

Moravia teen puts priority on family matters

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

MORAVIA — Stefan Myers says he has a simple motto in life: Wing it.

The phrase pops up repeatedly in conversations with the senior at Moravia Central School.

But beyond the nonchalance that the motto implies, Myers has another side many people don't see.

The parishioner of St. Patrick's practices classical guitar three hours a day. And after teaching himself computer art, Myers, a native of Locke, N.Y., has earned an invitation to the highly selective New York State School for the Media Arts Program at the State University of New York College at Fredonia this summer.

Most importantly, however, the 18-year-old Myers has also had to face his father's blindness, kidney disease and cancer.

Through it all, however, Stefan has developed an optimistic philosophy about life. He has also come to an awareness of life's responsibilities far beyond his years.

"I kind of figured it gave me a head start on life," Myers remarked.

In April, Myers received the Hands of Christ Award during the annual Bishop's Day with Youth at the Riverside Convention Center in Rochester.

When asked about the award, however, Myers responded, "I don't know exactly why I got it, and no one told me exactly why. I just help out at school, the community, my family. I'm just being me."

Stefan's familial role, and the importance he places on family, is what sets him apart from many of today's youths.

His father, Jerald Myers, has suffered from diabetes most of his life. The disease began to take its toll in 1983, when — because of failing eyesight — Jerald Myers had to leave his job at an auto body shop.

Around the same time, Jerald Myers had to begin using a dialysis machine after he was diagnosed as having kidney disease. Because Stefan's mother was working, the teen had to go home every day after school to assist his father with the process. Stefan also took on such household chores as cooking the family's dinner.

These additional responsibilities kept Stefan from going out with his friends and participating in school activities, he acknowledged, but he didn't mind because his family was so important to him.

"Family ranks right up there above everything else I can think of," Stefan said.

Furthermore, Stefan said, he and his father have become closer through it all.

"I think it kind of helped us get closer when we needed to work together a lot," he said.

One of the fruits of their working together is a short wave and ham radio setup they created.

His father is currently seeking a radio license. In the meantime, Stefan and his father both listen to shortwave broadcasts from around the world.

In addition, Stefan plays guitar for his father and the rest of the family. The young man only began playing in August, 1990, quickly learning both acoustic and electric guitars. After he began taking classical guitar lessons in January, Stefan became so adept at playing that he even began teaching some of the beginners in the class.



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
After his father, Jerald Myers (right), lost his sight in 1985, Stefan worked with him to set up a short wave and ham radio. Using a hodgepodge of equipment, the system includes a receiver from a World War II destroyer.

In much the same way, Stefan mastered computer art.

During his freshman year, Stefan recalled, he began visiting the school's computer room to play the various games. Soon, however, he began to broaden his computer knowledge and later discovered artistic possibilities.

By his senior year, he was taking computer programs, discs and printouts of his artistic creations to exhibits and shows.

His interest in computer art has also led Stefan to consider a career in advertising art. This fall, he plans to attend Daemen College in Amherst, a suburb of Buffalo, where he will major in graphic design.

Stefan acknowledged one possible cloud in his future. Diabetes is hereditary so the possibility exists that he, too, might develop the illness. His father was first diagnosed with the disease at the age of 18.

"Every once in awhile I think about it," Stefan said, "but I figure if I'm going to get it I'm going to get it."

Of more immediate concern to Stefan is the fact that college will take him away from his family. But Stefan is confident that his younger sister and brother will take care of things while he's gone.

And, he added, "If they have any problems, I'll be here."

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