



Sign-language illustrations are posted in communal areas for those residents with limited language skills.

“... Then they will tell you there's a lot of traffic, or there's no traffic light, so it will be unsafe for the residents. You want to say to people, 'If it's so unsafe, why are you living here?'”

Paul T. Pickering  
Diocesan director of Catholic Charities Residential Program



(Left) Denielle Schrelb listens to a radio scanner — a gift from her father, a firefighter — before leaving for work at 6:15 a.m. (Above) Schrelb, an avid Elvis Presley fan, gets ready for church.



(Above) Janet Siuja (right) embraces Resident Counselor Korleen McCready at the end of a long day. McCready has worked at the home for nearly six years. (Right) Siuja plays along with Nazareth College student Mary Korfhage during a weekly music class, which was organized by the Webster Group Home Committee at the Ridgcrest Facility.



## Group in Webster helps homes feel welcomed

WEBSTER — About three years ago, Jean Fredericks received a call from Monroe County Legislator William P. Polito (R-8th District).

Polito said he had recently discovered that nine group homes called Webster home, Fredericks reported. The legislator had spoken with officials of the agencies operating the homes to discover ways to better assimilate the homes into the community.

As a result of those conversations, Fredericks said, Polito decided to form a committee. Fredericks, a member of the Good Sam Committee at St. Paul's Parish, 783 Hard Road, was among those asked to sit on the committee.

She agreed to help start what is now the Webster Group Homes Partnership Committee.

The organization helps to link fraternal and church groups with area group homes, Fredericks explained. As a result of those connections, individuals now volunteer in the homes by offering companionship, recreational activities, arts and crafts and music programs, and by helping residents get out into the community.

She has seen those efforts at work in her parish, Fredericks noted, citing the case of former Webster High School student Matt Coles.

During the summer of 1991, Coles was looking to volunteer his services at an area agency. After he contacted Fredericks, he began volunteering at the Holt Road Catholic Charities group home, with which the parish had developed a relationship.

Over the next year, the 6-6 center for the Webster High basketball team visited the group home every Sunday night. There, he played basketball and football games with residents.

Meanwhile, group home residents began attending Webster football and basketball games to cheer for Coles and his teammates.

According to Fredericks, Coles' involvement is just one example of how community residents can get involved with group homes.

"I think our parish has really accepted (group home residents) as just the way they are," Fredericks said. "They come to our church, three or four of them, and I've noticed that after the first few visits that people reach out to them, whereas they might not have before. I think it's just awareness."

Committees such as the one in Webster can take valuable roles in combatting NIMBYism, noted Barbara Poling, a staff member of the diocesan Catholic Charities Residential Program.

"I think Webster, for the most part, never has been a community to express the 'NIMBY syndrome,'" Poling said. She added, however, that since the committee's creation, "We've pretty much established a good relationship between the community and the group homes."

It takes time to develop such a committee, Fredericks said.

"Little by little, there's a spark," she said. "It works, when an attempt is made. I think Webster should be proud."

— Lee Strong