

Former music director agrees to plea bargain

Faces probation, weekends in jail

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

WAVERLY — Leo McDermott II, former director of the non-denominational Praise and Power youth choir based in Watkins Glen, pleaded guilty Sept. 24 to third-degree endangerment of a child.

The plea stemmed from charges of endangerment and third-degree sexual abuse filed against McDermott in January, 1992. The charges concerned an incident involving a 16-year-old Waverly boy who was a member of Praise and Power.

The Praise and Power choir drew its members from throughout Tioga County, the Elmira area and parts of Pennsylvania.

Prior to the incident involving the Waverly boy, McDermott had served as music director at St. Mary of the Lake Church in Watkins Glen. His position was terminated in November, 1991, when McDermott announced plans to be ordained as a non-denominational charismatic minister.

McDermott was scheduled to face trial Tuesday, Sept. 29, on two misdemeanor charges, one for third-degree endangerment of a child and the other for third-degree sexual abuse.

The guilty plea before Waverly Town Justice Frederick Luther was part of an agreement worked out between McDermott's lawyer, James Baker, and Tioga County Assistant District Attorney Gerald Keene.

In return for the guilty plea to the endangerment charge, the charge of third-degree sexual abuse against McDermott was dropped.

Baker said the agreement is contingent upon a pre-sentencing investigation to be conducted by the Tioga County Probation Office. If the investigation does not uncover any new facts, sentencing will take place Dec. 1 in Waverly Village Court.

"Mr. McDermott admitted to having a frank discussion of sexual matters with the young man," Baker explained. That admission led to the guilty plea on the endangerment charges, Baker added.

However, Baker noted, McDermott denied having any inappropriate physical contact with the youth. As a result, the sexual abuse charge was dismissed as part of the agreement, he said.

McDermott faces a possible sentence of two months of weekend detention in the Tioga County Jail, plus three years probation, Baker said.

In a deposition given Jan. 10 to Schuyler County sheriff's deputies, the 16-year-old boy said McDermott at-

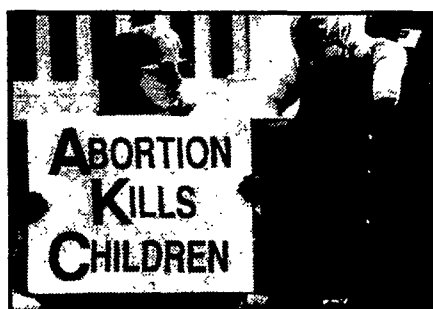
tempted — during a van ride from Watkins Glen to the youth's Waverly home — to persuade the youth into beginning a sexual relationship with McDermott.

The Waverly youth also claimed McDermott grabbed him in the buttocks at the end of the ride.

McDermott served eight months in an Ohio prison after following a conviction for corrupting a minor in 1989. The sentence stemmed from a four-year relationship McDermott had with an Ohio youth. McDermott was serving as a music teacher in the Lorain, Ohio, school system at the time.

McDermott was released from the Ohio prison just three months before being hired to direct St. Mary's choir.

The board of directors of Praise and Power learned of the Ohio conviction in December, 1991. At the board's Jan. 12, 1992, meeting, McDermott's resignation as the choir's director was announced.



United by faith for life



Thousands link for 'life chain,' event followed by rosary march

Members of more than 60 congregations lined Rochester's East Avenue, from the Liberty Pole to Winton Road, as part of a National Life Chain on Sunday Oct. 4. The event, held from 2-3 p.m., was one of hundreds held across the nation to show opposition to abortion. Similar chains took place in Brockport, Geneva and Hornell. (At top left) Carol Rose and her son Kevin were among the approximately 2,500 pro-life activists who assembled on East Avenue. (Above) Immediately following the life chain, worshippers gathered for the 33rd International Rosary March at the Liberty Pole. That event concluded at Our Lady of Victory/St. Joseph Church, 210 Pleasant St., Rochester.

Unified board signals new trend at Nazareth schools

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — In more ways than at any previous time in their lengthy histories, Nazareth Academy and Nazareth Hall are using common resources to their mutual advantage.

Following an announcement last summer, the two schools formally have been renamed "Nazareth Schools — The Academy and The Hall." The two schools have functioned under the governance of a single school board since September of 1991.

Nancy Ferris, elected president of that board this July, acknowledged that the new board is a reflection of the schools' push toward "shared resources."

"The public relations director and the development director used to just work for the academy, and now they're shared," said Ferris. "And some of the 'specialty teachers,' like our fine arts director, are now teaching students from both schools. We also have a financial manager (for both the academy and hall)."

The Sisters of St. Joseph have owned and operated both Nazareth Academy and Nazareth Hall throughout the schools' histories. Plans leading up to

the combined board stemmed from a recommendation made by an outside advisory committee of community leaders appointed by the Sisters of St. Joseph in 1989.

Many of those committee members now serve on the current school board. In fact, Ferris — who had previously served as advisory board chairperson at Nazareth Hall — noted that she is one of the few members to have sat on previous boards.

Nazareth Academy, a 121-year-old high school for girls, has been located at 1001 Lake Ave. since 1916.

Nazareth Hall, located two blocks away at 180 Raines Park, currently educates boys and girls in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Built in 1884, the school was a military-style boarding institution until it became co-educational for grades K-8 in 1972.

Nazareth Hall's grades seven and eight — for both boys and girls — were moved to classrooms in Nazareth Academy's southwest wing during the fall of 1990. Sixth-graders moved into that wing the following year.

In addition to creating more classroom space at Nazareth Hall, these changes were made to offer junior-high level students the opportunity to take accelerated programs offered at

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