

From Picnics to Street Corners, Youth Ministry Works All Hours

This is the second in a three-part series on the Area Youth Ministry (AYM), an ecumenical, volunteer organization in northwest Rochester which attempts to reach the teenagers who are not in church.

By PATRICIA ROESCH

It is 2 a.m. Friday. John Wischmeyer stands at the corner of Lorimer Street and Plymouth Avenue and

John is a deacon from St. Bernard's Seminary assigned for the summer to work with AYM. He has been on the street since early evening, looking for kids who want to talk, and getting acquainted with teenagers he doesn't know.

His street ministry tonight has taken him to "The Cellar," at St. Anthony's Church, where 40 to 50 teens came and went, playing records and talking in the psychedelic, neon-painted room. He notices six boys march in around 10:30 who had mocked him about "a teen hangout with adults around," earlier in the week. Well, maybe, they decided, it was worth a look. They had no place else to go.

John left when the "The Cellar" closed at 11, and went over to a neighborhood diner. A group of boys he hadn't seen before lounged under the street light, leaning on the newspaper stand. He asked one of them for a match.

"Sure." The boys glanced suspiciously at John's collar.

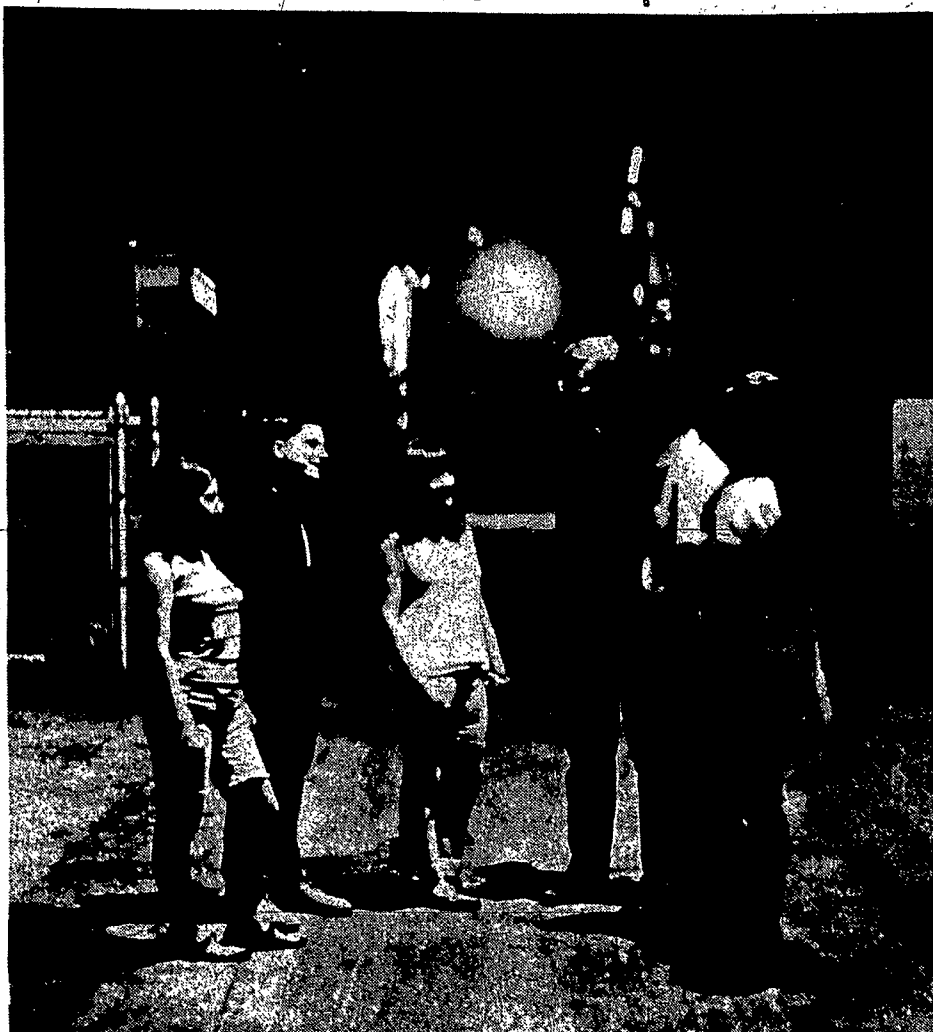
The street worker had often heard the kids say, "Don't try to reform us. We're too bad for the church." Or swear and add, "Oh, sorry. You're a minister." The stereotype image is almost always there as a barrier.

John said, "Thanks," and walked on down the street. He would see them again and they would recognize him. "Gradually they would get to know each other."

