

Local News

Developments in Atlanta will affect 'rescues' in Rochester

By Richard A. Kiley

The arrest last week of Operation Rescue leader Randall Terry — on the eve of the organization's "Siege of Atlanta" — will have an effect on how a pro-life group in Rochester conducts future "rescue missions."

David E. Long, executive director of Project Life of Rochester, said that his group will continue efforts to "decentralize" leadership for rescues so that police won't be able to single out one person before Rochester activists picket a physician's office.

"Next year, you'll see a number of rescues with different leaders at each one," said Long, who did not travel to Atlanta to participate in intensive picketing of seven of the city's abortion clinics. "Right now we have five rescue leaders, and we should have 10 trained by February. We'll take precautionary measures."

Long added that the arrest of Terry, a former Rochester-area resident and leader of the Binghamton N.Y.-based Operation Rescue, would also alter his group's policy of notifying police in advance of a rescue.

"Police in New York state are watching what is going on down there," Long said. "They're saying, 'What's good for the police in Atlanta is good here.' Police in Atlanta are trying to break them."

More than 450 demonstrators — including at least seven Catholic priests — were jailed last week in Atlanta, where police officials denied allegations of brutality by protest leaders. No precise figure was available on the number of priests arrested because they — like other "Operation Rescue" participants — refused to identify themselves to authorities.

Organizers said Atlanta police "used force and inflicted pain" as they cleared the protesters from three Atlanta clinics.

A spokesman for Atlanta police, who had arrested nearly 800 Operation Rescue participants between July 19 and September 3, said that "as far as our department is concerned, the officers were doing their job."

He said the force used was in line with what was necessary to remove the protesters, who were "blocking a legitimate business."

Witnesses said police twisted arms and fingers, applied pressure to sensitive areas on the neck and dragged those who would not walk.

A spokeswoman for the Atlanta Public Safety Department confirmed October 5 that two people had been hospitalized — "one elderly gentleman who complained of neck and head injuries" and "a middle-aged woman complaining of chest pains and nausea."

Long said recently that his group had met up with similar police behavior after pro-life activists were charged with misdemeanors ranging from criminal trespass to resisting arrest for entering the office of Dr. Morris Wortman, 200 White Spruce Blvd., Brighton, on September 24.

"That may be a good thing, because the Civil Rights Movement in the '60s experienced a turning point when the police brought out the black dogs and started to push people around," Long said. "The people continued their passive resistance and they increased their

numbers."

More than 60 Catholic and Protestant clergy participated in a protest on October 4, including Auxiliary Bishop Austin B. Vaughan of New York, who had been arrested in four previous Operation Rescue actions.

All those arrested in the October 4 demonstration were held overnight, spokeswoman Juli Loesch said.

By 10 a.m. October 5, a dozen protesters had given police their real names, posted bond and been released, the Public Safety Department said.

More than 400 protesters gathered at a motel outside Atlanta October 4 to receive final instructions and travel together to three targeted clinics: Hillcrest Clinic, Feminist Women's Health Center and Atlanta SurgiCenter.

Terry told the activists "we're not going down there as the heroes. We are going down there in a spirit of repentance."

"We are 15 years late," he added, referring to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 decision legalizing abortion. "There are no heroes here today."

As the group split in three and traveled toward the clinics, police helicopters monitored their movements and barricades were set up at the seven private clinics in Atlanta which perform abortions.

Volunteer escorts, trained by abortion advocates, were outside each clinic to help potential clients into the buildings. A coalition of Rochester-area community organizations recently said they would provide escort services during future rescue missions.

Long noted that in the past, "escort services have turned violent."

"When you have 50 people blocking the entrance to a clinic and police can't get through, then these people won't be able to get through and they'll become violent," he explained.

Long added that the formation of a coalition is also "exciting" in that it "forces Christians to get off the fence," since organizers of the organization offering escorts said they represent several religious organizations.

In Atlanta, as escorts approached clinics, many of the demonstrators crawled toward their assigned positions. Loesch said the "passive, non-aggressive stance" was meant to show police, clinic staff members and potential clients that they "were not under any threat."

Terry was arrested shortly after he addressed a group of his supporters at St. Jude's Church in suburban Sandy Springs on October 3. Police entered the church and asked Terry to step outside, where they arrested him on charges of conspiracy to commit a crime.

After his bail was set at \$75,000, an Atlanta family posted a property bond, and Terry was released in time to lead the first protest.

"I found it very shocking that the police will come into a church to arrest somebody," said Father William Hoffman, pastor of St. Jude's. "I thought churches would be considered something of a sanctuary."

Father Hoffman, was among those priests arrested. The other Atlanta archdiocesan priests arrested were identified as Father Daniel Stack, associate pastor of Holy Family Parish

in Marietta, Ga.; Father Michael A. Woods, pastor of St. John the Evangelist, Hapeville; and Monsignor Michael J. Regan, pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Carrollton.

