

Junior-high group shows concern for community

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

BRIGHTON — Students comprise approximately one third of this volunteer group's membership, making it an unusually energetic bunch.

Even more impressive is the fact that these youths haven't even reached high-school age yet.

Since its inception in 1988, the Seton Service Club has continually performed a multitude of volunteer services throughout the school year. The organization is made up of seventh- and eighth-grade students from Seton Catholic Junior High School, located at the Our Lady of Lourdes Campus, 165 Rhinecliff Drive.

According to Patricia Urban, the club's coordinator, about "30 active and 15 semi-active members" belong to the group.

"Once they've done three projects, they're considered full-fledged members," said Urban.

A recent project had group members hard at work in the school basement one afternoon last week. Some helped prepare bread, lasagna, Jell-O and Christmas cookies in the kitchen, while others designed Christmas trinkets in an adjacent room.

The food and gifts were delivered the following day to members of Integrating the Handicapped into Society (IHS) at Southview Towers, 500 South Ave., Rochester. IHS provides guidance and fellowship for handicapped adults who wish to live in an apartment setting.

Seton Service Club also promoted the holiday spirit by recently conducting a stocking-stuffing project for residents of St. Joseph's Villa, 3300 Dewey Ave., Greece. The Villa provides an array of mental health and supportive services for children, adolescents and their families.

The club also does an extensive amount of work outside the school. Members assist at two Rochester-based soup kitchens: St. Peter's Kitchen, 681 Brown St.; and St. Joseph's House, 402 South Ave. In addition, the group's junior-high members make visits to Monroe Community Hospital, 435 E. Henrietta Road.

Urban added that the organization is adding prison ministry to its agenda. A trip to the Orleans Correctional Facility, located in Albion, Orleans County, is scheduled for early next year.

Seton Service Club was founded four years ago by Sister Judith Whalen, SSJ, a former assistant principal and social studies teacher at the school. Sis-



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor
Lisa Mykins (left), Sue Selner (center) and Shannon Selner, members of the Seton Services Club, prepare dough for baking Dec. 16 at Seton Catholic Junior High School in Brighton. The bread was part of a dinner the group prepared and delivered to individuals at Integrating the Handicapped into Society in Rochester the next day.

ter Whalen is now a pastoral assistant at St. Rita's Church in Webster.

Urban took over the group when she became a science teacher at Seton Catholic in the fall of 1991.

"I think that it's really important that kids see the problems that other people have, and to realize that to live a good Christian life and be a good American citizen, we need to outreach to those less fortunate," commented Urban, who had previously been involved in similar outreach activities while teaching at Holy Trinity School in Webster.

Students' parents frequently donate food, supplies and money to the group. Several mothers, led by the group's assistant coordinator, Patti Bertucci — whose daughter, Erica, is a Seton Catholic seventh-grader — help with the cooking.

The group also received a \$150 gift this past fall from Girl Scout Troop 17, which meets adjacent to Seton Catholic Junior High at Our Lady of Lourdes Church. In addition, the club conducted a "Santa's Post Office" fundraiser this past month, during which the junior high students purchased "singing

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Patricia Urban
Seton Service Club
coordinator

telegrams" that were "delivered" during homeroom period.

Urban explained that Seton Catholic students are encouraged to choose those duties with which they are most comfortable.

"Some will just cook; they cannot handle anything more," said Urban. "I personally noticed that at Monroe Community Hospital, some kids were really bothered by the extreme handicap of some of the people."

On the other hand, Urban remarked, "Some of these kids have found that they have a real gift for relating to the elderly and handicapped."

Urban emphasized that although a handful of students use involvement in the group as credit toward confirmation projects, the great majority perform strictly voluntary service.

Shannon Selner, an eighth-grader, joined the Seton Service Club last year. The 13-year-old said that her first visiting mission "was kind of awkward, seeing how other people live. But now I'm used to it."

"It's fun, and you know you're helping someone," Selner added.

Kurt Mangold, a Seton Catholic seventh-grader, noted that he has particularly enjoyed kitchen duty since joining the group in the fall.

"I'm a much better cook now, but my frosting (for the Christmas cookies) was a little lumpy," said the smiling 12-year-old Mangold.

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