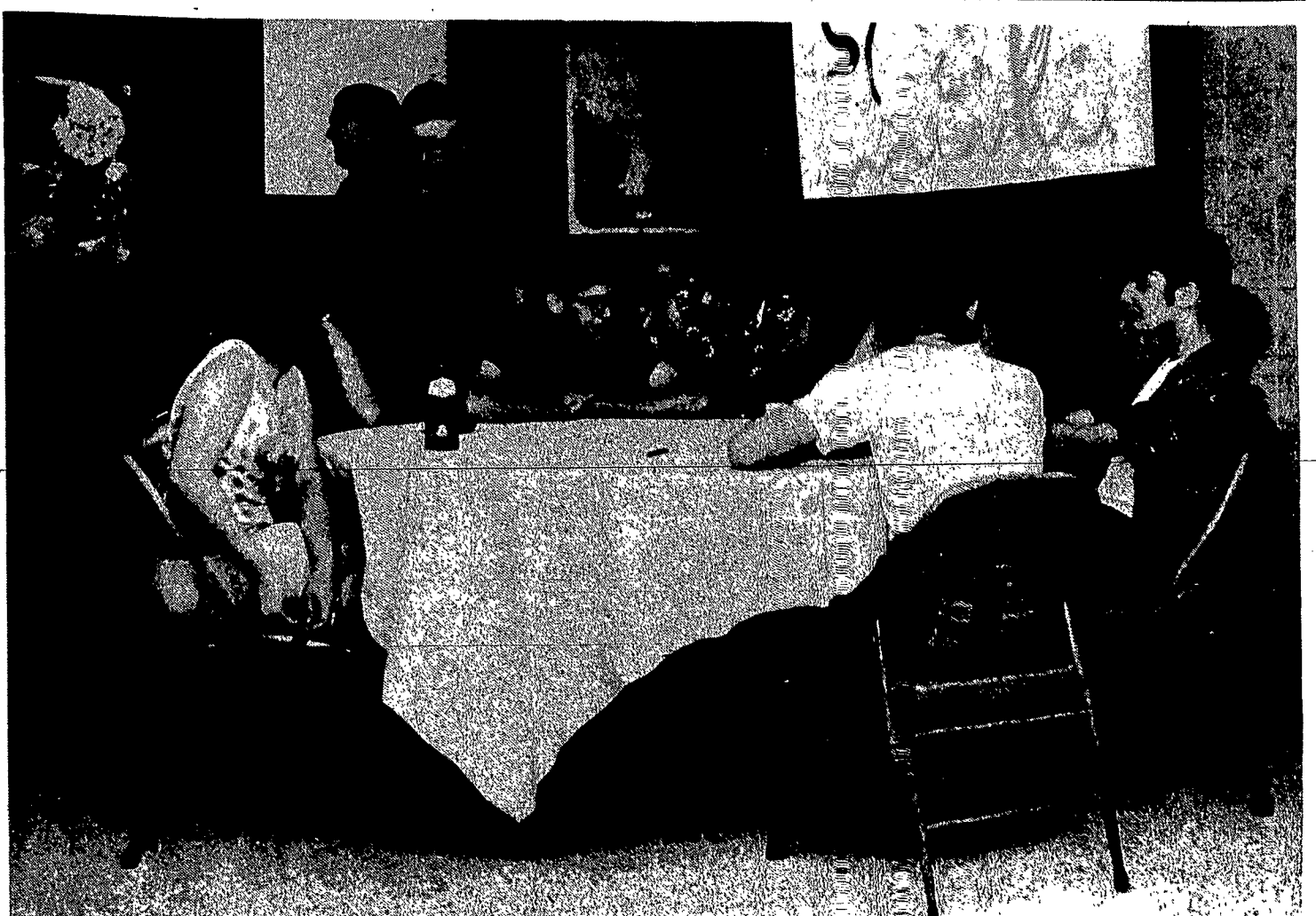
Most street ministry is done "after hours" and is informal low key. One of the unusual features about AYM is its reversal of the "church to youth" channels. In the AYM the church, and this means volunteers from 11 Protestant and Catholic parishes, offers Christianity as an alternative to no church relationship at all.

Marian Johanknecht, an AYM volunteer from Lake Avenue Baptist Church, says:

"The main purpose of the program. (if you can call it that, and I'm not sure you can) is not to bring the kids



John Wischmeyer, deacon from St. Anthony's Church, chats with a group of teen-agers he finds in his street ministry.



"The Cellar" swings with adults and teen-agers two evenings each week. They gather for games, dancing, informal talk and just relaxation. It's often the only place for many teens to go.

(Courier-Journal Photos by Don Durjee)

into church, but to bring the church into their lives."

Most of the teen-agers identify with "The Place" or "The Cellar," rather than with AYM as a large organization. They don't know what happens to the Teen Emergency Fund or the Ball Fund or how the emergency housing system operates. They do not know that if "a kid is in trouble, he calls Mrs. Hall and she'll help." Or they tell their friends to "go ask Mike if maybe you can get something from the Emergency Fund."

