

Teens scavenge for treasures in Penfield

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

PENFIELD — The white sun hovered above the horizon as 18 members of St. Joseph's Parish youth group gathered in the church parking lot on Gebhardt Road Thursday evening, Aug. 10. Nora Bradbury Haehl, the parish's youth minister, began pairing the students in teams for the "Seek and Ye Shall Find Treasure Hunt."

Many of the students had been strangers moments before they were paired, but there would be no time for the idle chatter that usually distinguishes the conversation of new acquaintances. The eight teams had a mission — to find within the space of one hour nine items that had been strategically hidden in various spots up and down Five Mile Line Road.

Haehl provided the teenagers with rhymed poems that would clue them as to the first spot where an object would be hidden. At each spot, the teams would have to pick up an object and a note that provided clues as to the whereabouts of the next item.

Points would be awarded on a cumulative basis consisting of search time, num-



Clue #3 led the team of Julie Sprinkle and Sean Redding behind the Post Office to the playground.



Nora Bradbury Haehl, youth minister at St. Joseph's Parish, gives scavenger hunt directions to the youth group, which gathered Thursday evening, Aug. 10.

ber of objects found and how quickly a team put together the pieces of a puzzle included with each clue. A team could also lose points for opening up a small note, stapled to each clue, that explicitly told where an object was hidden.

"It's 7:15 now," Haehl said. "Be back by 8:15."

Some of the teams took off running, but Team #5 decided to take a relaxed approach. Their slow gait from the parking lot was reflected in their cool approach to fashion.

Julie Sprinkle, a Penfield High School freshman, walked with her hands stuffed in the pockets of her jean jacket, which she wore over a black T-shirt emblazoned with the insignia of Guns 'n' Roses, a popular hard-rock band.

Through his Oakley sunglasses, Penfield senior Sean Redding read the first clue they had been given. The note's rhyme directed the pair to an inconspicuous home, its front lawn graced by two trees. From there, they were to walk toward the tree on their right and then travel southwest from it to the spot where the object was hidden.

"Southwest?" Sprinkle said, groaning. "I know my directions," Redding replied.

Pointing toward the tree, as the sun began setting to his left, he waved his hands in a series of clockwise motions. "Never eat shredded wheat," he recited. The mnemonic device led the pair to a shrub along the road.

Beneath the plant, Team #5 found its first object, a small button, and a clue to the next location. But would they have enough time to locate the rest of their treasures? They had spent nearly 15 minutes just looking for the first object.

Sprinkle scoffed at any suggestion of doubt, and undaunted the duo picked up their pace, finding two more objects — a nail and a poker chip — within 10 minutes.

"See, my pockets are getting full now," Redding said with a smile. "I'm getting kind of excited about this."

Despite the success in playing the game fairly, Team #5 was not above improving its own chances by pulling a cheap deceptive trick on another team. As an unsuspecting pair came up Devonshire Circle towards Team #5, Redding attempted to send them away from a house at which objects were hidden.

"The house is the other way," he said. But their opponents were not fooled. "Ha,

ha," replied sophomores Julie Dohse of Penfield and Brian Damaso of Bishop Kearney.

What goes around comes around, they say, and Redding's deception came back to haunt the pair as they looked for their final object, a golf ball hidden in a sandy, weed-strewn lot off Five Mile Line Road. The team discovered their final note with little effort, but wasted several minutes before realizing the golf ball had probably been stolen by another team.

"I can't believe someone ripped us off," Sprinkle exclaimed.

Her partner was not so sure. "There's no proof," Redding remarked. "We run on a system of innocent until proven guilty."

As they returned to the church parking lot, a full 15 minutes late, Team #5 was greeted by the cherubic faces of four other students. "Someone ripped off our golf ball," Sprinkle and Redding announced.

"We did," answered an anonymous voice from the cluster of students, who were sitting in groups, laughing and talking. But no one was man or woman enough to admit publicly to the crime. As Sprinkle and Redding gave Haehl their booty, Penfield freshmen Beth Bruce and Chris Harrison exchanged accusatory remarks with Tanya Smith, also a freshman, and Doug Equinozzi, a junior.

Fittingly, Team #5 and the two teams alleged to have stolen the golf ball all finished in the bottom of the rankings. As night fell upon the town, the four top teams, including first-place winners Dave Bruce and Caryn Wicks, senior and sophomore, respectively, at Penfield High, donned Groucho Marx disguises and toasted their victories with some bottled Cokes.

Meanwhile, Sprinkle and Redding, strangers before their fateful pairing, said that they would acknowledge each other when they met in the school hallway this fall.

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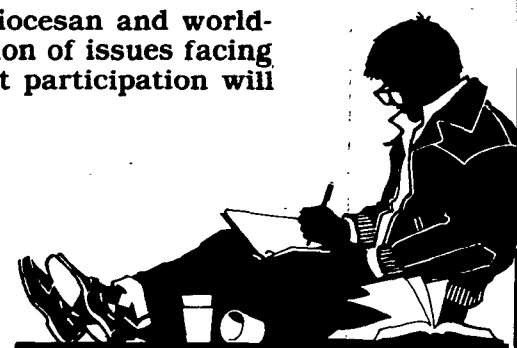
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