrush. There's no typical hoarder," said Henriette Kellum, a mental health therapist in Arlington, Va., specializing in hoarding.

Research suggests that compulsive hoarding, long believed a symptom of obsessive compulsive disorder, is a mental health condition in its own right. Some research found no direct correlation to the disorder.

"Clutter is only the behavioral manifestation. Hoarding is often precipitated by loss — a loss of a person or things," said Christiana Bratotiis, a Boston University doctoral student researching hoarding.

Mary De Van, a licensed clinical social worker from California, said she sees the same pattern. "They are comforted by the clutter; they love the things they have. It's the kind of attachment beyond what most people have and the idea of getting rid of it is very distressing," she said.

Social anxiety, depression and isolation can cause someone to be a compulsive hoarder or can be the result of hoarding.

"Some of these people are isolated. They're in pain — emotional, physical pain. There's so much more to this. There are social implications, think of the grandmother that can't have her grandchildren in her home because they have no place to play," said an attendee who deals with hoarding in her job as a social worker.

In addition, there is the potential for hoarding to cause physical injury.

"Hoarding can be fatal," said Kellum. "There's the case of a gentleman who died in a house fire because firefighters were unable to get to him. People have been found dead under their things. ... There can be very high risks."

Attendee Mary Timeyin, a Washington resident and an advocate for the Consumer Action Network, said the symposium opened her eyes to her own past hoarding problem. "I wondered how on earth I could have lived like that."

Timeyin said a personal loss precipitated her depression and hoarding.

"I'd always suspected something was wrong. I feel relieved. It's comforting to know what it is," she said. Timeyin also sought the panel members' advice for her elderly mother, who had two rooms stacked to the ceiling with items, she said.

Kellum believes the biggest obstacle is trying to help the segment of the hoarding population who are unaware that their compulsion is a problem. "The people that come to us and ask for our help aren't the problem; it's the ones who don't."



(CNS illustration)

U.S. HOARDERS =
1.4 MILLION

DESTINATION



(Photo provided)

Grotto of the
Redemption

Destination: Grotto of the Redemption in West Bend, Iowa, is artistry in precious stones and gems, with a message that is timeless. The Grotto wraps around St. Peter and Paul Church. Sunday Mass is at 10 a.m. and Saturday evening Mass is at 5 p.m. Travel time from Rockford is approximately six hours.

Why to go: The grotto, on the National Register of Historic Places since 2001, is a composite of nine separate Grottos, each portraying a scene in the life of Christ, the story of the fall of woman and man, our divine redemption through Christ, and Mary's presence in the redemptive process. Its builder, Father Matthias Dobberstein commented, "If your messages are carved in stone they are well nigh imperishable. The imperishableness is the outstanding feature of the Grotto."

As a young seminarian, Dobberstein became critically ill with pneumonia. As he fought for his life he prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary to intercede for him for the grace of health. He promised to build a shrine in her honor if he lived. The illness passed, the student completed his studies and after his ordination he came to West Bend as pastor in 1898. For over a decade, he stockpiled rocks and precious stones until the actual work of his promise began to take shape in 1912.

Special events: The grotto will be outlined in holiday lights from Dec. 1, 2008, through Jan. 6, 2009, and its ice rink will be open for skating from December through March. Nominal fees apply. There is a snack bar inside the warming house. Call 515/877-7465 to verify skating hours.

Amenities: The Grotto is open year round with lighting and music until 10:30 p.m. Its gift shop offers a large variety of special occasion and religious gifts. The Grotto Café is open May–September. Call 515/887-2371 for menu and hours. Tours are offered daily from May 1 through Oct. 16, starting at 10 a.m.; suggested donation \$2 to \$5. There are 80 campsites available for overnight guests. Fees: \$15 per night for campers and \$10, tents.

Access: Accessible for strollers and wheelchairs.

(Grand) Kid friendly: Yes, with plenty of room for exploring, as long as they remember this is a shrine. Climbing the stairs is OK; shouting is not.

Info: Address: 300 N. Broadway Ave., West Bend, Iowa 50597. Web site: www.westbendgrotto.com. Phone: 800/868-3641

— Tony Carton

Share a favorite destination with others. If you have a photo, send it to "S.O. Destinations" at The Observer, 555 Colman Center Dr., P.O. Box, 7044, Rockford, IL 61125, or to observer@rockforddiocese.org. If you want a photo back, include a stamped, addressed envelope. If you send e-mail, include "Seasoned Observer" in the subject line. You don't need to include all the details we have here, but give us a phone number or Web address so we can get the information.