



Mercy ninth-graders Lisa Lesniak (left) and April Brooks were among approximately 80 high school students who attended the "Rochester Area High School Youth Ending Hunger Conference" at The Harley School March 28.

Student summit strives to halt hunger

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

BRIGHTON — The numbers are sobering: more than 35,000 people die each day from hunger or hunger-related causes.

Among that staggering number of people, more than 75 percent are under the age of 5.

Being aware of these statistics wasn't enough for some Rochester-area high schoolers. They wanted to do something to alleviate the problem.

Approximately 80 youths gathered Saturday, March 28, for the first-ever Rochester Area Youth Ending Hunger Conference held at The Harley School, 1981 Clover St.

A series of films, workshops, discussions and guest speakers filled the morning and afternoon. Former Congressman Barber Conable, who was also president of the World Bank, was the keynote speaker.

Beth Cooper Benjamin, a 17-year-old Harley junior and one of the program's organizers, noted that the activities she helped plan were two-fold in purpose:

to inform, and to initiate action.

"The most important thing is education. If people are willing to be educated, then we can beat this problem," said Benjamin. "We also wanted to develop a community-wide Youth Ending Hunger group that will help the homeless, have forums with the community and media, and give presentations in schools. The idea was for these people (students) to continue to work together after the conference. I expect to see most of them again."

April Brooks, 15, a ninth-grader at Our Lady of Mercy High School, attended the conference along with fellow Mercy freshmen Lindsay Columbo and Lisa Lesniak. Brooks found one workshop to be particularly moving.

"My workshop was about welfare, and it was actually given by two people who are on welfare. I learned a lot, about the number of welfare people and how difficult it is for them. I didn't want to each lunch that day, I felt so bad," Brooks remarked.

Frank Cavallaro, 17, was one of four Aquinas Institute seniors to participate. He noted that his group, which

also includes Jennifer Cianciola, Tony Maiola and Jeanne Schickler, will make a presentation on hunger to other AQ students in the near future.

"We need to let students know about hunger and how much it would cost to end it," said Cavallaro. "A lot of people have to participate, not just one little group."

The Harley conference was modeled after similar Youth Ending Hunger Conferences in nearby cities. Benjamin said that she and the event's other organizer, 17-year-old Harley senior Jen Rubenstein, got the idea for sponsoring a local event after they both spoke at a conference in Toronto last fall.

They and four other Harley students had also participated in the national Youth Ending Hunger Summit in Buffalo last August.

Youth Ending Hunger is a 25,000-member international organization of young people whose goal is to educate communities and spur them toward ending world hunger.

"Hunger is so unnecessary. It's absolutely ludicrous that we haven't stopped it already. It's got to be our first goal," Benjamin emphasized.

Brooks believes that the top priority should be halting local hunger.

"We can't help others until we've taken care of it here. The big thing is ending hunger in Rochester," she stated. "If I'd lived in another town, my first concern would have been ending it there."

YOUTH BRIEFS



AQ Follies will present musical in five shows

ROCHESTER — The Aquinas Follies will present the musical revue, *Celebrate America*, in five appearances over the next two weekends.

Shows are April 3-5 and 10-11 at the Aquinas auditorium, 1127 Dewey Ave. Scheduled times are 8 p.m., except for a 2 p.m. matinee on April 5.

The Follies, a group which includes approximately 40 performers of all ages, originated 15 years ago at the former Cardinal Mooney High School and moved to Aquinas after Mooney's closing in 1989. Since their inception, the Follies have been led by Bernadette Derleth, who serves as choreographer, artistic organizer and director.

Tickets for *Celebrate America* can be purchased at the door at \$6 each; children ages 12 and under will be admitted free to the April 5 show if accompanied by a parent.

Call Bob Mueller at 716/865-1411 for information.

Elmira native, astronaut set to land at Notre Dame High

ELMIRA — Elmira native Eileen Collins, now a NASA astronaut, will appear at Notre Dame High School, 1400 Maple Ave., on Wednesday, April 8.

Collins is scheduled to speak during an 8:45 a.m. assembly in the school's auditorium.

A 1974 graduate of Elmira Free Academy, the 35-year-old Collins became an astronaut in 1991. She is qualified for assignment as a pilot on future space shuttle flight crews. Collins is currently assigned to orbiter systems in the Operations Development Branch of the Astronaut Office at NASA's Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas.

Camp Stella Maris offers summer youth programs

LIVONIA — Camp Stella Maris is accepting registrations for its summer programs.

The camp, located on the eastern shore of Conesus Lake, offers one- and two-week resident programs for children ages 7-16. One-week day camps are also available for children ages 6-12.

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