

Marriage & Family Life

Committed to community, Couple balances faith and family life

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

CANANDAIGUA — Monette and Michael Mahoney, who serve on the ministerial staffs of two different parishes, have discovered one secret to maintaining a fulfilling family life.

They've established an 800 number. "We couldn't be without it," Monette said with a laugh about the toll-free listing.

The phone line has come in handy, not only because their two oldest sons — 20-year-old David, and 18-year-old John — are away at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kan., but also because of the Mahoney's deep commitment to serving the church.

Last year, while Monette, Michael, John, and their two younger sons — Mark, 16, and Paul, 13, — lived in Le Roy, Monette was teaching religious education and coordinating music at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Hamlin and Michael was directing religious education at St. Stephen's Parish in Geneva.

Michael had taken the job in Geneva after his position at St. Columba/St. Patrick Parish in Caledonia was reduced to part time to cut costs.

Meanwhile, Monette and Michael are also studying at St. Bernard's Institute in Rochester. She is working for her master's in theology — which she will complete this year — and Michael is preparing for his ordination to the permanent diaconate in June.

"We were paying \$300 a month for gasoline," Michael recalled. "We were putting 3,500 to 4,000 miles on the car each month."

The hours and miles on the road were putting a strain on the family, Michael acknowledged.

"How do you maintain a quality family life while commuting those kinds of distances?"

The couple soon decided to change its situation for the family's sake. Both Monette and Michael began looking for parish positions that would move them closer together. Monette succeeded when she was hired in July, 1992, as the religious-education coordinator at St. Mary's Parish in Canandaigua. Michael has remained at St. Stephen's, where he became the pastoral associate in November.

The family moved to Geneva in December.

Monette must still commute, and the couple continues driving to Rochester for classes at SBI. But for the first time in a while the family can eat together most evenings.

The Mahoneys are perhaps the extreme example of what couples might experience while both serve in ministry. And, in reality, they are among the few couples in the Rochester diocese working full-time for the church in some capacity.

But through discussions with fellow diaconal candidates and spouses, the Mahoneys realized that their juggling of schedules and time is not



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

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Monette (left) and Michael Mahoney's commitment to service has spanned 22 years of marriage.

Reviving relationships

The Retrouvaille program encourages couples — whose marriages have become troubled — to rediscover their mutual love. Page 3A.

Prepping parishes

As the Rochester diocese phases out most of its role in marriage preparation, officials are helping parishes develop their own programs. Page 5A.

Fostering families

The church must help modern families realize that human life must always be accepted and nurtured, Pope John Paul II says. Page 7A.