

# SENIOR LIFESTYLES

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE CATHOLIC COURIER



Unlike some elderly citizens, 75-year-old Nancy Tomaselli enthusiastically volunteers her age when asked.

"I always tell my age," Tomaselli responded. "I'm proud that I've lasted this long!"

In part, Tomaselli attributes her upbeat attitude in life to participating in the senior citizens' group at St. Mary's Church, 15 St. Mary's Place, Rochester. The group meets from 1-3:15 p.m. every second Thursday of the month. Various social and educational events make up the seniors' calendar. Occasionally, the group takes bus trips lasting from one to three days to such locations as Niagara Falls, Canada.

Some of the group's 80-year-old members have inspired Tomaselli to keep active even when she doesn't feel like it.

"I'll always say, 'Wear out, don't rust out,'" she joked, adding "At 75, even sometimes I have pull myself up by the scruff of the neck and get going."

St. Mary's is one of a small number of diocesan parishes that enable senior citizens to "get going" by regularly slating activities especially designed for seniors.

Variety is the spice of the seniors' meetings, noted Mary Lu Coffey, St. Mary's pastoral assistant who oversees the group's activities. She noted that between February and June, the St. Mary's seniors will hear a speaker on women's health issues; listen to a singer for St. Patrick's Day; enjoy a Lenten spiritual program conducted by a diocesan priest; participate in a May crowning of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and meet with a novelist.

A steering committee comprising St. Mary's seniors meets once or twice a year to outline what group members would like to do. Coffey then works to try and arrange trips and speakers, she said.

While monthly meetings bring Rochester seniors together, monthly *eatings* draw senior citizens to St. Mary's Church, 155 State St., Corning, noted Sister Mary Ann Silwa, SSJ, pastoral assistant.

From October to May, Sister Silwa and between 30-60 seniors hold a monthly dish-to-pass dinner which is also open to parishioners from the three other churches in the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community — Immaculate Heart of Mary in Painted Post, as well as St. Patrick's

## Groups put seniors in driver's seat

BY ROB CULLIVAN, Staff Writer

and St. Vincent de Paul in Corning.

Angela C. Stauber, 84, looks forward to the monthly dinners. A widow, she joined the senior group about seven years following the death of her husband three years earlier.

"I'm a senior citizen living all alone, and I had nothing to do," she said. The dinners bring out her hard-earned culinary skills, she added. "I don't know if I'm a good cook, but after 50 years I guess you become a good cook," she commented.

In addition to the monthly dinners, the Corning-Painted Post seniors address get-well cards to sick parishioners and cook meals for the homebound at Christmas, Thanksgiving and St. Patrick's Day.

St. Patrick's is a popular day to make meals for the home-bound because many parishioners are of Irish descent at the Corning parish named for the saint, Sister Silwa said. She added that the parish is located in an area sometimes referred to as "Irish Hill."

The Corning seniors will also occasionally visit Corning's All Saints Academy, 158 State St., to attend the children's performances, Sister Silwa added.

Not all parishes in the diocese boast such active seniors' social groups, but a number of churches encourage the elderly to volunteer their time to

help one another.

At St. Francis DeSales, 130 Exchange St., Geneva, 71-year-old William T. Lane is one of nine parishioners in the "Dove" program who regularly volunteer to drive primarily senior citizens to doctor appointments, hospital visits and grocery stores.

Lane said he sometimes spends as much as five hours a day driving a client from Geneva to Rochester and back for a hospital visit. Other times, he'll spend as little as an hour taking someone grocery shopping.

A desire to put his actions where his faith is motivates the volunteer driver.

"I'm to the point where I believe that if you're Catholic, you've got to practice your faith," Lane said, adding that Catholics should find a service to help their neighbors — "something you can put your teeth into."

Frances Crasanti, the Dove program's coordinator, noted that anyone who volunteers to drive will have plenty of work to keep them busy. Her home phone rang 121 times in 1991, mainly calls from elderly and handicapped people who needed a lift somewhere.

One of those callers was Hazel Scott, who lives in the Elmcrest Apartments in Geneva.

"I use the program to the doctor, to go to the hospital," Scott said. She observed that Lane was one of her favorite drivers. "He seems to be a real good driver, and he seems to be real pleasant to talk to."

Lane noted that he receives as much from the program as he gives to it. He has become friends with some of his passengers, and even socializes with a few.

"I'll take them out to lunch," he said. "I'm not above, that myself because I'm alone and I don't like to eat alone."

Lane's comments point to why seniors will seek out parish activities or volunteer work — the need for a social life coupled with a desire to contribute to the community.

"It gives me a chance to get out amongst people," said 81-year-old Helen Gilman, a member of the senior group at St. Mary's in Rochester.

"It makes me feel useful," Tomaselli said about the same group.