Charity Long, (a junior at Marshall High School), is on the "committee" at "The Place."

"That means I help clean up and hand out the ping-pong balls and see that nobody goes down in the kitchen and steals something. Sometimes, when there aren't enough staff members around, I cook the pizzas." She knew there were adults trying

to reach the drop-outs. But she didn't sound optimistic about the success:

"If they dropped out of school, they would figure it was their own business and wouldn't go around telling everybody."

Edie Dingwall, a Jefferson High School junior, is on the temporary committee at "The Cellar."

"We're planning some things for the kids to do, like a picnic, and maybe an overnight weekend in Bristol. We also made a few rules for "The Cellar" like no drinking and if you get in a fight you can't come back for two weeks."

Edie estimated that they have 84 kids who have paid 50 cents for a membership card. Everyone else pays 25 cents each time they come.

The teen-agers involved with AYM have a voice of their own in a newsletter called "Rebel."

"Rebel" is written and produced

by the kids with guidance from Sister Beatrice of Nazareth Academy, and Ann Benington from St. Pius X Church. The paper is distributed to about 300 teen-agers in the Jefferson, Marshall and Brown Square areas.

In a recent issue the teen reporters interviewed their peers on the use of drugs. (Mrs. Benington says the "Rebel" staff tries to include opinions on topics the kids are talking about among themselves.)

The quotes "Rebel" printed included:

"Dope makes me feel good. Yes, speed, grass, pot are groovy. I don't feel it's a waste of money. It's like floating on clouds, cloud nine. Groovesville. It's not a danger to my life." Little Ace.

"Waste of time, money and life." Ronald.

"Glue is all right, beautiful. Pills are rotten, inconceivable. LSD — tragic." Sam.

"Glue ruins your life, clouds your mind. Pills are all right when used

properly. LSD, acid, no good." Betty.

Street ministry works at all hours, in front of the diner, down at "The Cellar," on the street corner, or a weekend in Bristol. The key witnesses, the teen-agers themselves, turn in the evidence. They "go to The Place,"

and they all know Mike."

The value of adult involvement and commitment, and the strength ecumenism gives to AYM will be the subjects of the last article in the series on the Area Youth Ministry, next week.

Franciscan Meet Slated

The fourth annual Franciscan Commitment Conference will be held on the campus of Hobart College, Aug. 6 to 10. There are accommodations for 118. The Immaculate Heart Fraternity of Geneva is the host. The theme is: "The Sacraments: Root of Franciscan Commitment."

The Annual Franciscan Commitment Conference aims to give in-depth coverage of one basic area of Franciscan life, to intensify the Franciscan witness of each participant, to teach more effective fraternity interaction and to prepare all participants to live, learn and love — the Fran-

discan Tertiary way of life through dynamic daily group witness.

Father Virik Bunning, O.F.M., Provincial Commissary of the Detroit Capuchin Province will be the keynote speaker. Program highlights are lectures on Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist and workshops for tertiaries and directors.

Reservations have come from So. Weymouth, Mass.; Yonkers; St. Patrick's of Rochester; Immaculate Conception of Bronx, New York; Red Bank; Hoboken; Hackensack, New Jersey and St. Patrick's of Wilmington, Del.

Women Declare War on Rats

By MARCI LUX

A Rochester inner-city neighborhood crawling with "rats the size of cats" will finally be purged by an organized attack-team of outraged mothers.

After months spent fruitlessly trying to goad the city into baiting the sewers of their neighborhood, the members of the Mothers Club of St. Martin de Porres Center at 537 Clinton Avenue North in Rochester decided to take up rat-chasing themselves.

According to Mrs. Margaret Muchard, Director of the Center, a "Rat Control" Committee has been formed to aid residents of the neighborhood in their fight to control the rodent population.

"There have been pieces in the daily papers about the city's intentions," Mrs. Muchard said disgustedly. "And it's been talked, and talked, and talked about, but nothing has been done."

Under the new Committee, each woman of the club will have two volunteers from the area working under her, who will visit houses and investigate the rat conditions. After having surveyed the situation the mothers and their workers will then compose a detailed letter to the city officials describing conditions and demanding immediate action.

"If they won't do anything, we will," stated Mrs. Muchard.

The method of control will have to be a complete fumigation of the area. The Center itself is fumigated once a month.

Householders who beg their slumlords to have property cleared of rats periodically are told bluntly, they reported: "If you don't like these quarters, move out!" Neither landlords nor city health authorities understand the residents' alarm.

Children come to the center every day with sores from rat and roach bites, Mrs. Muchard said.

