

CATHOLIC COURIER

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Churches join forces to say 'no' to drugs

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Protestant and Catholic churches serving the city's drug-ravaged black and Hispanic communities are uniting to drive pushers and dealers from their neighborhoods, to create programs that help addicts recover, and to educate congregations about the dangers of drug abuse.

The United Church Ministry Anti-Drug Task Force is calling on church members and neighbors to join a march against drugs Saturday, May 6, starting at noon at Wilson Magnet High School, 501 Genesee St. Marchers will walk through the city's southwest neighborhoods.

The task force was formed because drug abuse is ravaging black and Hispanic communities, according to Father Laurence Tracy, task force chairman and pastoral assistant for the diocesan Office of the Spanish Apostolate.

Although much of the public may perceive drug use and drug houses as features of everyday life in minority communities, Father Tracy pointed out that, in fact, minorities are often among those most opposed to drug use. "The vast majority of blacks and Hispanics are against drugs and detest the problem more than ... whites because they see it," he said.

To defeat drug use, church leaders need to become just as visible as the pushers who roam their neighborhoods, according to Father Peter Deckman, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church.

"This is something we won't tolerate in our community," he said, noting that drug dealing "is on every street corner."

Drugs and diseases spread by intravenous drug use, such as AIDS, are devastating the minority community, according to Justo Gonzalez, assistant pastor of Iglesia Mahanain, an Evangelical Pentecostal church at 49 Phelps Ave.

Gonzalez spoke at the task force's inaugural luncheon on Saturday, April 29, at Mount Olivet Baptist Church, 141 Adams St. The pastor noted that statistics indicate that intravenous drug users — and not homosexuals or bisexuals — are the chief victims of AIDS in the minority community.

But even intravenous drug use has not damaged minority neighborhoods as extensively as has cocaine use, according to Dr. Constance Holt, the luncheon's keynote speaker and medical director of Park Ridge Hospital Chemical Dependency, Inc. Until three years ago, Holt said, most of the patients at Park Ridge were alcohol abusers. But cocaine has rapidly surpassed alcohol and other drugs as the drug of choice among abusers, she observed.

Part of the problem, Holt noted, is that



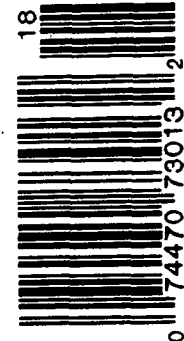
cocaine dependence is very difficult for addicts to kick. Cocaine stimulates a "profound release of dopamine," a chemical the body manufactures in limited quantities that gives a person a feeling of well-being, Holt said. The cocaine "high" is created by an overabundance of dopamine in a person's body. But since one's body would naturally limit the release of dopamine, an addict must continually use cocaine to stimulate dopamine's release and stay "high," she explained.

Deprived of cocaine, an addict may become depressed and even suicidal, Holt said. Cocaine also overstimulates the heart, causing stress and even heart attacks in some cases, she said.

Gonzalez related his first-hand knowledge of the sorrows of cocaine addiction. "I got a call last night at 11:45 from a

Fight for schools

Frustrated and grieving, Greece parents and students scramble for alternatives to avert the planned closing of Cardinal Mooney High School this June. Meanwhile, parish council members from St. Anne's contemplate court action to save their elementary school. See pages 3 and 10.



CRACK DOWN — Drug houses make some inner-city Rochester neighborhoods dangerous places to live. Photos from the Rochester Police Narcotics Unit show (clockwise from left): a barricaded door; a homicide believed to be drug-related; cocaine found in a raid; and the exterior of a suspected drug house.



mother of a 14-year-old addicted to cocaine," Gonzalez told the audience. "This shouldn't happen. We don't want it to happen."

