## Students spin community web at high school retreat

## **By Rob Cullivan** Staff writer

WEBSTER - For Stacey Leone, God and community mean more when they come with strings attached.

Leone, a member of the youth group at Holy Trinity Parish, attended an Emmaus retreat from Thursday, March 23, to Saturday, March 25, at the Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua. Emmaus retreats are designed for high school seniors who have attended Teen Seminar, a diocesan-sponsored retreat for 11th- and 12th-graders.

Leone, a senior at Webster High School, particularly enjoyed one exercise in which participants sat at tables and threw strings of yarn to each other. By the end of the exercise, the participants were all connected by a multi-colored sea of yarn. They then made their way into the retreat house chapel where they placed the string on a crucifix.

The exercise symbolized how people are connected to each other in a community. Leone said the exercise showed her, "once you've got a community, it's hard to pull it apart."

Leone is connected to several communities - her youth group, her family and her family's parish of Corpus Christi in Rochester. These connections help her to keep her faith alive. But unless Catholic students in the public school system actively seek connections with the church, she commented, they have little encour-

agement to strengthen their Catholicism. Referring to the effect of her public school environment on her faith, she said, "I personally don't think it has any effect on me because of the friends I have, (but) it may be more difficult for a once-a-week church-goer."

To help Catholic students in the public schools feel connected to the church, Leone suggested an annual gathering of public school students from throughout the diocese that would be modeled on the annual Bishop's Day with Youth, which this year is scheduled for Sunday, April 9, at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center.

Leone also advocates allowing public school students a period of silent reflection each morning, so that they are allowed to strengthen their faith through private prayer.

One retreat-goer, R. J. Sherman, a senior at Newfield Central High School, thinks that the Catholic Church offers enough opportunities for public school students. But Sherman also believes that retreats such as Emmaus could use more publicity. "I would have never learned about the retreat except through my youth group," Sherman said, commenting that parishes such as Immaculate Conception in Ithaca, of which he is a member, should advertise youth retreats.

Like Leone, Sherman depends on close friends who are Catholic to help him bolster his faith. He attends Mass on Sundays



Students at the Emmaus Retreat create a web of yarn symbolizing their community at the Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua.

with his peers, and has met many other young Catholics while attending four diocesan-sponsored retreats.

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The Emmaus retreat broadened his sense

of community, Sherman said, pointing to the yarn exercise as a useful illustration of "everybody working together to hold a community together.



## Notre Dame, Elmira Are the homeless treated fair MICKEY KOZEMKO, freshman: **RENUKA DESHMUKH. senior:**

I feel that there is

either an inadequate money supply, or if there is adequate money, it is being distributed wrong. The reason I feel this way is because there is still a



things being done for homeless people and I appreciate that. However, there are many homeless people that are not helped because there is not



enough aid to go around. I think more should be done because everyone should be



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