Monroe County Health Department has \$150,000 available for eradication and preventive measures on rodents. Its rat program has been somewhat curtailed, officials admitted, because not all of \$490,000 sought in federal and state funds has been granted. Small neighborhood projects, but no massive rat-war seemed possible this year, they say.

Rats are so populous—and even worse — so unperturbed by human presence, that they romp on lawns "just like cats," said several mothers.

Enthusiasm for the project among the inner-city residents is such that twenty-two of the men from the section came to the meeting of the Mothers' Club, offering their services in the project.

"They're very excited about it," commented Mrs. Muchard. "Neighborhood reaction to the plan will be helpful in our attack." With leadership, the families are willing to make an all-out effort to rid themselves of the pests and to better the place in which they live, she feels.

The Center with its ever-increasing involvement with inner-city residents and their needs, has long had a major problem: lack of space.

To alleviate this handicap the Board of Directors of the St. Martin de Porres Center will launch a major fund drive this September, to raise \$100,000 for the construction of a new Center.

The new building would be about two blocks from the present one, and would contain 6,000 square feet of much-needed space. Many activities which must be curtailed now because of the cramped conditions could be expanded and other needed projects initiated.

The Clothing Depot, also a project of the Center, is maintained in the store adjacent to the present Center. Neighborhood volunteers manage the Depot, which is open daily for the sale of used clothing.

Soon to begin their own activities with the Center is the new Women's Auxiliary, now being recruited from Rochester parishes. An opening tea will be held July 30th, from 2-4 p.m., in the Medaille Hall at Nazareth College, when Mrs. Muchard will speak. The purpose of the Auxiliary will be to aid the Center financially.

A complete landscaping of the Center's backyard at the corner of Clinton and Gorham St. was the gift of an anonymous donor. A swingset, slides and sandbox will be delivered soon through the generosity of still another of the Center's friends.

Perhaps once the new Center is built, the children won't have to worry about rats for companions in their new playground. But then, that will be up to sensitive Rochesterians in September.

PAT ANSWERS

Do you have questions about parish-life, customs and traditions which bug you? The famous HELP! column doesn't know everything. Try PAT ANSWERS! . . . But don't ask PAT about faith or morals. Simply write in your concerns and hang-ups about living in the family of God . . . Address: PAT ANSWERS, 35 Scio Street, Rochester 14604. PAT'S answers will not necessarily reflect the opinion or policy of the Editor, —or of the Diocese.

Q.—Is it superstitious to believe in dreams? Don't the Old and New Testaments tell us that God made use of dreams to communicate with men?
 —R.M.L., Wayland

A.—Yes, God did communicate with St. Joseph, St. Paul, Jacob, Solomon, Daniel and others through dreams. The Bible indicates that these men were clearly aware of the supernatural nature of the message of those special dreams. It is superstitious to react to our dreams because ordinarily they have a natural cause. Psychologists say that the contents of dreams depend on the state of our health, the day's fatigue, food, our fears and worries, and even sleeping postures.

Q.—Is present day professional boxing considered evil by the Church?
 —M.R., Rochester

A.—There is no official teaching of the Church on professional boxing but most moral theologians teach that professional fighting as it exists today should be condemned. They argue that the boxer's goal is to win by directly injuring or knocking out his opponent. Deaths and crippling injuries do come in the ring. It is called an unreasonable and brutal form of recreation. Because there is also evidence that it is a sordid business which often deceives the paying public and brings profits to the criminal element in our society, it is considered wrong to support prize-fighting by attending the bouts.

Q. I have heard of the possibility of going validly to Mass on Saturday instead of Sunday in some resort areas due to the overcrowded condi-

tions. Planning my vacation I wonder if this is possible in the U.S.?

—G. K., Rochester

A. We do not know of any place in New York State where this Saturday privilege applies. Several resort towns in New Jersey and Minnesota have received permission from their local Bishop to accommodate vacationers by having the Masses of obligation on both Saturday and Sunday. A Bishop can grant this privilege to an individual pastor on request if there is a proven need.

Q. The Pope's trip to Bogota, Colombia next month interests me. But what, please, is a "Eucharistic Congress," which is the purpose of his visit?

—Mrs. H. S., Puerto Rico

A. A Eucharistic Congress is an international gathering of Catholics held every 4 or 5 years in a different country (like the Olympic games). It is a religious demonstration involving thousands of lay and religious in special public honor—for the Blessed Sacrament. It is intended to stimulate the faith and devotion of the country where the congress is held. Masses, processions, huge groups involved in adoration of the Eucharist and reception of Holy Communion, plus lectures and intellectual discussions on the theology of the sacrament are elaborately scheduled over a week's duration. The U.S. Church was once host to such a congress in Chicago in 1926. Most recent other congresses were in Bombay in '64, Munich in '60 and Rio de Janeiro in '55.

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