

Teens grow in leadership at institute

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

BRIGHTON — Some day soon, parish council ballots at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish will list the name of Michelle Kelly, who plans to run as for the seat of youth representative to the council after she is confirmed next year.

Politics also lies in the future of Patrick Murphy, who will be a senior at McQuaid Jesuit High School next fall. Murphy credited his Christian faith with inspiring him to contemplate a career in activist politics when he graduates from college.

Both teens were encouraged to pursue leadership roles by the discussions they had with other students at the Catholic Youth Leadership Institute at Camp Stella Maris June 26 to July 2.

The diocese established CYLI in 1980 to teach leadership skills to high school students. Throughout the week of prayer and discussion at the Livonia camp, participants learned skills ranging from achieving group consensus to handling decisions that reflect a large number of viewpoints. Fifty-four students from throughout the diocese participated in this year's program.

Kelly, who will be a sophomore at Brighton High School next fall, credited CYLI workshops with opening her eyes to her talent for leading others. "I met a lot of people there," she remarked. "I found I could do that without the backing of my friends."

On the other hand, Kelly also found that leaders frequently need the backing of their supporters before making decisions. Based on what she learned in a CYLI workshop on the leadership styles typical of dictatorships and democracies, she plans to change the way she works on projects as a homeroom representative at school.

"I kind of did things on my own," Kelly said of the leadership style she exhibited during her term of office last year. "Now I will ask other people what their opinions are."



Richard M. Mearns Sr.

Fifty-four students from throughout the diocese participated in the week-long Catholic Youth Leadership Institute June 26-July 2 at Camp Stella Maris. The institute is designed to help students sharpen their leadership skills.

If elected to the Lourdes parish council, Kelly said she would relay the opinions of her peers to the adults in her church. "I don't think enough people know what youths feel ... A lot of youths believe in God, but they don't believe in everything that the pope is saying," she said, citing abortion and birth control as issues on which young people are often at odds with church teaching.

Young people need to know the reasoning behind church teaching, remarked Kelly, who believes she can act as a bridge between adults and teenagers, serving to explain the views of each group to the other.

She also noted that many of her peers have difficulty communicating with their parents, a problem touched on in one CYLI

session on communications. During that session, Kelly said, participants examined their use of the words "you" and "I" in conversation, and learned that when arguing with someone, it's best not to decide what the other person is feeling.

For example, Kelly remarked, if one feels slighted by one's parents in an argument, it's better to say, "I feel I'm not being given a chance," rather than, "You're not giving me a chance." The former statement is less provocative but still carries the same concern as the latter statement, she said. Using "I" when expressing one's feelings allows the listener to also express his or her feelings in a constructive manner, rather than forcing the other person to respond to an implied accusation, she said.

Kelly will also put her new-found leadership skills to good use this Sunday at a youth group meeting at Our Lady of Lourdes, when she and a fellow member will lead a discussion on satanism and atheism, she said.

Secular rather than parish politics concerned Murphy, who learned in a CYLI workshop that he has an ability to deal well with people. "I think (the institute) de-


veloped good leadership characteristics and it helped me be more assertive," he said of the week-long program.

Murphy hopes to carry over lessons learned at the CYLI into his life at McQuaid and his college years. A session in which participants tried to discern what ministry — in the broadest sense of the word — they were called to impressed Murphy the most.


"I was partial to the call to ministry," Murphy remarked. "I feel that possibly my call would possibly be to better the world and go into politics." If he enters politics, Murphy would work for the reduction of nuclear arms in the world and the punishment of corporate polluters.

"I don't think enough is being done to get rid of nuclear arms," he said. "I don't think Exxon was punished enough when that tanker spilled."

Murphy doesn't know what political party he'll join, but he'll probably work at politics on the local level before trying to ascend to the national scene. Throughout it all, he plans to stay close to God. "(My faith) brings out the caring in me, and I think there should be change and I want to be part of that change," he said.



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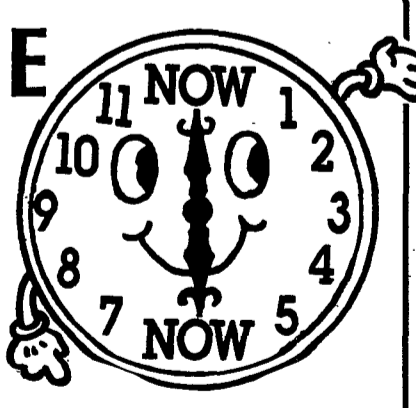


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