

Friendship bonds parishioners for 75 years

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Amanda Janas, a freshman at Aquinas Institute, thinks she has something her peers don't have — a parish that's a second home.

"I like the people at my parish because they're nice and friendly," she said, listing her various parish activities such as attending youth group meetings and working at the parish's coffee hours after 11 a.m. Mass on Sundays.

Her friends at school hardly ever talk about their own parishes, she said. "Most of (my friends) just kind of go to Mass," she said, speculating that "maybe there's not that sense of unity at some parishes."

Unity and friendship are the hallmark of St. Andrew's, whose members used the term "family" to describe the 75-year-old parish. To many members of the parish, any other word would fall short of capturing the community's essence.

One can see the parish "family" at its best during the weekly coffee hours, Janas said. "When there are new people around, (parishioners) welcome them in and they get to know them ... No one sits in the corner alone," she said.

Mary Critelli said the parish was just as friendly when she and her husband joined St. Andrew's 35 years ago. "Going to church wasn't lonesome for very long because people made themselves known to you," Critelli said.

Such forthright caring meant a lot to Jan Mendick, a divorced mother of three children, who said the parish has supported and accepted her.

"I was rejected from a Catholic parish because I was single ... and seeing another man," Mendick said, recalling her former parish from 18 years ago. "When you're rejected from one (parish), you're timid of



Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier
Marie Trott (left) and Marie Cartenuto greet each other at St. Andrew's 75th anniversary dinner-dance on Nov. 18. The two have been parishioners at St. Andrew's throughout the parish's existence.

starting up again."

Nonetheless, she gave St. Andrew's a try, and found not only acceptance, but encouragement. "As a single parent, it's something I've gotten from the parish and needed in my life," she said.

"(Parishioners) go after you until you're involved," Mendick continued, adding that she gives back some of what she has received by singing in the parish folk group

at weekend Masses. She was asked to join a year ago after a friend gave her name to the group's leader, Janis Reed.

The music group's organizational approach embodies the parish's openness, Reed remarked. "We don't really hold auditions," she said. "We believe that if people are really willing to sing ... We'll take them on."

St. Andrew's has a history of "taking on" all comers for its various communal enterprises. To financially aid members during times of disability, Father George W. Eckl, the parish's first pastor, organized St. George's Benevolent Society in 1920. Currently, the society is made up of more than 100 members from throughout the diocese, according to Arthur Sanderl, president.

In exchange for dues of \$1 per month, society members receive \$14 a week when they are disabled. Members can receive a total of \$400 during a lifetime, and a \$100 death benefit.

Sanderl, who is also a church usher, looks at his office as just another means of pitching in at the parish. "Everybody helps everybody else, and that's what a parish is all about," he said.

Another communal parish venture — which is now defunct — drew its

membership from the mothers of the parish's school children. Marie Trott, a founding member of St. Andrew's, helped organize the Mothers' Club. She said the club served to cement and engender friendships between dozens of parishioners.

"I remember I was out Christmas shopping, and I met this woman in a grocery store, and she said, 'Haven't I seen you before?'" Trott said.

"Come to find out, she was new in the parish, ... and we developed a friendship." Trott remembered that the two women had previously seen each other at Mothers' Club meetings.

Trott's husband, Carl, exclaimed that his wife was a social butterfly, always organizing card parties, raffles and parish shows. She shunned his praise for her outgoing activity on behalf of St. Andrew's, though.

"The reason I was the leading one was because I was the only one to get up in front of all these people. I was too dumb," she joked.

Marie Trott's continual volunteerism finally rubbed off on her husband, who noted that he was never one for church activities until he joined St. Andrew's.

"When we first got married, I just went to church on Sundays," he remembered. "After (our first child) got born ... I joined the Holy Name Society, and I was connected with just about everything."

"Everything" included the parish's numerous festivals and parties, which Carl Trott and other parishioners credited for giving St. Andrew's its reputation as a warm and caring parish.

Members of St. Andrew's earlier this month displayed their dancing and conversational abilities at a 75th anniversary dinner/dance at the Mapledale Party House. Ironically, the majority of the party's attendees no longer belong to the parish, but such is its reputation for fun-loving that several hundred former parishioners couldn't resist the urge to celebrate with the current congregation.

Most of the people who attended the Nov. 18 gala probably remembered the parish in a fashion similar to Salvatore Buscaglia's, who left the parish in 1969.

"The people there are attuned to stretching out to those who are underprivileged," he said, citing St. Andrew's food cupboard for the area's needy.

For those who have remained at St. Andrew's, there aren't any reasons to leave. "I did have a chance a year ago to move out," Mendick said, noting that her new home skirted the parish's boundaries. But she decided against switching parishes. "Once you do join — and you do participate — you become part of the family," she said.



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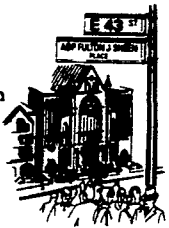
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