Father Stack told the *Georgia Bulletin*, archdiocesan newspaper, that he would give his name as "Father Doe."

Three priests from outside the area were also believed to be in jail, including Father Edwin F. Arentsen, a priest of the Diocese of Belleville, Ill., who was released August 27 after spending 40 days in an Atlanta jail for an earlier Operation Rescue.

The others were Oblate of Wisdom Father Norman U. Weslin of Ponce, Puerto Rico, who has been working with Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in the Bronx, and Capu-

chin Father Benedict J. Groeschel, also from the Bronx.

Operation Rescue first appeared in Atlanta during the Democratic National Convention in July, and stayed there for much of the summer. Since then, more than 1,100 protesters have been jailed, mostly on trespassing charges.

Long said the activists are using Atlanta as a "national battle front" against clinics where abortions are done.

"People are going there and experiencing massive rescues so they can go back (to their own cities) charged," he said. "And they feel they need to stay there in an attempt to win over the system."

Includes information from NC News Service.



Linda Dow Hayes/Courier-Journal
Students, teachers and parents of Our Lady of Perpetual Help rallied together on Friday, Oct. 7, and walked through their school neighborhood in an anti-drug march they entitled a "No-A-Thon." Sallie Dellavilla, a second-grade teacher at the school, leads her class in a Spanish-language chant of the slogan "Just Say No to Drugs."

Provision stalls plea-bargain offer

David E. Long and 35 other pro-life activists arrested for blocking the entrance of a Brighton physician's office three weeks ago stalled a plea-bargain offer from the Monroe County District Attorney's office last week, after Long said he could not accept one of the provisions affecting some of the defendants.

The activists, who are members of Project Life of Rochester, were expected to plead guilty to trespassing violations Saturday, Oct. 8, before Town Justice John J. Ark and representatives of the DA's office, but a provision affecting 12 of the 36 defendants troubled Long. The 12, including Long, also face charges resulting from a rescue mission last May at Highland Hospital, in which 42 people were arrested. That case is scheduled to be tried November 15 before City Court Judge John Manning Regan.

The arrangement with the DA's office required the 12 defendants who participated in both rescue missions to plead guilty in both cases and agree to perform community service.

Long said he would have to discuss the plea-bargain offer with other activists arrested at Highland Hospital, citing that members of each group have an agree-

ment to act in solidarity with one another.

Long told Ark that he would probably meet with the Highland group this weekend, but the town justice said it was doubtful that he would agree to any plea offer once trial notices were sent out next week.

The plea bargain was initiated during a hearing before Ark on Friday, Oct. 7. The agreement would have required that of the 36 defendants to plead guilty to trespassing violation.

The activists would have to pay a combined fee of about \$6,000 to the Brighton Police Department and the Monroe County Sheriff's Department to cover the cost incurred by law enforcement agencies that made the arrests.

The proposed agreement also required Long to plead guilty to a more serious charge of criminal trespass for the Highland protest, and serve 40 hours of community service.

The other 11 defendants facing charges from the Highland rescue would have been required to plead guilty to trespass violations and do 24 hours of community service, according to Long.

Only Long would emerge from the case with a criminal record.

Students, faculty fight drug abuse with march through neighborhood

Students, parents and faculty of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Rochester, marched nearly two miles Friday, Oct. 7, in a "No-A-Thon" designed to raise public awareness about drug and alcohol abuse.

Carrying signs that read "Just say no to drugs" and "Diga no a las drogas," the marchers walked from the Joseph Avenue school through the neighborhood while chanting "Just Say No," then returned to the school where each student received a "Just Say No" button and a certificate noting his or her participation in the march.

Sister Clare Francis Mongenhan, school principal, said that previous years' walk-athons had raised money for school activities, but that this year the school had decided to devote the march to raising awareness of substance abuse. This year's march was sponsored by Omni Corp., a Long-Island-based company that donated the certificates and buttons, and provided educational literature to the school. School parents will sell the company's products to raise funds for field trips next spring.

New York State Assemblyman Gary Proud participated at the invitation of school officials. "It's my neighborhood," Proud said, ad-

ding that, "anything that raises consciousness (of drug abuse) is good."

Sister Melita Burley, a fourth grade teacher at OLP, said that each grade from kindergarten to sixth has a drug-education program. The students "get a little more information each year," she said, noting that a number of speakers from community organizations have visited the school. Students have done oral reports on drug and alcohol abuse and have interviewed informed adults on the subject, she said.

According to Sister Burley, one student brought the "Just Say No" message home to her mother. "She was influential in helping her mother stop smoking," the teacher reported. After hearing her daughter express concern over the effects of smoking, the mother, "decided to try a little harder to stop."

Last week's No-A-Thon, meanwhile, drew rave reviews from one fourth-grader. "If we had a choice, we'd do this every year," Adam Mendez said.

Fellow fourth-grader Scott Gunkel had mixed feelings. "It's kind of embarrassing and kind of fun," he said. "It's great to get off school for a while."

Rob Cullivan