

Poisons on grapes inspire fast at Aquinas

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — When it comes to helping migrant workers win their rights in California, Paul Ciavarri says: "Think fast!"

The Aquinas Institute senior heads the school's student boycott committee, which is sponsoring a fast on behalf of the United Farm Workers of America AFL-CIO. The UFW, led by Cesar Chavez, has been promoting a boycott of California table grapes until growers grant them the following demands:

- A ban on the use of the pesticides captan, parathion, phosdrin, dinoseb and methyl bromide on grapes.
- A joint UFW-grower testing program for poisonous residues on grapes sold in stores, with the results to be made public.
- Free and fair union elections for farm workers and good faith collective bargaining.

The idea for a fast at Aquinas grew out of Chavez's own 36-day fast, which ended last August 21. Chavez had hoped the fast would publicize the boycott, which the UFW initiated in 1984 in response to the use of the cancer-causing pesticides in grape vineyards harvested by migrant workers. Ciavarri learned of the fast and the boycott last summer, and decided he wanted fellow students to answer Chavez's request that his fast be passed on to "concerned men and women throughout North America."

Ciavarri contacted the UFW office in New York City, which sent him information. In October of last year, he and six other students formed the boycott committee, which distributed information about the UFW's struggle to students and school parents. The committee also sponsored a



campaign to write letters to area grocery markets asking them to remove California table grapes from their shelves. About 25 students wrote letters, Ciavarri said.

Over Christmas vacation, the boycott committee met with members of the school's peer ministry. Ciavarri, a peer minister himself, persuaded 16 fellow ministers to enlist students in a chain fast between Feb. 20 and March 21. One of the ministers who was persuaded to join the fast was junior Don Schwab.

"It's a just cause," Schwab commented. "I'm for justice in a non-violent way. It's just the right thing to get involved in."

Getting other students involved was not as easy, according to senior Beth Rieter, who is on the boycott committee. Before the fast began, Rieter and other students sat at an information table during lunch hours, asking others to commit to giving up lunch once during the 22-day period.

"Some people would ask, 'What purpose would (the fast) serve?'" Rieter said, noting that she herself had similar questions when Ciavarri asked her to join the boycott committee. "I said, 'Why are you boycotting grapes? I love grapes!'" But Ciavarri showed another side of the grapes Rieter loved when he persuaded her to watch *The Wrath of Grapes*, a UFW-produced video documenting working conditions that led to the call for the grape boycott. "I couldn't believe that something like this was really happening," she said.

What is happening is that workers and their children are developing cancer from handling grapes sprayed with the deadly pesticides the UFW wants banned. "Workers are regularly sent into the fields too soon after pesticide spraying — despite legislation about safe re-entry periods," according to the National Farm Worker Min-

istry, an affiliate of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

The children of workers in California's Central San Joaquin Valley also suffer from their parents' exposure to the pesticides. California's Children Services report that in the last 10 years, there have been 276 childhood cancer cases in Kern County, with 154 of those occurring in the town of Bakersfield alone. This is four times the expected rate for that age group.

Information presented in *The Wrath of Grapes*, which theology instructor Kathleen Mahoney agreed to show to her classes, persuaded several more students to join the boycott, and eventually, the fast. Of Aquinas' total student population of 792, 285 students have so far committed themselves to the fast. More than 20 teachers, office workers, and other school employees, have also joined the effort.

But will the fast serve any practical purpose? "It's more a symbol than anything else," Rieter said — a sentiment echoed by Ciavarri. "It shows solidarity with Cesar Chavez and this work for the boycott," he said.

SPEAKING OUT

By Scott Rhatigan
Bishop Kearney

At this time of year, seniors are finally finishing with the Scholastic Aptitude Test. These tests are used by colleges and scholarship committees to evaluate a student's potential and level of education. While no one disagrees with the fact that something is needed to evaluate a student, the SAT is

not the answer. Some type of standardized test is needed as a preliminary to minimize time and cost to the colleges and scholarship committees, but the SAT has many problems interwoven throughout it.

In the past, the SAT has been shown to be biased against poor minorities who don't have the necessary background references to compete with other students who can afford the special preparation classes. It has also been shown that a large number of high scorers flunk out of college because they really didn't have the potential that was shown by their SAT scores. Grades and activities reflect a student's will to work and his ability to study.

Scholarship committees, such as the Regents Scholarship, must take all aspects of a student into consideration. The will to work is necessary to survive in college and an SAT score is not enough to show the level of determination which is a true aspect of potential. While this may cost more money at first, it will be more fair to those concerned and more beneficial.

Women invited to visit SSJ foster care home

The second in a series of "Come & See" programs offered by the Sisters of St. Joseph will take place Tuesday, March 7, at SSJ Morning Star, a foster care home operated by the sisters.

Women of all ages and backgrounds who want to know more about Morning Star and the children for whom the sisters care are welcome to visit at 4 p.m. and join the family for supper at 5:30 p.m.

Following the visit, the evening will continue at the SSJ Motherhouse with an informal discussion about caring for young children. A reflection evening program by Sisters Mary Lourdes McCarthy and Diane Branch will follow the discussion.

During the program at Morning Star, visitors will meet the three sisters who run the foster home: Sisters Jaqueline Stephens, Jeanne Morreall and Kathleen Fletcher. The three caregivers are all certified foster parents through Monroe County.

At Morning Star, the sisters provide for children who are difficult to place in other foster care homes. Many of these children have physical, emotional and medical problems.

The deadline for reservations is March 6.

The next "Come & See" retreat at the SSJ Motherhouse, 4095 East Ave., Rochester, is scheduled for April 14-15, from 7 p.m. Friday night to 4:30 p.m. Saturday. Retreats include room and meals. The cost is \$20.

Call Sister Lum or Sister Pray at 716/586-1000, ext. 28, for information on any of these programs.

McQuaid Jesuit

Do boy-girl relationships play too big a role in students' lives?

AS TEENS SEE IT

ANDREW STONE, senior:

I have had a girlfriend during my high school years, but since McQuaid is an all-male school, the daily distractions are not there. I'm not saying that serious students would be affected by the presence of members of the opposite sex in relation to their academic performance. I think a female perspective would be an advantage in certain subjects.



DAN MILLER, senior:

I believe boy/girl relationships are not only not too big a part of student life, but one of the most important parts of it. Females will play important roles in the rest of our lives, so the sooner we begin to work on relationships, the better.



JOHN BEEAKER, junior:

No. Going out with people, be you a boy or a girl, really broadens your horizons in life and enhances the high school experience.



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A:

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Each week, the Catholic Courier, in conjunction with the House of Guitars will feature a Music Trivia contest. All you have to do to enter is answer the question, fill in your name and address and the school you attend (if applicable), cut out the coupon and send it in to the Catholic Courier. If more than one correct entry is received, a drawing will be held and one winning entry will be drawn. If yours is the winning entry, you will be mailed a coupon for a free album or tape of your choice redeemable at the House of Guitars, 645 Titus Ave. 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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