

Program on prejudice knocks 'chips' off students' shoulders

By Richard A. Kiley

Rochester's Holy Rosary School was the scene of frantic "blue-chip" trading last Friday afternoon, as approximately 40 students made moderate gains in a bullish market. As the trading began, students scrambled to acquire more blue chips — or gold, green, white and red ones — than their classmates.

Trading took a downslide, however, in the second session, as some students lost their enthusiasm; it seemed that no matter how adept they were at wheeling and dealing, they just couldn't overcome the good fortune of their classmates.

And for good reason. The market was fixed.

The simulated trading sessions — a game called "Starpower" — were designed to illuminate the roots and effects of prejudice. Presented by the Rochester chapter of the Panel of American Women, the game was based on the adage "He's holding all the chips." No matter how valiantly certain students tried, there was no way of evening the odds.

Starpower enables students to explore prejudice by allowing them to take a walk in the other guy's shoes. It is designed to illustrate the fact that not everyone has good fortune in life, and that sometimes no amount of effort can change the hand that has been dealt.

Starpower further points out the problems people face because of prejudice. The job market in particular is a site of such problems, and the panel warned students that they may encounter prejudice sooner than they expect.

"You may apply for a job in the neighborhood Burger King soon, and not be hired just because of your outward appearance," said panel member Pat Geraci.

Geraci told students that prejudice is built into today's world. She explained that the Panel of American Women — which is comprised of women of different ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds — is concerned about the effects of prejudice, discrimination and racism.



Dawn Wagner (from left), Anna Jimenez, Dawn Infantino and Teresa Vigelette engage in 'blue-chip trading' during a program on prejudice at Holy Rosary School last Friday.

"A lot of people form an opinion about you just by your color, last name, or whether you are a man or a woman," Geraci said. "Differences can be very interesting ... sometimes you need to be in the shoes of another person to find out what its like to be in a certain situation."

Gaynelle Wethers, a panel member and principal of St. Monica's School in Rochester, said she hoped the students' experiences would enable them to better understand the racial strife that plagues South Africa.

"When you look at the news now and see people who can only live in certain parts of neighborhoods, now maybe you can relate to the issue there a little better," Wethers said.

"Maybe now you'll be more sensitive to others who are not as fortunate."

Geraci also encouraged students to challenge those who demonstrate prejudice. "Shake people up and disturb their peace," she advised.

Starpower is one of many programs and presentations the Panel of American Women offers students in grades kindergarten through college, in an effort to highlight the positive aspects of cultural difference and ethnic heritage.

Educators may choose from a variety of other programs the panel offers, including: a discussion focused on the Dr. Seuss book "Sneetches;" "Whom Will I Choose?," a program that encourages discussion of re-

spect for individuality vs. name calling; and "Stereotyping Technique," which gives students first-hand experience with being judged as a member of a group instead of as an individual.

According to panel member Betsy Powell, the Rochester chapter began giving presentations in 1972, and has reached out to elementary, high school and university classes as well as civic, social and religious groups.

Geraci claims that the Rochester chapter has been "the most active" in school presentations of the 15 chapters nationwide. She noted that the local group welcomes all opportunities to present programs in area schools.

Maryknoll congratulates the Diocese of Rochester for placing the Rev. Peter A. Deckman in overseas mission for fourteen years.



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