

# New Elmira Young Adult Ministry Sponsors Coffeehouse

By Teresa A. Parsons

If you live in the Elmira area and you're sick of bars, discouraged about meeting people and seeking a range of activities from social to spiritual, cheer up. Young adult ministry has arrived.

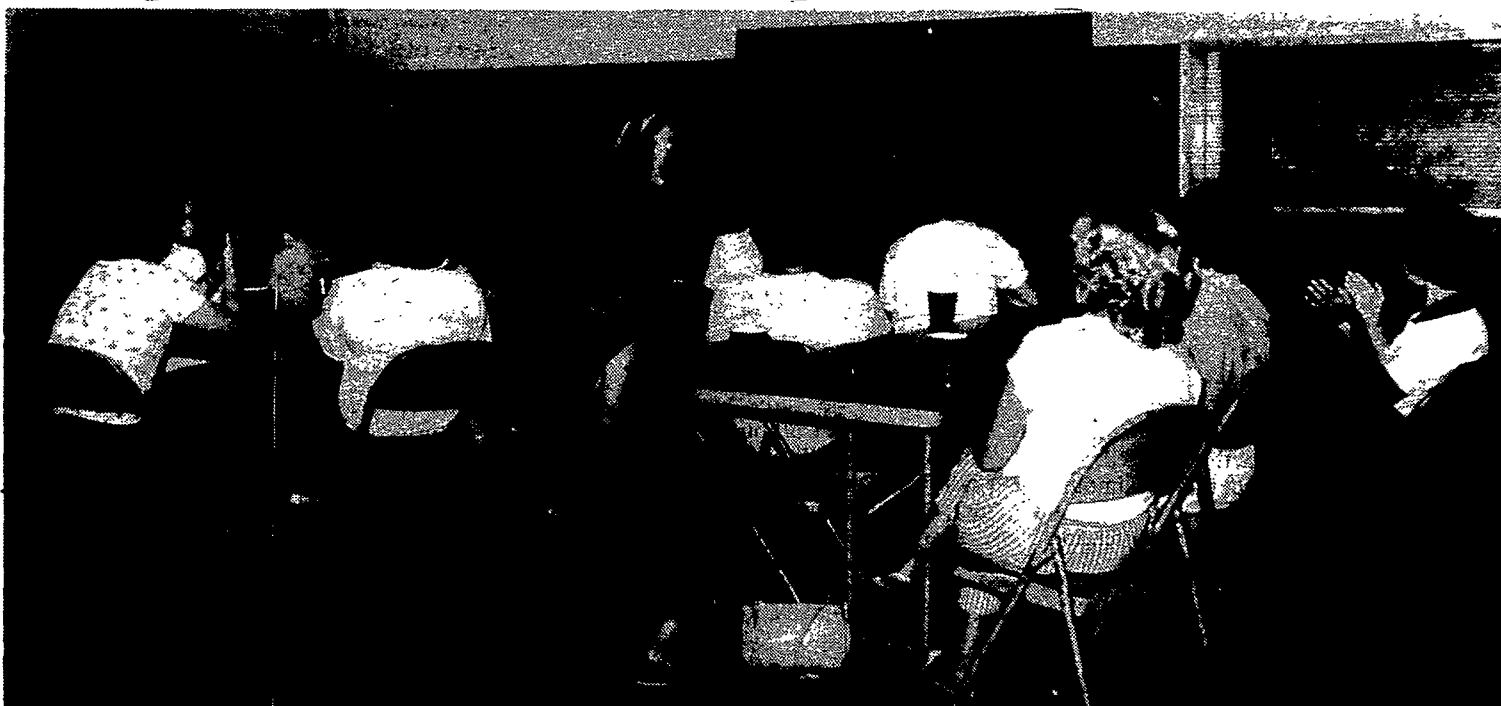
On Sunday evening, July 14, Elmira young adults sponsored their third event, a coffeehouse at St. Patrick's Junior High School, featuring the singing and guitar playing of Dale Allen, refreshments, and a small but friendly and enthusiastic crowd.

Marie Mulvaney, one of the event's coordinators, said a coffeehouse was chosen because it had been a success for young adults at a Rochester parish. Coming so shortly after the Fourth of July, she said, publicity was a problem that probably hindered the turnout.

"I was disappointed at the numbers," she remarked, "but there were new faces there, which was encouraging. People are becoming more aware." Those who attended said they enjoyed Allen and the casual atmosphere, and urged that another coffeehouse be planned and advertised more heavily. Other events the team has already sponsored were a Trivial Pursuit Night and an afternoon of volleyball.

Young adult ministry is still relatively new to the Diocese of Rochester. Three years ago, the Commission on Young Adult Ministry was formed to promote awareness within the Church on issues concerning people 18-35 and older, including loneliness, sexuality and communication. While several parish-based ministry teams have been established in the diocese so far, Elmira is the first regionally based group.

Last January, staff members from several Elmira parishes and St. Joseph's School of Nursing met with Karen Rinefierd, diocesan coordinator of young adult ministry, and a field consultant for the Southern Tier Office of Religious Education to explore the needs of young adults in the area. Ten people they identified as potential young adult leaders then formed a planning team with representatives from Ss. Peter and Paul, Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Cecilia and St. Patrick parishes as well as St. Mary Our Mother in Horseheads. Students at St. Joseph's School



Teresa A. Parsons/Courier-Journal

Dale Allen drew unwavering attention and rave reviews from the crowd at a coffeehouse sponsored by the young adult ministry team of Elmira.

of Nursing have also expressed interest in the team.

Mulvaney became involved just five days after she moved from the Chicago area to Elmira to become medical records director for St. Joseph's Hospital. After observing a lack of church-centered educational and social activity for people in the 18-35-plus age range in past parishes, she asked Father Paul McCabe, pastor at Our Lady of Lourdes, whether there was anything similar happening in Elmira. He told her about the

new ministry team and she went to their next meeting.

"Nobody's even called upon for help," Mulvaney observed of her past experiences. "We are people with a lot to offer, looking for opportunities to serve."

A native Elmiran and parishioner at Ss. Peter and Paul, Tom VanBenCoten was one of the first members of the ministry team, which he also heard about through his pastor. He's watched friends and other people his age leaving Elmira because of it's economic woes — Chemung County has one

of the highest rates of unemployment in New York State — and because, in his words, "there's just nothing to do here." Rather than leave, he's chosen to try to change the existing situation.

VanBenCoten, Mulvaney and the other team members plan to sponsor a variety of educational, social and spiritual activities open to anyone from 18 to 35-plus, single or married, in or near the Elmira area. They encourage anyone interested in joining the planning team or in just enjoying their events to call Marie Mulvaney at (607)734-5031

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