

# Mercy student explores the effects of radon

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

**FAIRPORT** — Beth Persons wants homeowners to breathe a little easier.

But before doing so, she advises them to test their houses for radon, a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas produced by the normal decay of uranium and radium. Studies have shown that radon breaks down into other radioactive material that can

cause lung cancer.

Persons, a sophomore at Our Lady of Mercy High School, promulgated her beliefs at the Science Congress on Saturday, March 18, at St. John Fisher College. A day-long student competition sponsored by the Central Western Section of the Science Teachers Association of New York State, the congress featured a variety of area high school students presenting exhibits on to-

pics drawn from the fields of earth science, physics, chemistry and biology.

According to Persons and radon, which is found in the earth's soil and geological rock formations, enters buildings through sump pumps, drains, cracks, crevices and other openings around a building's foundation. Radon can also be found in well water.

Before giving her presentation, the

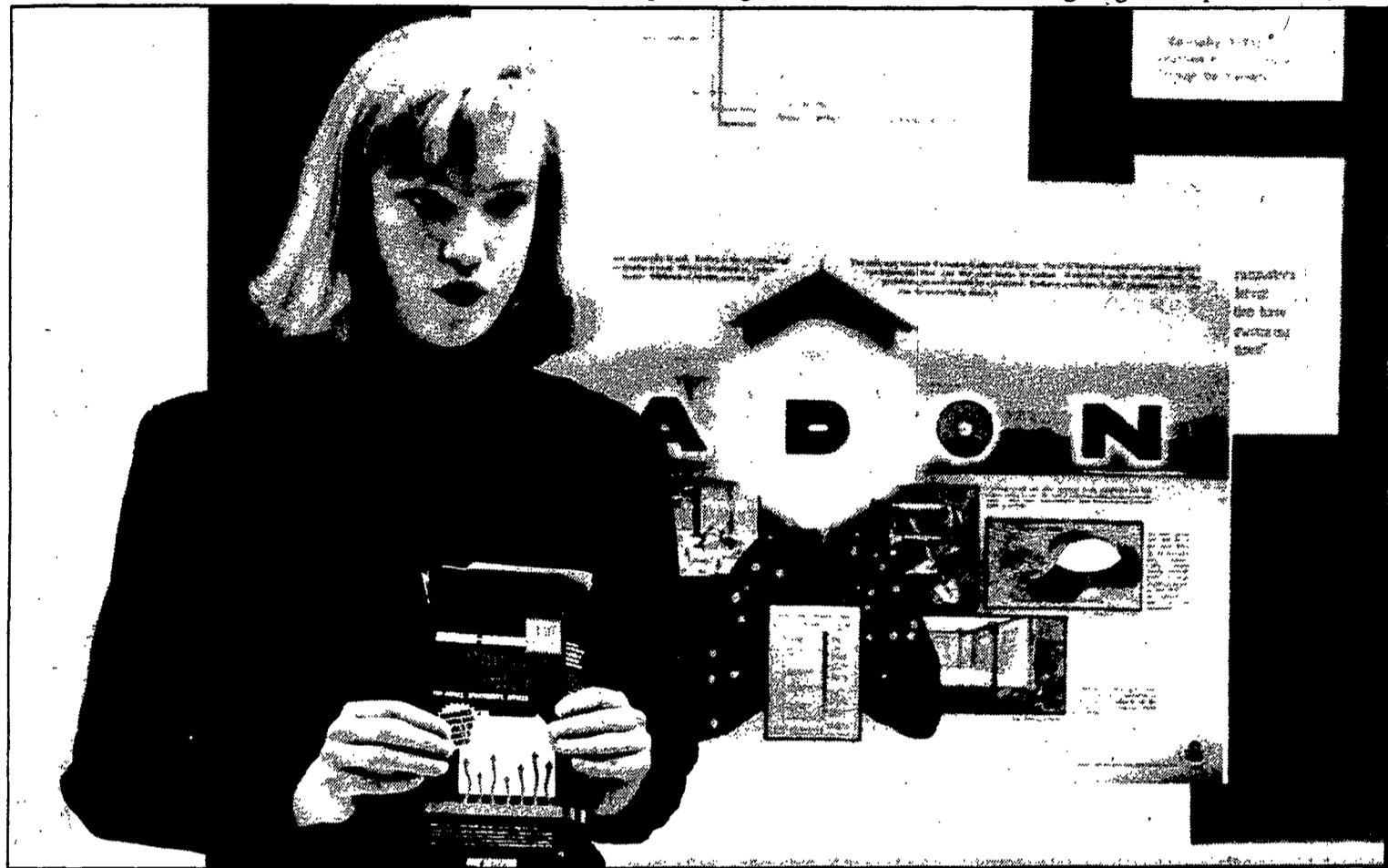
Mercy sophomore conducted tests for the presence of the gas in her house, her next-door neighbor's and a classmate's house five miles away. She bought radon-tester kits from a local home improvement store and set them up in the basements of each house.

