

# Youth

## Aquinas sophomore tells peers about need for fire prevention

By Rob Cullivan

For Lynn Wesley, fire prevention is a relative matter. The Aquinas Institute sophomore was inspired to enter the Western New York Fireman's Association beauty pageant last July by her uncle, Roger Damon, a past chief of the Gates-Chili Fire Department.

Wesley was crowned queen of the pageant on July 29, winning in a field of 15 girls from throughout western New York. Each contestant had to deliver a speech on a fire-related topic, perform a skit demonstrating her personality and model an evening gown.

In her speech, Wesley discussed the conditions volunteer firemen face when they respond to a call and the reasons they cite for volunteering. "Their responses (to her question) were that firefighting has been in my family for a long time, and it makes me feel proud to be able to serve my community," Wesley told the judges.

Firefighting is a family affair for Wesley, whose 17-year-old brother, Tim, is a member of firefighting Explorer Post 286. Tim, a senior at Aquinas, wants to follow in his uncle's footsteps and has applied to join the Ridge-Culver Volunteer Fire Association when he turns 18.

His sister remembered thinking about him

and her uncle before making her speech. "(I thought if) by some chance that I did win I would be representing him (Tim) when he became a fireman, and my uncle too. That just gave me such a thrill," she said, smiling.

Wesley gets her chance to represent her relatives and the association at as many as three speaking engagements a week at locations throughout Monroe County. But her interest in fire prevention goes beyond her royal duties. According to her mother, Susan, the whole family will drop what it's doing to respond to a neighborhood fire — watching on as Tim assists the Culver Ridge volunteers.

The family's eagerness to see him succeed can sometimes lead to sacrifices. Susan recalled a particularly bitter cold night when Tim and the others arrived at a fire only to realize that he had forgotten his gloves at home. Although she was dressed lightly, Lynn began walking back to their house to retrieve her brother's gloves. As they stood there, Susan and her husband, Clement, realized how cold it was and got in their car to pick up their daughter. By the time they caught up with her, she was frostbitten. "It took us a few days to warm her up again," Susan said.

Fortunately, it doesn't take as long for a

friendship became a victim of a natural parting. I couldn't understand why it had to happen that way. I was angry, sad and spiteful all at once, and afraid because I didn't want to be hurt again.

When the first boy I ever told I loved dumped me, I couldn't believe it. I walked through my days like a robot. I don't remember any of my classes, but I must have studied because I have the transcripts.

I remember that the spaces between my crying became longer and longer until only an occasional song set me off. Accepting the pain and then letting go of it was the first step to healing.

Many circumstances are beyond our control. Accidents, illness and death are all supposed to happen to other people, not to us. And when they do, we hardly can believe it.

On the day my mother was to arrive for her first grandson's first birthday party, I got a telephone call. My mother had had emergency surgery the night before. She was diagnosed with an inoperable and virulent form of cancer. In two years, she was dead.

During those two years, we had many special times. My mother didn't ask, "Why me?" She asked, "Why not me?" Then she tried to live each day to the fullest. She fought to live but prayed, "Thy will be done."

I, on the other hand, flailed against the cards dealt me. Surely there was some right combination of things to do that would save her. Above all, I did not want to lose her.

Yet through her death, I grew. I learned that God can bring good out of darkness and peace out of pain. And I learned to "let go and let God" because he knows better than I about



Linda Dow Hayes — Courier-Journal  
Lynn Wesley, a sophomore at Aquinas Institute, won the title of queen for the Western New York Volunteer Fireman's Association last July.

## Coming of Age

By Linda Rome

There are many endings in life: the natural progression of the seasons, changes of age, growings up and away. Sometimes it is difficult to accept the finality of these passages because they do not jibe with our mental images of how our lives are supposed to be.

When I was 14, my best friend started dating. She walked between classes with her new boyfriend instead of with me, and met with him after school to study — the way we used to together. She had less time for me and our

## Speaking Out

By Scott Rhatigan  
Bishop Kearney High School

The legislation which allowed those 18 or older to vote was heralded as a way to introduce "democracy in action" to the youth of our nation. It gave those who could defend the country a right to say who would govern it. It may also have been a mistake.

The segment of the population affected by this law — those between 18 and 21 — do not vote as frequently as do others. Therefore, politicians do not address the issues affecting this group except to mollify parents' concerns. With such inattention and the poor example set for

them by an apathetic public, it is no wonder that adolescents often vote ignorantly, haphazardly or not at all.

This is not to say that the vote should not be given to this age group in order to prevent such meaningless voting from affecting elections. Rather, we must work to encourage young citizens to participate intelligently in our democracy. In high school, teachers should devote part of their courses to giving students an understanding of our government and present-day issues. Colleges are vital to this effort because the greater part of this segment of society is enrolled in college. Local and state politicians should speak to classes about the benefits of voting. Teachers could present election issues to the classes and organize group registration and voting.

These efforts may seem wasteful because of the poor voting history of this part of our population. Such measures are, however, the least we can do to preserve democracy for the future. Voters today will be voters tomorrow.

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The winner was Pat Dugan of St. Bonaventure

### MUSIC TRIVIA

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Who wrote "God Bless America"?

A:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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The Courier-Journal  
Music Trivia  
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## McQuaid Jesuit High School Should birth control be available in diocesan Catholic high schools?

### As Teens See It

DAVE MIENTEMP, Senior

Obviously, I go to Mc Quaid and, in accordance with Catholic doctrine, I don't believe my school could possibly distribute birth control. I also really don't think that birth control in the schools is a good idea, as it would only encourage sex. The school is a place of learning, not of sexuality.

MIKE BISHOP, Senior

I believe that the facts must be faced that teens do have sex. When they have sex, they run the risk of contracting diseases or getting pregnant. Anything that will prevent either one of the above is well worth it. So I say, "Give us condoms."

### Academy seeks teen actors

High-school-age boys are invited to audition for male roles in Nazareth Academy's spring musical, "Camelot," January 9 and 10 from 3-6 p.m.

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