

Add NFP To the 3 Rs

By Carmen J. Viglucci

As the school year winds down so, too, does one phase of activities for Marian LaPorta, community education coordinator for Rochester Natural Family Planning.

What's the connection between, say, seventh graders and natural family planning? Simple. Part of Ms. LaPorta's duties is to give talks on the natural family planning method in schools, from seventh grade right through college.

And she does so, not only in Catholic institutions, but in public schools as well. This past school year, she not only visited such high schools as Aquinas, Bishop McQuaid, Cardinal Mooney and Nazareth Academy but Leroy, Victor, Brighton, Spencerport and Palmyra-Macedon public high schools as well. She has delivered her presentation to seventh graders at St. Monica's and to collegians at Nazareth College, the State University at Brockport and the State University at Geneseo.

According to Rochester NFP's annual report, school presentations were provided for 1,153 students.

"In Catholic schools, I am usually asked to speak to health, marriage, religious or home economics classes," Ms. LaPorta said. "In public schools, in health, child care or home economics classes."

She and her husband, Phil, are both certified NFP teachers, and when his work schedule allows, he joins her in the classrooms.

"Most schools like couples to give the class," Ms. LaPorta said, "because there are usually male and female students."

"There are generally lots of questions but I've noticed when the classes are all one sex, there are even more," said Ms. LaPorta.

"In those cases when we go back for a second time, we make the second session a question-and-answer period and make it possible for anonymous questions to be presented."

What sort of reaction does Ms. LaPorta evoke? A Cardinal Mooney senior marriage student said, "I discovered that one doesn't have to be afraid of his/her sexuality and that there are alternatives to artificial birth control."

A freshman at Mooney offered: "I think

it is good that you talk to us at school because some teens know very little about sex. If they don't hear about it in school or at home they are going to learn about it in the streets and get wrong information."

A male senior in Aquinas Institute's Family Life class said, "It seems to be the ideal method of preventing/promoting pregnancy. The information was presented as very natural and I am convinced that NFP is better for the body. I am impressed."

A female in the same class offered, "I think it is a good idea. It brings out communication in the couple. I didn't know much about it before and was skeptical before this presentation. It changed my mind."

In a Child Development class at Palmyra-Macedon, a student said, "I think it's a really good way of birth control. Knowing what's going on with your body at every time of the month is really healthy. It's also nice to know when you can become pregnant if you wish."

But although such comments are typical, Ms. LaPorta says such is not always the case. For instance, a freshman at Cardinal Mooney said, "I think that NFP is a good idea to some extent. I don't think it's good if it gets carried away and the exact date and time to have intercourse is always set. It should be more natural."

"I think it would be difficult to stick to this kind of birth control," a Mooney girl said.

These are close to the kind of objections NFP teachers hear often from adults.

"We try to get them to look at sexuality in a positive light. Lots of problems in adolescence can be lessened if they become aware of their fertility with a positive outlook. We recommend a responsible attitude toward sexual relationships and remind them that couples need to be motivated to use the method effectively," Ms. LaPorta said.

One of the basic principles of NFP is that couples must be taught the method properly, thus the requirement for certified teachers. In addition, a strong premise of the method is that the abstinence periods, usually seven to ten days a month, enhance a marriage. Adherents say it builds



Marian LaPorta describes her NFP presentation.

communication in a marriage and actually adds to the romantic side of their relationship.

Another aspect which Ms. LaPorta mentions is that NFP takes the burden of birth control off the woman and makes it a shared responsibility. Thus, the male partner contributes to the marital relationship.

But some of the reactions are of a more difficult nature. "For unmarried couples, there are no benefits," said one high school senior. "Today there are unmarried couples engaging in sexual activities. NFP should address the needs of unmarried couples."

Ms. LaPorta says she hears similar complaints in her college classes.

"I tell them that we teach family planning only in the context of marriage, she said. "We know this is a controversial issue. I tell them that the whole NFP concept deals with shared responsibility of both partners. It is ideal in marriage. Life, love and family could be our motto."

According to Ms. LaPorta, the class consists of a slide presentation on both male and female anatomy, the reproductive system and the menstrual cycle. A history of NFP also is included as well as explaining what NFP is and what it teaches.

"Of course, we gear it down for seventh graders. We don't give them details; they'd be overwhelmed, wouldn't understand."

