

Youth

'Just Say Yes!' to listening, author urges

By Rob Cullivan

If you asked Margaret Grant how one should respond to teenage drug abuse, she might respond "Just Say Yes!"

Yes, that is, to teenagers seeking an understanding ear for their fears and concerns.

Grant has been saying yes to troubled teenagers for the last 20 years, helping them to find a way out of the traps of drug abuse and delinquency. A native of Rush, she is the author of "Please Don't Throw Me Away," a book documenting her work as a volunteer with the Teen Challenge program in Rochester and as a member of the board of a local state facility for delinquent youth. (Grant asked that the facility's name not be used for this article.)

Grant has gained a lot of hard-earned wisdom in her work. She believes that parents must learn not to overreact to finding out about their children's drug abuse. Too often, she said, young people are afraid of revealing their experimentation with drugs to their parents — a fear that parents sometimes reinforce with disciplinary measures. "How many girls

become prostitutes because they're thrown out of the house?" she asked rhetorically.

A more effective approach to stopping drug abuse would be if parents tell their child that his or her drug use hurts them, but that they are willing to listen to their child and to discuss solutions, Grant said.

Throughout her book, Grant reiterates her beliefs in a non-judgmental approach to the youth who cross her path. She writes that few of the children she had met had ever known love and compassion in their upbringing. "Some came from homes filled with anger and bitterness. Others had been child-abused ... Many had been termed 'problem children' and had been shoved from pillar to post, finally ending up homeless and alone."

One of those children is John Paul Stevens, to whom she devotes several chapters. Early on in his stay at the state facility, Stevens tearfully asked Grant for her help. Her affirmative response committed her to a long and painful relationship, one in which Stevens sometimes ignored her for months on end, so wary was he of trusting anybody with his secret feelings

and concerns.

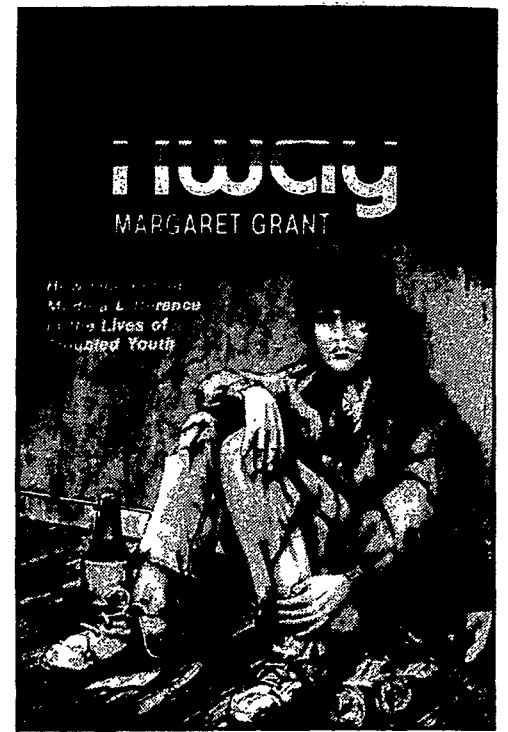
Grant details several events in their relationship that exemplify the frustrations she often encounters working with teens. In one instance, Grant purchased a Bible and a plaque inscribed with words about friendship to give Stevens for his birthday. She gave the presents to a cook at the facility to give to Stevens.

When he received the presents, Stevens told the cook that he was delighted. But when he saw Grant at a religious service the following Sunday, he completely ignored her. Several weeks later, she met Stevens, who suddenly decided to talk to her again.

"I could not understand what it was that kept John Paul from letting me know his true feelings," Grant writes. "He would come to a certain point; then, it was as though he would close the door."

Although Stevens often closed the door on her concern, Grant kept knocking by persistently talking to him, keeping in contact with the youth even after he left the school. The book ends with Grant sending Stevens a gift

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The cover of Margaret Grant's new book depicts a troubled teenager.

