

College students team up with urban youths

Nazareth project lends assistance at School No. 4

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — It's doubtful that Lisa Lomanto will ever again experience such a drastic difference between two teaching assignments.

In the fall of 1991, following her graduation from Nazareth College, 4245 East Ave., Lomanto substituted at St. Mary's School in her hometown of Clinton, N.Y. She describes Clinton as a "really small community that's very much middle-class. The students have a lot of stability at home; usually both parents live there."

Last January, Lomanto returned to Nazareth College to begin work on her master's degree in elementary education.

She also enrolled in the college's "Partners in Learning" program, in which Nazareth students interact with students attending School No. 4, located at 198 Bronson Ave.

Lomanto soon found that very little — if anything at all — about School No. 4 resembled what she experienced in her hometown.

Approximately two-thirds of School No. 4's student body lives at — or below — the poverty level; about 90 percent of the students are African-American.

In addition to poverty, Lomanto said, students frequently face violence as well as sexual or drug abuse within their households. Lomanto acknowledged that several children she knows are victims of — or witnesses to — these problems, even though they may not be easily recognizable.

"There are a lot of things that the kids can hide, but you know the area. They're out on those streets, walking around," remarked the 23-year-old Lomanto, who works with a kindergarten class at School No. 4.



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

Lisa Lomanto (left), a graduate student at Nazareth College of Rochester, helps kindergartner Johnny Smith with a writing project as part of the "Partners in Learning" program at Rochester's School No. 4.

"I think about them after I've gone home," she added. "I get so attached to them."

Lomanto and 60 other Nazareth students spend parts of their week at the school, where they provide support for the teachers by correcting homework or serving as tutors.

"There's a lot of need for individualized, one-on-one attention," said Lomanto.

Partners in Learning, in its second year of operation, is overseen by the college's Office of Campus Ministry. The program receives funding through the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education.

Nazareth also contributes to this program by deducting six dollars from tuition costs for every hour that a student participant works at School No. 4.

According to Jo Terry, on-site coordinator for Partners in Learning, the program has proved quite successful so far.

"It seems like it's working out quite well. The (Nazareth students) have been very helpful," said Terry, a Rochester resident. She emphasized that the Nazareth contingent has been particularly helpful in improving the elementary school students' reading skills.

Rickey Harvey, a 7-year-old second-grader, is appreciative of the help that he's received from another Nazareth student, Kathy Hunter.

"She helps me with my sentences, helps me read, and helps me with my

pluses and minuses," he reported.

Hunter, a 19-year-old Nazareth sophomore, has been involved with the Partners in Learning program since its inception last year. She noted that, for many of the young students, the school serves as a refuge in the midst of a depressed neighborhood.

"It's probably a lot easier to be in school," she commented. "Something different happens all the time around here that shocks you."

Hunter, who works with special-education students, said that her greatest personal satisfaction comes from seeing the program's positive results.

"One girl I had last year couldn't read very well, but she improved so much by the end of the year. It's great just knowing how important reading is to her now, and knowing that I contributed to that," Hunter said.

Students receive awards for Hispanic essay contest

ROCHESTER — Twelve students who attend schools in the Rochester area have been honored as winners of the Hispanic Heritage Month Essay Contest.

The recipients are: grades 4-5 — Jared Bermudez (School No. 28), Daniel Munoz (School 25), Mahogany Newport (School 25) and Josue Valle (School 28); grades 6-8 — Wanda Liz

Aquino (Frederick Douglass), Charles Bush (Seton Junior High), David Kerbs (Frederick Douglass) and Helena Vargas (Monroe); grades 9-12 — Samuel Cruz (East), Mary Echaniz (Wilson Magnet), Bernice Hernandez (East) and Josue Rivera (Marshall).

An awards ceremony was held on Thursday, Nov. 12, at City Hall. The contest ran from Sept. 15 to Oct. 9.

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