But in college classes, the NFP teachers get more technical. "We often teach those who will deal professionally with birth and social agencies, as well as for their own use. The purpose is to get them aware of fertility. In their textbooks, there is often a lot of artificial contraception but very little on natural birth control."

Ms. LaPorta on her school visits also informs the girls about another NFP educational program — fertility awareness classes.

In those classes, "girls learn about their bodies and how they work. Fertility awareness classes are not geared to family planning at all. We are flexible and can teach from adolescence to pre-menopause. But we get mostly women in their 20s," Ms. LaPorta said.

NFP adherents often have to remind people that the method is used to bring about births as well as space them. Marian and Phil LaPorta, naturally, use the NFP method themselves and they are expecting a child. And though summer brings a lull to their classroom visits, they can look back in contentment at their efforts. Especially when they recall the words of one Pal-Mac student:

"NFP is safe and effective. Learning more about your body is learning more about yourself."

Marian LaPorta couldn't have said it better herself.

Guardian Angels Honors Couples

Fifteen couples renewed their marriage vows and were feted by fellow parishioners

Support Group

The support group for Families and Friends of the Mentally III and Emotionally Disturbed will meet 7:30 p.m., Monday, June 25 at Reformation Church, 111 N. Chestnut St. The meeting will feature small group discussions. Further information is available by calling 334-5095.

at Guardian Angels Church last week.

The renewal took place during a Sunday Mass.

Following the Mass, the couples and their families were honored at a brunch planned, prepared and served by members of the liturgy and parish life committees.

A cake, baked and decorated by Mrs. Harriet Beiter, was the centerpiece.

Each couple received a photograph taken that morning.

Those honored are: Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Lucia, 40 years; Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ward and Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hoaglund, 35 years; Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mackey, 30 years; Mr. and Mrs. Donald Drexler, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Whitney, Mr. and Mrs. Aldo Travato, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Viennet, Mr. and Mrs. John Mueller, Mr. and Mrs. John Waldecker and Mr. and Mrs. Donald Nobes, 25 years; Mr. and Mrs. Richard Aiken, Mr.

and Mrs. Michael Triassi and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Stover, 20 years; Mr. and Mrs. James Cole, 15 years.

Kodak Gives \$65,000 to UNCF Drive

Eastman Kodak Company has announced a contribution of \$65,000 to the Rochester area United Negro College Fund campaign drive. The local UNCF recently kicked off its drive by setting a 1984 goal of \$275,000.

"We are pleased to continue our support of the local UNCF effort," said William L. Sutton, Kodak senior vice president, director of Corporate Relations. "We recognize the contributions of these fine students and believe the UNCF concept warrants the support of this company and this community."

Humane Helpers

The Humane Society last week issued an urgent call for volunteers to assist with either caring for animals or assisting office staff a few hours each week. Interested persons are asked to contact Debbie Santolla, volunteer coordinator, 223-1330, Mondays, Wednesdays or Fridays.

Family Planning Bill Approved by House

Washington (NC) -- The House of Representatives June 11 passed a bill extending family planning programs designed to prevent unwanted pregnancies, and the Adolescent Family Life program, intended to help pregnant teen-agers and promote sexual self-discipline.

The vote on the combined legislation was 290-102, sending the bill on to the Senate.

Action on the measure came after the House Energy and Commerce Committee had rejected attempts to have the family planning program mandate notification of parents when their teen-age children receive prescription contraceptives from family planning clinics. The committee said family planning clinics should encourage teen-age clients to inform their parents but not demand it.

Federal courts also have rejected efforts by the Reagan administration to require parental notification when contraceptives are prescribed for teen-agers.

In the current fiscal year, the family planning program has been allocated \$140 million, for some 4,500 family planning clinics, while the adolescent family life pro-

gram has been given \$14.9 million for grants to 75 groups.

Catholics Charities and social services organizations have been among those who have received grants for the pregnant teen-agers program since it took shape, in its present form, in 1981.

NFP Information Sessions

Natural Family Planning Education of Rochester, Inc., has scheduled three information sessions for the month of July. All are free but pre-registration is required.

All are from 7:30-9 p.m. -- the first, on Monday, July 2, at St. Mary's Hospital in the East Auditorium; the second, on Friday, July 13, at Rochester General Hospital's main conference room; and the last, on Friday, July 27, at Lakeside Hospital in Conference Rooms A and B.

For more information, contact Marian LaPorta, community education coordinator, at 464-8705.

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