

Educational
Conference . . . 7

St. Charles Borromeo's
Caring Communities . . . 10

Michael
Bausch
Ordination . . . 5



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New Program Helps Youth Before a Problem Develops

By Michael Groden

"Juvenile Delinquency: Behavior of a child or youth that is so marked by violation of law, persistent mischievousness, anti-social behavior, disobedience or intractability. . ." (Random House Unabridged Dictionary)

Even the definition is unclear.

Juvenile Delinquency can mean anything from violent criminal activity to staying out later than you are told.

Many "delinquents" are kids with only one parent who has to work and is not able to always be at home or someone whose homelife is a lot less than ideal or completely nonexistent. It could also be someone who merely need someone to talk to.

A bad family situation, most authorities agree, is one root cause of serious problems among young people. Lack of proper supervision, discipline and affection can and often does result in serious crime offenses, drug abuse (including an alarming increase in alcoholism among teens) or very often young runaways.

One proven way to reduce these youth problems, according to Community Partners for Youth, is to reach youngsters before they get into trouble. Partners for Youth, a Community Chest sponsored agency that began operation in January, is dedicated to that goal.

The agency, headed by Elizabeth Lerner, was formed to provide help for "youth: delinquent, adjudicated and non-adjudicated, youth from single parent families and any other youth. . ." In short, Lerner said, any kid who may benefit from having a one-to-one relationship with an adult that he or she can count on for support is eligible.

She added that 35 percent of the young people are already involved in the judiciary system but the remaining 65 percent are not.

Adult volunteers (18 years and older) are carefully matched with children or



Photos by Susan McKinney

Partners Marshall Mutnick, (above left) and Thomas Giannavola (right) warm up during a training session at the Monroe Avenue YMCA. Below the partners pose in traditional Do Bok uniforms. Tae Kwan Do is a weaponless Martial Art originating from Korea.



teenagers (5-18) to help prevent future problems with the law or to prevent "alienation of the youth from society."

The program seems to be on the right track according to Barbara Giannavola, whose son Thomas is a participant. Thomas was matched with Marshall Mutnick several months ago and definite progress has been made, Giannavola reported.

Mrs. Giannavola, a single parent with three sons, explained that her eldest son is mentally ill and must be

hospitalized frequently. Thomas, her youngest, has had a great deal of difficulty adjusting to the home situation and began having "behavioral problems" at school, she said.

"Tom needed a buddy, and Marshall was the answer. He's what I would like to have for a big brother," she said.

Mutnick, a service manager at Suzuki of Rochester on Scottsville Road, has got as much out of the program as his 12-year-old charge. "I enjoy the

program, I think the experience has improved myself," he said. "I've grown to appreciate my own childhood more," he added after seeing how other children sometimes have to cope with problems he never had.

Mutnick's hobbies were an important key to reaching Tommy. He is proficient in the Martial Art of Tae Kwon Do, a Korean form of self defense. Mutnick will receive his black belt in August. He also races motorcycles in off road competitions.

Tommy became very interested in Tae Kwon Do and is now taking instruction from Michael Avent at the Monroe Avenue YMCA. Mutnick said that all Tommy needed was something to do, something to be involved in.

He said that the most important thing anyone can do for a youngster is "to let a kid be a kid. I just try to let him know that there is someone around that he can talk to."

Mrs. Giannavola said that Partners for Youth takes great care in matching the adults and children. Her son Rick is now on the waiting list for an adult partner. "I can't express enough how appreciative I am about the agency's work. I hope someday that I'll be in a position to give back to the agency what it has given me and my sons," she said.

Community Partners for Youth is constantly in need of new volunteers. Since January the agency has made more than 120 matches and there are some 400 more waiting to be served.

Elizabeth Lerner reported that there is a particular need for male adult partners who would be willing to share a few hours each week with a youngster. A screening process and brief training program are needed to insure a good match, and a one-year commitment to the program is required.

Partners for Youth is located in the Powers Building, 16 W. Main St., Rochester, 14614. Their phone is 716-454-2292.



St. Joseph's

Landmark 'Buys' Tower and Facade

The Landmark Society has purchased the front wall and bell-tower of St. Joseph's from the Redemptorist Fathers.

Almost five years ago, a fire raged through St. Joseph's Church in downtown Rochester, totally gutting the oldest Catholic house of worship in the city.

When the smoke had finally faded, all that remained were the magnificent limestone walls and the extraordinary tower, designed by George F. Lorenz of the architectural firm of John H. Oberlies.

And since that fire, a host

To 2

NY Bishops Discuss Evangelization Effort

Watertown — More than 125 laymen, religious, priests and bishops gathered here last weekend to discuss what is emerging as a major concern of the U.S. Church, evangelization.

The occasion was the annual meeting of the bishops of New York State. Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, and Auxiliary Bishops Dennis W. Hickey and John E. McCafferty led the Rochester delegation to the event.

According to Father Bernard Christman, editor of the Ogdensburg diocesan newspaper, North Country Catholic, what began as a large meeting on evangelization, evolved into a

"retreat," or spiritual experience on that subject.

Father Christman also noted that, excepting the bishops present, the number of laity was greater than the number of clergy. This, he stated, was indicative of the laymen's influence on the world of evangelization.

Among the conference speakers were Father Alvin Illig, head of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' committee on evangelization, and Father Michael Himes, faculty member of Immaculate Conception Seminary in Huntington, N.Y. Cardinal Terence Cooke chaired the event.