By Stan Ewing
Aquinas Institute

Aquinas Institute has always stood for excellence in both academics and service to others. This excellence is exemplified through the Community Service Program here at Aquinas Institute. This program is designed to benefit the students of Aquinas, as well as the community of Rochester. Students learn to participate in communal activities as well as take part in bettering the lives of others.

The CSP has always been part of the Aquinas policy. Every year, seniors are required to perform a minimum of 16 hours of community service in order to graduate. There are a great number of agencies and volunteer services that an Aquinas student may choose from. A booklet is provided for each senior that lists all of the agencies for the CSP. Nursing homes, soup kitchens and agencies for the mentally retarded make up the majority of the list.

Students may, however, choose to do their services elsewhere. Aquinas students may also teach other students and accredit their community service hours. For example, an Aquinas senior may teach catechism to elementary students rather than volunteer at an agency.

The primary goal of the program is to get students involved in the Rochester community and to show that Aquinas seniors care about their community. Not many other high schools in the area have such a program. Aquinas students are recognized as a particular asset to the City of Rochester through their hard work and

Speaking Out

concern. This program sets our high school apart.

As a senior, I have many challenges to overcome, as do a number of other seniors; college interviews, visits and term papers to write. It is hard to find time to set aside for myself, let alone to do volunteer work for an agency. However, it is possible. It may take a little planning, but the rewards of volunteer service — a feeling of warmth and accomplishment — are well worth the efforts put forth.

At the moment, I am a volunteer at Strong Memorial Hospital. I transport patients and equipment throughout the hospital. It's enjoyable, and by no means do I mind working without a salary. This is the beauty of it. One doesn't feel like it is work if it is enjoyable. Seeing the smiling faces of the patients only makes you happy.

I'm proud to say that all Aquinas seniors experience the same warmth and happiness that I do when they volunteer. The Community Service Program helps in molding the young ladies and gentlemen of Aquinas Institute into the mature adults that they have become.

Teenagers' attitudes on abortion

By Eileen Flynn
NC News Service

A short time ago, I had an experience I found very upsetting. I was on a panel discussing abortion at a public school. The give and take between panel and audience lasted more than two hours. When I left, I felt as though I had been through the wringer.

The panel had drawn the participation of more than 200 high school students, and what I heard them say troubled me deeply.

On the whole, they seemed comfortable with casual sex. They also seemed to consider abortion the way to eliminate a complication that frequently follows sexual activity.

Incredibly, abortion represented to them a practical remedy for a common indiscretion. Many students balked at the judgment that abortion is wrong morally and were barely civil to panelists who held that position.

McQuaid High School

Do you think high school students are too conscious of fashion?

MARK RUFFO:

Yes, definitely. Some students put more emphasis on the way they look than their academic studies. People try to reflect the way they look, not have their looks reflect their person. The person's personality and attitude should be the main way of judging character. Being too conscious about your appearance hides your character.

KURT SCHMIDT:

Yes, I believe they are. Students will go to great extremes to find that certain skirt or pair of pants that relates them to their clique, yet makes them stand out. I will not deny that many students judge others on the clothes they wear, but the way you act will make a much larger impact on someone than the way you dress.

Coming of Age

Of course, I am generalizing. Not everyone in the audience spoke, and one has no way of knowing what the silent students were thinking. However, there was one girl who spoke with a quiver in her voice and who kept me from total disillusionment.

She courageously asked her peers: "Am I the only one here who thinks it is wrong to destroy your own flesh and blood? How much violence

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As Teens See It

BRIAN STALTER:

Unfortunately, yes we are. We like to think that the people behind the clothes are what matter, but too often we allow ourselves to judge our peers on a label, or a price tag. When you really get down to it, someone who makes fashion a priority when judging someone's character is really missing out on knowing that person for what they are.

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We received 8 correct entries identifying *The Twist* as the Chubby Checker record which reached #1 in two different years.

The winner was Evan Dewander of Fairport

MUSIC TRIVIA

This week's question:
Who had the hit single "You Are the Sunshine of My Life?"

A: _____

Name _____
Address _____
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School _____

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All entries must be received within seven days of this paper's issue date. Winning names and answers will be printed the week following each drawing.

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