

# Teens find kitchen duty rewarding

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

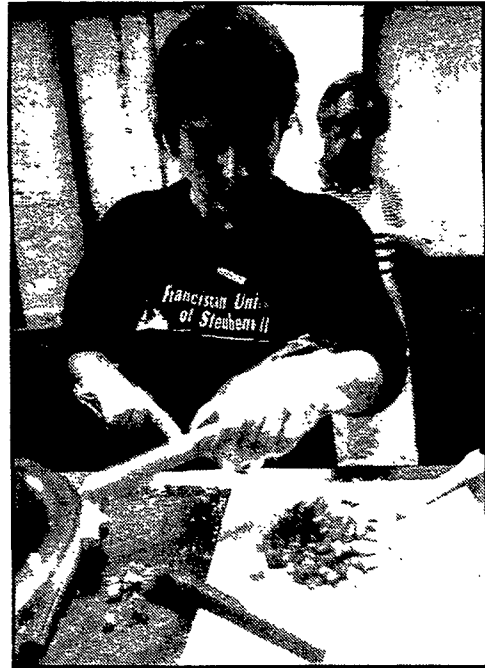
ROCHESTER — It can be a big adjustment to go from a small town to a big city.

It's an even bigger eye-opener when you go to a part of the city that reveals what it's like to be a victim of tough economic times.

Making that quick adaptation was the challenge last week for a group of high school students from Wayland, who embarked on a 75-minute journey up north to Rochester so they could volunteer at St. Peter's Kitchen, 681 Brown St.

Located behind Ss. Peter and Paul Church near Bulls Head, St. Peter's Kitchen provides lunch for those who cannot afford their own. Meals are served every day from 1 to 2:30 p.m. The number of guests averages around 250. The kitchen just celebrated its 10th anniversary of service last month, according to director Mary Leahy.

All but two of the 18-member Wayland group are sophomores at Wayland Central High School. The youths volunteer at the kitchen as part of their confirmation-preparation classes at St. Joseph's Church in Wayland. Splitting



Carol Lindsey, one of the group's adult chaperones, prepares food in the kitchen.



Erik Kunkel/Photo Intern

Stephanie Stephens (left) serves lunch at St. Peter's Kitchen in Rochester's Bulls Head neighborhood Feb. 26. Stephens' confirmation class from St. Joseph's in Wayland was volunteering at the kitchen as part of the parish's confirmation program.

into three divisions on different days, they began their trips last Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 26-27, from Wayland High, which has an approximate enrollment of 600.

The teens left Wayland, located in northwest Steuben County just east of Dansville, at 9 a.m. They arrived at St. Peter's Kitchen at 10:30 a.m. and stayed for about four hours.

Although they missed most of a school day, "The principal (Tom Dutchess) belongs to St. Joseph's and has always been extremely cooperative with projects like this," said Carol Lindsey, St. Joseph's confirmation coordinator.

And this wasn't exactly what you'd call playing hooky. The group's duties consisted of passing out trays, helping to prepare food, sweeping floors and washing trays.

The Bulls Head neighborhood around St. Peter's Kitchen reflects the deprived state of many of the kitchen's guests. Yet Lindsey believed that her group handled this new experience well.

"When you're coming from a small town it's a little scary, but it wasn't as bad as I expected. The kids acted very mature about this," Lindsey said.

Billie Jo Mark, 16, initiated the idea to come to St. Peter's Kitchen. "I felt like I had to help these people. They're really no different than me, and you never know how fate could change

things and I could become (poor) just like them," she said.

Justin Coats, 15, added, "I wish I could do something more."

Witnessing poverty's young victims was especially difficult for Mark. "That's what's really sad, because the kids can't help it," she said. "When they ask for more food and I tell them no (each guest is allotted specific portions), that's a lot harder than telling the adults."

Although most don't have as many miles to cover, Leahy noted that var-

ious youth organizations frequently volunteer at St. Peter's.

"The kitchen needs all the energy it can get, so we really open our doors up to the youth groups," said Leahy.

Overall, it appeared that the Wayland youths enjoyed the experience.

"I'd like to come back," said Coats.

"We had such a response that they're talking about claiming their own day (of the month) to come in and work again," noted Leahy. "The people in that group are very, very enthusiastic."



The young Wayland parishioners pray before serving lunch at St. Peter's Kitchen on Feb. 26. Pictured left to right are: Billie Jo Mark, Stephanie Stephens, Mark Van Orsdale, Justin Coats and Norbert Belanger.

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