

Street Academy Lures Drop-outs Back

By BONITA BALDWIN

"You can get high off education. We want to get some place; that's why we're here." The trim black teacher paused to face a student. "What do you want to be?"

"An electrical engineer."

"You want to be the best engineer you can?" The youth nodded. "And what do you want to be?"

"A nurse," a quiet Puerto Rican girl answered.

The teacher turned to the class. "She wants to be a nurse. Not just any nurse. A good nurse, so she can say to the whole world, 'I'm a nurse and I'm proud of it.'"

"A person who respects himself gets himself together up here," the teacher continued pointing to his head. "If you can't read, don't worry. We're here to learn. Once you start you'll see it isn't anything like you thought. You really can get high off education."

This classroom dialogue occurred in St. Francis Xavier elementary school, but it is not the usual parochial education. In fact, it isn't parochial education at all. The City School District rents the former grade school to house the Neighborhood Street Academy.

"There are street academies in most major cities," Lawrence Evans, project supervisor, explained. "We offer an alternative

education for drop-outs, potential drop-outs, and students who want an alternative education." Neighborhood Street Academy emphasizes the basics, reading, writing, and arithmetic, and a socialization process which centers around group projects and social events, such as dances, talent shows and picnics. In the past four years 1,000 students, aged 16-21, have gone through the Academy. Currently about 180 are enrolled.

"Some kids come in turned off. We have to build up their interest and help them take it as far as they want to go," Evans said.

"We've seen some real successes. We've got kids in college, with good jobs, and some who were in trouble are out, and at least better than Nixon."

The philosophy of the Academy is simple. "We believe every student is important and can learn." An extensive referral is employed to direct youths to other agencies when the Academy is not suited for their needs.

"We've enjoyed our relationship with the Catholics," Evans said and recalled the time that the school was broken into. Three sisters came and helped him clean up and stayed with him until the police arrived.

"That was really nice of them. I might have been arrested." The black school administrator grinned. "We all look alike, you know."

chance to share their convictions and to hear yours.

Encourage your church community to remind people of registration and election dates. Support church-sponsored meetings with candidates and suggest that meetings with officials continue after elections.

The suggestions listed above may provide some direction for voting this Fall. The information problem — too little, too much, too contradictory — can only be related to with steady effort and the belief that the individual's views and decisions can and do make a difference.

Church And Politics



Sister Frances

An election season elicits comments like "One vote doesn't make that much difference" and "How can I get enough information to decide which candidate to vote for?"

The importance of one vote has been demonstrated in recent election results. The New Hampshire Senate seat became a long struggle because of a close election last Fall. Closer to home, one village in the Rochester diocese has a mayor who was elected by one vote. Finally, last week's Democratic primary in Rochester was apparently won by a candidate with a two-vote margin.

The problem of acquiring information on candidates is a more complex one. Feelings, biases, religious beliefs, economic considerations, friends' opinions and first impressions do count in all human decision making. Most decisions, including political decisions, are not well thought out, nor are they based solely on rational argument. What ways are there of ensuring intelligent election time choices which reflect the real needs and values of voters?

An individual can begin a personal political education program in a number of different ways. Choose one area of local government (county, village, town, city). Read all news accounts about that level of government. Go to a legislative meeting. Try to connect names, faces, issues. Analyze the types of issues handled at this level of government. Do you and your representatives care about the same issues? Whose agenda should change — your or theirs?

Share your interest with people you live with. As campaign literature comes in this fall, decide on a place to post it. Adults are thus helped to focus on the upcoming elections and children grow in awareness too. Initiate conversations about candidates and issues. Mention candidates at common prayer time and discuss the importance of qualities such as justice, openmindedness, dedication, vision, etc.

Broaden your personal program to include work and social contacts. Ask people about candidates they plan to vote for. Ask for help in discovering candidates' views. Share your own frustrations and hopes about the election. Question people who display buttons, posters, or bumper stickers. Give them the

St. Paul's Lists Father Tammany

Father Alan Tammany, OFM, of the Emmanuel House of Prayer in Glenmont, near Albany, will celebrate Mass at 8 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 5, at St. Paul's Church, 783 Hard Road, Webster. He will be accompanied here by Joe Dean of the Emmanuel community, and

both will address the Women's Aglow Fellowship dinner meeting at 6:30 Monday night at Valle's Steak House, 1335 E. Ridge.

On Sunday afternoon, from 2 until 5, Father Tammany will hold a teaching session at St. Paul's.

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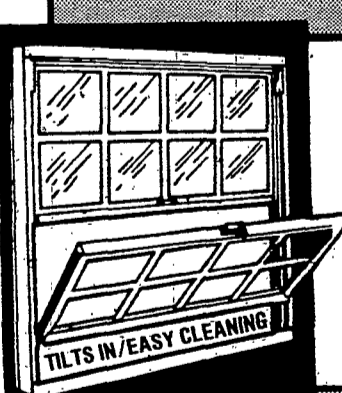
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