

# Bath teen puts personal values above society's

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

BATH — Kristen Stewart recalls seeing a different way of life when she ventured out of the Southern Tier for a trip to Chicago two years ago.

"You'd be eating dinner in a restaurant, and all the homeless would come up to the window and look in, looking for handouts," Stewart said. "I felt bad for them. It was hard watching them being pushed away and being told, 'Go away; you're not supposed to be here.' I know there are hungry people around Bath, too, but I'd never seen it like this."

The Haverling High School senior admits to being concerned about other issues that affect her country as well.

Regarding the Los Angeles riots, she commented, "They're back to the racial prejudice of the '60s. I guess it really surprised me when those four (police officers charged in Rodney King's beating) were acquitted. It scares me because everyone should be treated equally."

"I guess what scares me and my friends is, after we go to college, what's going to be there when we get out?" the St. Mary's Church parishioner wondered. "What's the national debt going to be like? Are we going to get shot and mugged? Even here in Bath it's not safe anymore."

Mary Carol Wall, a St. Mary's catechist who taught religious education to Stewart two years ago, noted that her former student is a model example of the values that Wall tries to teach.

"Kristen doesn't take things at face value. She goes a little deeper," Wall remarked. "The term 'counter-culture' is often coming up now in terms of Christians, and Kristen takes that to heart. She knows that you just can't go with the flow of society. We're trying to tell (our students) that they're unique and different, and to ask, 'Is this good for me?' when they look at the choices made available to them."

In addition to her interest in national issues, Stewart is very active on the local scene. She has been a member of 4-H Club for 10 years, and actually belongs to two 4-H groups: the Country Bunch in Bath and the Thurston Champions in Campbell.

Stewart has done a wide array of volunteer work in the 4-H Club and also through the youth group she belongs to at St. Mary's. Her activities include visiting shut-ins and community nursing homes, and she helped out with victims of Hurricane Hugo.

She also participated in an effort to maintain correspondence with Bath-area servicemen who fought in Operation Desert Storm last year. "We sent them Kool-Aid, toiletries, book, magazines and suntan oil," she said.

At Haverling, Stewart is hoping to get more involved with



Kristen Stewart, a parishioner at St. Mary's Church in Bath, volunteers 15 hours a week at the Bath Veterinary Clinic. In addition to comforting patients like Tiesha, she walks and plays with animals boarded at the clinic.

Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

the community's younger children. "I'm taking a human development class where we talk about trying to do the little things to make everyone's future better. So we're talking about starting a Big Brother-Big Sister program where the seniors get together with the fifth- and sixth-graders," said Stewart.

"Kristen is a very caring person. She's done so much volunteering," commented Sister Mary Agnes Zimmer, RSM, religious education administrator at St. Mary's.

Stewart's volunteer efforts were noted last month when she was presented with a Hands of Christ Award for outstanding high school seniors in the Rochester diocese.

Caring for animals also takes up a large part of Stewart's life. She puts in 15 hours per week at the Bath Veterinary Clinic, and at home she raises pigs, sheep, bees and goats. In addition, she is also a proud dog and cat owner.

It appears likely that Stewart will continue devoting a large part of her life to animals. She's entering Alfred State College this fall and plans on majoring in animal science, with a minor in agricultural business. Eventually she hopes to go on to veterinary school.

Most likely, Stewart's career path will lead her to a new environment.

"I kind of want to get out of Bath. I really enjoy it here, but maybe I need a change to develop my interests," Stewart remarked.

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