

## Volunteers make up soul of 125-year-old church

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Not-for-profit organizations searching for help need to look no further than the Sunday night bingo game at Holy Family Parish.

They'll find Ethel Spahn, sitting at the registration table, chatting with players as they prepare for a night's game of chance.

If you look at her back, she claims, you'll find a remarkable phenomenon, one never before reported. "My husband says I have a 'V' on my back," she said.

That "V" stands for "volunteer," and Spahn, a Holy Family parishioner for 67 years, has spent most of those years involved with one parish function or another. Currently, she is a member of one of the four teams that take turns running the parish's bingo games each Sunday.

Spahn noted that, despite the headaches that occasionally go with her work, nothing can compare to the euphoria she has experienced helping out at the 125-year-old parish.

"Somebody said to me sometime that if you went to Holy Family, you'd never be happy anywhere else," she said.

The bingo worker's sentiments echoed the parish's theme for its 125th anniversary celebration — "Love resides here." Several parishioners reflect that theme by donating their time at parish functions, or by working at various minimum-wage jobs in the church.

Deacon Angelo Coccia's reason for volunteering his time at the parish is elemental. "Basically, the only one reason to do this is to serve my God," Coccia said. "All that comes after (that) is the nuts and bolts."

The "nuts and bolts" of Deacon Coccia's service include administering sacraments to invalid parishioners and working with parish Bible study groups.

His work is a way of thanking the Lord for His blessings, Coccia said. "I come from a good family. I have a beautiful wife ... I have a daughter and a son," he added.

Gratitude also motivates George Stockmeister to manage the parish's recreation

hall for a minimal salary, and to volunteer at the parish's bingo games. "The only reason I volunteer is we got to keep the school open," Stockmeister said.

"My dad went here for free. It didn't cost us anything," Stockmeister explained, adding that he graduated in 1932 — the same year the recreation hall opened. "I figure that what little I do helps to pay back what I got."

Judging by the amount of money the parish takes in through games each year, Stockmeister and the other bingo workers have repaid their parish several times over. He estimated that, between the parish's game on Sundays and another sponsored by the home/school association on Wednesdays, the school receives nearly \$90,000 in revenue from bingo each year.

As for the fringe benefits bingo workers and recreation hall staff enjoy, Stockmeister was philosophical. "The fringe benefits are great — all the water you can drink," he said with a smile.

Mary Wido, like Stockmeister, volunteers at bingo because she loves Holy Family School. "I think the school is a big part of keeping the neighborhood alive," she said, noting that once a person begins donating time to help out around the parish, "you can't quit until you die."

Wido admitted that she can lose her cool each week at bingo "because you don't have enough help and everyone's harping on you to do four things at once." Nonetheless, she won't be leaving the bingo team — or Holy Family — anytime soon. "It's the roots here," she said with a sigh. "It's my home."

Working bingo is not all aggravation, Wido noted. "We had a woman faint on-stage once," she said. "I was calling numbers ... (then) calmly over the microphone, I said, 'Would someone in the kitchen please dial 911?'"

The confused players on the floor looked at Wido as if she'd gone mad, she remembered. "Everyone was looking, probably because they thought I called '911,'" she said, laughing. Eventually, the fainting victim was taken home by her sister and another worker.

The victim's mother was undaunted by the incident, Wido said, adding that the mother continued to play bingo even after her daughters left. "I guess you can't blame her — she paid for the card," Wido said sarcastically.

Such liveliness keeps the volunteers coming back to bingo week after week. "We have a lot of laughs with the bingo players and the bingo workers," Wido said.

The occasional chaos at bingo might not suit Antone Kolbeck, a parishioner at Holy Family since 1942. Kolbeck coordinates four to six ushers for the 5 p.m. Mass on Saturday. He and his fellow ushers keep things organized so Holy Family's pastor, Father Frederick Eisenmann, can celebrate the liturgy in an orderly fashion.

"I want to have (the Mass) unified — tip-top, the way it should be," Kolbeck said. He occasionally coordinates usher assignments for funerals and special liturgies, but noted that he wishes he could do more for the church. "I love the church ... after all, no one can take my religion away," he said.

Kolbeck has been volunteering in one way or another at the various parishes to which he has belonged ever since he was an altar boy. April Guck, a 13-year old parishioner at Holy Family, may someday fill Kolbeck's shoes because she, too, serves at Mass.

Describing her motives, Guck was succinct. "I just signed up one day, that's all," she said, adding that she has been an altar server for the last two years.

"I think it's interesting," the seventh-

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Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier  
Volunteers at Holy Family range in age from 8 to 80. April Guck, a seventh-grader at Holy Family, has been an altar server for two years. She enjoys the Mass because it teaches her how to live out her Catholic faith.



Parental volunteers contribute vitally to day-to-day operations at Holy Family School. Betty Lou Dumbleton (left) assists art teacher Mary Ellen Wagner, who depends on Dumbleton to help in caring for 30 third-grade students.