

Youth leader guides teens through walk of life

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Three members of St. Pius X's youth group stood outside Cobbs Hill Recreation Center, waiting for their leader to register them for the Oct. 8 Easter Seals Walk for Independence.

Leanne Guimento, a junior at Churchville High School, spoke warmly about Patty Young, the youth group leader, as her compatriots huddled in the Sunday morning cold.

"She's supportive. She's funny. She helps with your problems," Guimento said.

"Sometimes you just need someone to listen to you and not give you advice," chimed in Rachelle Zambito, a junior at Nazareth Academy.

Aimee Erwin saved the best words about Young for last. "It's like she acts like a mother but doesn't react like one. More like a sister, but we don't fight," she said.

Young emerged from the recreation center and, upon learning of the gracious comments made about her, quipped, "Did I pay you enough?"

The three students and their leader then trudged off with 600 other walkers to raise \$55,000 for Easter Seals. St. Pius X's youth group walked five miles and raised \$140 for the organization.

Erwin said group members felt "dead" following the walk, but had enjoyed it nevertheless. Such activities bind the group together, Erwin said. "We've raised a lot of money for different causes," she said, adding that the group has also marched to fight hunger.

But it's the love of Christian companionship — not just the desire to fight disease and hunger — that motivates the girls to stay in youth group.

The trio attended St. Pius X Elementary School, but chose three different high schools. They found the parish youth group to be a good way of staying together.

"It's just nice to know that there are other teens that believe in God and make God a part of their lives," Zambito remarked, adding, "it's just nice to go on Sunday nights and reflect on the week to get a little support before you go to school."

The group's Sunday night meetings have inspired Erwin to strengthen her friendships with her peers. Sessions focus on a different topic each week, and Erwin was inspired by a discussion in which Young likened acquaintances to silk roses and "real" friends to real roses.

"You can always have silk roses as friends, and friends that are real flowers," Erwin recalled Young saying. "But once you hurt a real rose, it can never be the



Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier
Members of St. Pius X's youth group participated in the Sunday, Oct. 8, Easter Seals Walk for Independence at Cobbs Hill Park. Despite the cold and gloomy day, more than 600 people participated in raising \$55,000 for the organization. Above, (left to right) group leader Patty Young, Aimee Erwin, Rachelle Zambito, and Leanne Guimento warm-up before the walk begins. At right, proper shoe attire was necessary for survival during the five-mile event.



same. Once you treat (a real friend) bad, it's not the same anymore." Given the way the three girls talked about the youth group and its leader, the lesson seems already learned.

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