

Peer pressure competes with God's voice in teens

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Peer pressure can hinder or help a teenager navigate the blind curves of adolescence.

Students attending a peer pressure workshop at last Sunday's Bishop's Day with Youth literally illustrated the above statement during a group exercise in which workshop co-leader Steve Legere led two blindfolded participants through a maze of chairs, while their peers shouted misleading directions at them.

Legere was acting the role of God in the students' lives, a God who tries to quietly lead people down the right road even as their friends try to steer them into dangerous paths.

The dangerous paths that peer pressure can cause one to take are avoidable, said Legere, and his wife, Barb, both of whom direct the youth group at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Hamlin.

The Legeres' workshop was one of several offered during the sixth-annual Bishop's Day with Youth, an all-day convention that drew more than 700 diocesan teenagers and adults to the Rochester Riverside Convention Center last Sunday, April 9. The event is sponsored by the diocesan Department of Youth Ministry.

Knowing oneself is the key to standing up to negative peer pressure, the Legeres remarked. Too many young people lose their way in life because they let the crowd, and not their own beliefs, define who they are.

"Be in touch with yourself," Steve

Legere advised. "Set some goals ... You can't please everyone. If you try to please everyone, you'll burn yourself out."

Rebecca Nellenbeck, a youth group member at St. Mary's, Auburn, agreed that trying to please some of her peers strains her sense of self at times. Even eating lunch at East Middle School, where she is a student, can cause Nellenbeck some grief. "You have to sit at this certain table at the lunchroom when you're eating," she said. "I want to sit at other places, but I sit there because I want to be in the 'in' crowd."

Eating lunch at a certain table is the small price Nellenbeck pays for being "in," but she recalled another friend who pays a heavier price for popularity. A popular group invited her friend to a party with alcohol, and though Nellenbeck tried to persuade her not to go, the friend remarked that she would be unpopular if she refused the invitation. "Now she drinks heavily," Nellenbeck said.

On the other hand, the Legeres pointed out that not all peer pressure is bad. Students can persuade one another to get good grades, or to join a religious youth group, Barb Legere observed. Teenagers can judge their own tastes and beliefs against those of their friends to help decide what is best for themselves, she noted.

Young people must sort their own beliefs from among the opinions with which they are bombarded, agreed Andrea Nati, a member of the youth group at St. Mary's in Elmira. Nati's friends influence her choice of clothes, TV shows and music. As one of



two students blindfolded for the group exercise, she confirmed that it accurately illustrated her feelings when peers pressure her. "It was a really good exercise," Nati said. "You can't explain peer pressure better than that exercise."

Exercising her will is how Nellenbeck deals with day-to-day pressure to conform. "I think it's really hard for me to deal with (peer pressure)," she said. When she is laughed at for taking a stand against the crowd, Nellenbeck uses her will power to, "blot it out," and tells herself, "they're not any better than me."

Ultimately, Barb Legere said, an individual must choose to go with the crowd or not if he or she is to be fulfilled in life — a comment her husband echoed.

"If you do something with your friends, and afterwards you feel bad, chances are you probably shouldn't be doing it," Steve Legere said.



Judy Sanchez
A blindfolded Andrea Nati (top) tries to listen to Steve Legere, leader of a peer pressure workshop, as he guides her through a maze of chairs during the Bishop's Day with Youth on Sunday. Bottom: Tom Eker (left) and Fred Brienzi discuss the concepts of clown ministry in their workshop.

COMING OF AGE

By Christopher Carstens
NC News

Somebody came up with the idea of homework, and since then teen life has never been the same. Most kids seem to feel the same way about homework — "Yuck, no fun, boring, a real brain pain."

Given a choice between doing homework and going shopping at the mall, most teens don't have a hard time making up their minds. However, you must eventually get around to those algebra worksheets and history chapters, no matter how miserable you feel about them.

There is no way to make homework fun. Until they start giving assignments like "play Nintendo until you pass Level 14 on Super Mario Brothers," homework will continue to be less than exciting. However,

Starting is the hardest part of homework

you can take some of the pain out of it.

Lots of kids find that they can get their homework done in about one-third the time if they settle in and work at it steadily. By learning to be more efficient, you can salvage more time for the fun things of life.

The hardest part of doing your homework is getting started. This may come as a surprise to a lot of teachers and parents, but it is pretty easy for the average teenager to put off the fun of memorizing those Spanish vocabulary words. The trick is to begin studying at the same time every night.

Pick a time and stick to it. If you start right after dinner or at 7 every night for two weeks, it becomes a habit. Your homework won't be more fun — but it will be easier to get started and easier to get done.

Next, it helps to do your homework at the same place every night. When you regularly study in the same place, your mind will go into "homework gear" as soon as

you sit there with your books. Try it for two or three weeks and you will notice that it works.

You have to be away from the television. Many teens have no problem listening to the radio while doing their homework. However, almost nobody can study efficiently and watch television at the same time.

Finally, you can teach yourself to concentrate for longer periods. It's easy to sit down to study at 7, and then remember that you need to sharpen some pencils. Then you work for a few minutes and realize that you need a glass of milk. And you told Jill you'd call. Pretty soon, it's 9 and you've

been "working on" your homework for two hours and almost nothing is done.

With a kitchen timer and a little willpower, you can learn to concentrate better. Set the timer for 15 minutes, put it where you can't see it and work steadily until the timer rings. Then, when your 15 minutes are up, take a little break. When you come back, set the timer for 15 more minutes.

You will find that you can gradually increase the time on the timer until you can work 30 minutes or even longer without going into Pepsi panic. As your concentration improves, you will finish faster and remember more of what you study.

Nazareth Academy

What books have influenced you?

CHRISTINE FOSHER, senior:

Recently, I finished reading *Run Away, Little Girl*, by Marilyn M. Segal, about the astonishing and miraculous recovery of a brain-injured girl named Debbie. The devotion and love this family had toward their brain-injured child really touched me. Many parents might give up hope. In this book, the doctors wanted to put Debbie into an institution; however, the faith, hope and love of the family told them otherwise. Today, Debbie is 39 and functioning well above average. This is truly a remarkable story that is also very touching.



LISA KLAVER, sophomore:

A book that has influenced my view on life and my faith in God is *Christy* by Catherine Marshall. It is a moving book about a woman who questions her faith in God and ends up having more faith than she had started with. I really enjoyed this book and would highly recommend it.



AS TEENS SEE IT

KARIN MARLETT, senior:

The book that has influenced my life the most is a book I read in fifth grade, *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, by Eleanor Coerr. This book taught me to value every moment of my life because it is such a precious gift. It is the story of a girl named Sadako who tried to save her life by making 1,000 folded cranes. She believed that if she could do this, she would live.



JENNIFER MAY, sophomore:

The book, *Flowers in the Attic*, by V.C. Andrews, has influenced my life in many ways. I realized that money and material objects should not be the major priority in life. The desire for money has the power to destroy relationships. Family and friends should always come first in whatever we do.



HOUSE OF GUITARS

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We received 9 correct entries identifying Liverpool as the city with "Penny Lane."

The winner was Dolores Decker of Rochester.

MUSIC TRIVIA

This week's question:

What group broke into the music scene in 1977 with "Sultans of Swing?"

A: _____

Name: _____

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City: _____ **State:** _____

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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.

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