The kits contain canisters filled with charcoal, which absorbs radon when exposed to the air. After absorbing the charcoal for nearly four days, she sealed the canisters and sent them off for testing to a laboratory in Illinois.

Persons found a high level of radon in her neighbor's house, an acceptable level in her own, and a low level in her friend's house. Homeowners finding high levels of radon in their home should conduct more tests, Persons said, because the results of radon tests are subject to a variety of potential testing errors. For example, placing a tester too close to a sump pump may give an unusually high reading, she said.

But if subsequent testing also shows a high level of radon, a homeowner doesn't have to pack up and move, she remarked. "If high amounts of radon are measured in your home, you should first locate or investigate the method of entry," Persons said. Sealing a house's foundation or installing footing drains or a suction system in the sump pump can help, but the student noted that "either one of these procedures can run into thousands of dollars."

Persons' presentation impressed the judges, but she didn't win any awards. Nonetheless, she said she was encouraged to try again next year. True to her concern for the effect of the earth's environment on all of us, the student is considering another health-related topic — the ozone layer.



Beth Persons, a sophomore at Our Lady of Mercy High School, responds to a question about the Radon Gas Detector she used in her experiments.

## COMING OF AGE

By Paul Henderson  
NC News Service

I have just finished spending an hour with 14 young people from various regions of the United States, discussing issues that touch their lives as Catholics.

They talked about how they desire a place in the church — to be welcomed, to have their talents accepted. They spoke of their need to relate their everyday lives to their religion.

A question I have raised with many youth is, "What can young people do to be accepted, and how can the church respond to them?" Responses to this question speak of a bonding between youth and adults.

First, young people want the presence of

## Young people need support of adults

caring adults. In my experience as a parish minister, I learned that teens treasure the presence of faith-filled adults who "are there" for them.

Countless times I have seen young people introduce their parents and friends to adult leaders. You can see the special relationship that exists. These adults are the presence of Christ to young people; in them the ministry of the church is expressed.

Retreats allow teens to experience the support, warmth and love of their peers and adults when their own world seems to be caving in around them. The story of Tony is typical.

Tony was perceived by many as a prob-

lem. During most of the retreat weekend he stayed aloof, rebuffing all efforts to include him in activities.

At the end of the weekend, during our final activity, he disappeared. Several of his peers, quite concerned, set out to find him.

Once they found him they tried to convince Tony to join us, and after much coaxing he eventually did. Then he broke down in tears telling how this was one of the few times anyone had reached out to him in love. The church provided Tony with a community he could trust, and one that would accept him.

Teens tell me that for this caring to happen, clergy and lay adults need to be open

to young people. "It's good to have a priest or someone I can talk to ... who likes us kids," they say.

They want adults to let them participate in liturgy, in service projects, in parish councils. They express support not only for socials and sports, but also for retreats and catechesis. Teens seek direction, but want the why and how of things explained to them.

...

Henderson is special assistant for youth and young adults at the U.S. Catholic Conference

## What qualities do you look for in student council leaders?

JEREMY HAVENS, senior

A student council officer must be a versatile individual with the ability to understand and represent all the students. A student council officer must create activities that are fun and interesting to all the students. High school is fun and academics.



Aquinas Institute

## AS TEENS SEE IT

PAUL REYNOLDS, senior

I would look for a responsible, yet fun-loving person — someone who would look out for the students' best interest and yet get things done. This person must be sincere and back up what they say. He or she should have a good sense of humor and have the ability to work with the school administration.



LEIGH DONOVAN, junior

A student council officer should be experienced and innovative. They should have leadership qualities which would enable them to present new ideas and work with a diverse group of students.



### HOUSE OF GUITARS

Most New Album And Tape Releases Just \$5.98  
CD's From \$8.98 - \$11.98 Each

We received 13 correct entries identifying Olivia Newton John as the singer who recorded "Have You Ever Been Mellow?"

The winner was Jeff Miller of Marion.

### MUSIC TRIVIA

**This week's question:**

What guitarist formed the group Derek and the Dominoes in 1970?

A: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

**Rules:**

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.

**The Catholic Courier**  
Music Trivia  
1150 Buffalo Rd.  
Rochester, NY 14624