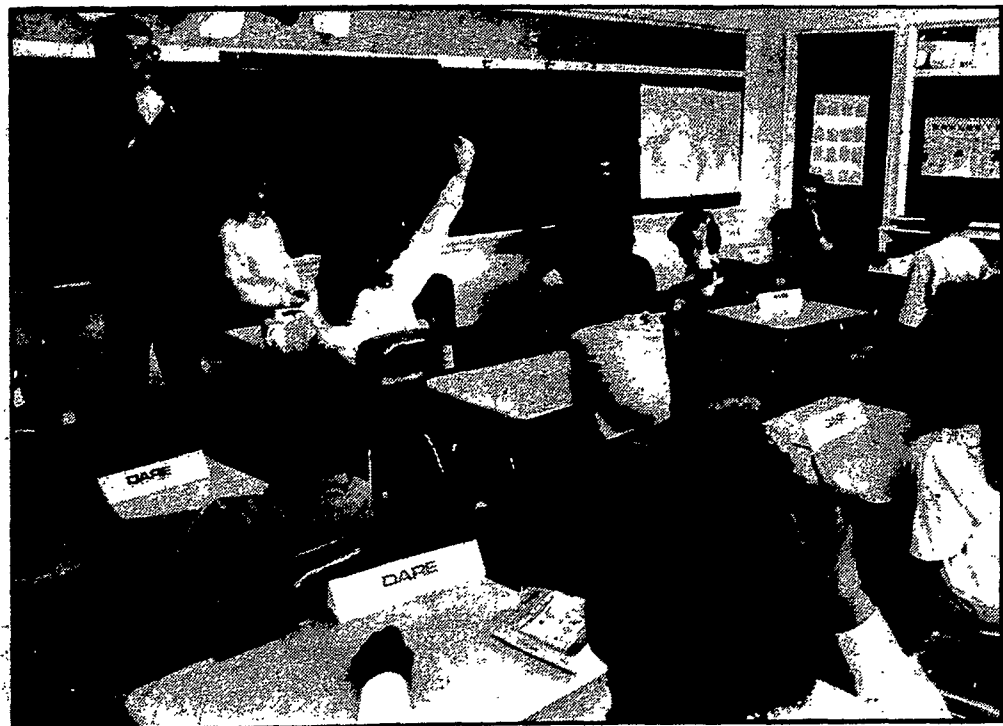
To stop drug abuse from happening, the task force is planning a series of actions, including another march in the city's Clinton Avenue area later in May. The task force also hopes to organize pickets of known drug houses, and to create programs to help parishes educate their con-

gregations about drug abuse.

Ten Catholic parishes have joined the task force, Father Tracy said. They are: St. Michael's, Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis of Assisi, Ss. Peter and Paul, Corpus Christi, Mount Carmel, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. Bridget's, Immaculate Conception and Saint Monica's.

Including the city's Protestant churches, **Continued on page 16**

Aquinas seniors tell fifth graders how to live without using drugs



During a weekly DARE class at St. Andrew's School, fifth-graders ask three Aquinas seniors about high school drug use. Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — It was dress-down day at St. Andrew's School on Portland Avenue. Sue Tallon's jeans-clad fifth graders twitched in their seats, looking forward to a Friday afternoon of roller-skating.

A burly, middle-aged, self-described "cop" smiled at the class, told them to "settle down," and introduced three Aquinas Institute seniors.

The first student, Joe Valentino, described himself as a soccer-, basketball- and baseball player. Jeanine Williams said she was going to the University of Maryland next year. Finally, Sandy Hofferford noted she was a track and band enthusiast.

Sergeant Gary Ras invited the class to ask the seniors questions, so Tiffany Gilmore popped the one that occupied everyone's mind: "Who takes drugs?"

All three responded, "not me" — not surprising, considering each senior was chosen as a drug-free role model for the elementary school students.

The question/answer session was one of

17 lessons designed to persuade youngsters to resist experimenting with drugs. Sponsored by the Rochester Police Department, Drug Abuse Resistance Education has been in place in the city's Catholic and public schools for the last two years.

Modeled on a similar program started by the Los Angeles Police Department, DARE concentrates on building self-esteem among students and encourages them to freely ask questions of professionally-trained police officers who staff the program.

Unlike traditional anti-drug classes that merely inform students about the harmful effects of drug use, DARE concentrates on encouraging students not to even consider experimenting with drugs. Lessons focus on ways students can resist peer pressure to use drugs, how they can manage stress without resorting to drugs, and how they ought to be critical of media images of drug use.

Last Friday's class at St. Andrew's emphasized that drug-users do not make up the majority of high school students. Valentino noted that of high school stu-

Continued on page 16