



Bonnewell, a former tutor, answers questions.



describing the word



recreation segment of more than 1,200 boys have



Peter Valone (top) videotapes Scott Bryant and Dan Ranaletta for the HAP TV station.



Father William Poorten, SJ, founder of the Rochester HAP program, addresses the 25th graduating class July 31 at McQuaid.

McQuaid program inspires young pupils to aim higher

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — In 1968, Father William Poorten, SJ, a McQuaid Jesuit High School teacher, dreamed of helping inner-city boys acquire the skills and drive necessary to succeed in high school and beyond.

Through funding provided by the Society of Jesus, Father Poorten started the Higher Achievement Program 25 summers ago. In addition to providing students free instruction in the basics of English, reading, literature and math, HAP features an extracurricular program emphasizing sports, games and "brain" activities, according to its director, Gerald W. Jaromin.

The students also produce a videotaped TV program; a newspaper, called *Hap Chronicle*; and a morning "radio show" over the public-address system consisting of various announcements related to the boys' current achievements.

Since its inception, more than 1,200 boys have graduated from the HAP program, which is primarily offered to children from low-income families who otherwise could not afford to enroll their sons in special summer programs.

A smaller number of students pay a \$250 fee if their families can afford the fee and if there are slots available in HAP.

Students are nominated for the program by their public and private school counselors and principals who make selections based on potential for leadership and college-level achievement.

Richard Johnson, a student at Jefferson Middle School on Edgerton Park, was one of 50 boys from 15 schools who attended HAP this summer. He noted that he was a "straight-A" student, and that he enjoyed math and literature.

"We're reading on the ninth-grade level," he said July 29, adding that he had just learned the definition of the word "lugubrious."

There was no room for lugubrious behavior at the HAP graduation, Friday night, July 31. Father Poorten, who is currently serving as retreat director at the Loyola House in Morristown, N.J., returned to the all-boys' school at 1800 S. Clinton Ave. to speak to the beneficiaries of his 1968 dream.

Along with their parents, tutors and teachers, the boys listened to Father Poorten talk about what he hoped they would take with them now that they had completed the five-week Higher Achievement Program.

Father Poorten likened the boys' success to that of

the Olympians then competing in Barcelona, Spain. Just as the Olympic athletes represented the world's nations, so too did the boys represent Monroe County's many races and ethnic groups, he commented.

"I think it's just brilliant to see African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Irish-Americans, German-Americans and Polish-Americans all together here," Father Poorten said.

Yet, unlike the athletes trained for momentary glory, the priest emphasized that the boys had been trained for permanent places in society.

"It's the people who get down there and work, they're the ones who make the difference in this world — and not just for a ball game," he told the students.

Father Poorten continually emphasized that each boy was a unique individual worthy of recognition — a philosophy embodied in the awards ceremony prior to his speech.

Every HAP participant took home at least one award, a practice that Jaromin said allows each boy to "get a little feel for success." In addition to receiving awards ranging from "Outstanding" to "Most Improved" in all subjects, participants were recognized for perfect attendance and for achievements in extracurricular activities.

Chris Latoski, a student at All Saints Catholic Junior High, 170 Spencerport Road, smiled

from ear to ear as he talked about winning one of the three "Outstanding" awards given for math. He noted that he hoped to become a spacecraft designer someday.

"Space is cool," he said. "It's out there. There's a lot of it."

Matthew Porter, an eighth-grader this fall at Nazareth Hall, 180 Raines Park, might have felt his heart launch into orbit when he won HAP's "Student of the Year" award. The award goes to the one boy all the other HAP participants consider "a man for others," according to Jaromin.

"I was surprised," he said. "I didn't expect it. It felt real good."

Such sentiments are precisely why 1979 HAP graduate Mike Bonnewell returns each year to tutor the students. One of HAP's original student tutors from a decade ago, Bonnewell now teaches English and social studies at Keshequa Central School.

"It made a difference for me," Bonnewell said of HAP. "It set my mind that I wanted to do more than plod my way through high school and go to a 9-to-5 job," he said.



James Carter of Nazareth Hall School reads a C.S. Lewis book in Ed Walker's private-reading class.



During the HAP graduation ceremonies July 31, Kathleen Landers and her daughter Caitlin watch as Landers' son, Chris Latoski of All Saints Junior High, receives his diploma and an outstanding award for math class.