

Activist says race, class are factors in dump sites

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

SYRACUSE — People of color have a vested interest in fighting environmental pollution because their neighborhoods disproportionately suffer the brunt of toxic waste dumping, according to Howard Hawkins, an environmental activist.

Hawkins spoke to the *Catholic Courier* by telephone from his office in Syracuse. The longtime environmental activist co-hosted a March 28 program on "Environmental Racism" before about 45 people at St. Bridget Parish, 175 St. Bridget's Drive, Rochester.

Winston Gordon, who Hawkins claims is one of the few African-Americans to own a farm in New York state, also spoke at the church.

Bill Appel, an organizer for Metro-Act, a Rochester-based community activist coalition, noted that his group selected St. Bridget Church as the program site in part because the parish serves a large African-American population.

Hawkins based his contention that minority and/or low-income neighborhoods suffer a disproportionate amount of toxic waste dumping on a 1988 study commissioned by the United Church of Christ's Committee for Racial Justice. The study concluded that 60 percent of the nation's minority neighborhoods are home to a toxic waste dump of some sort, whereas only about 30 percent of white neighborhoods share a similar fate.

Despite the fact that non-whites experience such environmental situations more directly, most of the "well-endowed" environmental organizations — Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society — boasted few, if any, minority staffers until the late 1980s, Hawkins said.

"At the same time, it was people of color who were on the front lines fighting the location of toxic waste sites, the location of trash incinerators in their neighborhoods," Hawkins claimed.

The situation has improved somewhat since October of 1991, when an environmental "summit" for people of color took place in Washington, D.C., he explained. Since then, environmental organizations have created a number of positions for minority environmental activists, he said.

Hawkins boasts a long history of involvement in the environmental movement. He is co-founder of the Clamshell Alliance, a group which fought against the establishment of two nuclear power plants in Seabrook, N.H., back in 1977. Along with 1,413 other activists, Hawkins spent 10 days confined to a National Guard armory for occupying one of the plant's building sites, he recalled.

Hawkins also belongs to the Greens, a national environmental party claiming 100,000 active members. He noted that the Greens do not oppose developing technology, but want such development to emphasize creation of a human world that harmonizes with the natural world.

"The technology is there," he said. "We can use materials and chemicals that can be recycled into the biosphere. But politically and economically it doesn't happen because there are corporations with profit motives and politicians with power motives who make decisions without the participation of people."

Hawkins stressed that people of all religious faiths could play an important role in saving the environment.

"I think the faith communities have values that the green movement shares with them," he commented. "We agree on ideas of justice, peace, community."

Bringing home the gold



File photo

Kearney teams win international competition

The Bishop Kearney High School Color Guard and Dance Ensemble each captured gold medals at the Winter Guard International World Championship competition, held April 2-3. The event took place at the University of Dayton, Ohio. The guard's theme, which focused on the strife between man and nature, was set to the music of Peter Gabriel's "Passion." The 27-member Kearney guard, which was established 11 years ago, has competed nationally for eight years. This year marked the first-ever gold medal for the color guard, which placed third in 1992 and fourth in 1991 at the competition. It also marked the first time the event featured a dance division competition.

Director's visit to highlight human development effort

Father Joseph R. Hacala, SJ, executive director of the Campaign for Human Development, will visit the Rochester diocese on Friday, April 16.

Father Hacala's visit coincides with the diocese's 23rd annual appeal and collection for CHD, an anti-poverty program of the United States Catholic Conference. The appeal takes place at parishes April 17-18 and collections will be held April 24-25.

The agency's director will serve as the keynote speaker at two events on April 16: a 12:30 p.m. luncheon at St. Mary Church, 95 N. Main St., Canandaigua; and a 6:30 p.m. dinner at St. Mary Our Mother Church, 816 W. Broad St., Horseheads.

Both programs will bring together pastors, parish personnel and volunteers with representatives of community organizations tabbed as CHD grant recipients this year.

A member of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus, Father Hacala was ordained in 1975. Currently, he assists in the pastoral ministry of St. Aloysius Parish in Washington, D.C.

A veteran of the church's anti-poverty struggle, Father Hacala has lectured widely on a variety of social

justice issues. He has written articles on several topics, primarily focusing on stewardship and ethics of land use and gospel-based justice.

Father Hacala has also written *Dreams of the Mountains' Struggle: The Appalachian Pastoral Five Years Later*, and *The Appalachian Land Ownership Study: from Colonialism to Stewardship*.

The U.S. bishops established the Campaign for Human Development in 1970 to fight poverty by supporting self-help projects that empower poor and low-income people. Parishes are CHD's sole supporters.

Seventy-five percent of the funds collected from parishes goes to such projects as the Economic Development Project, which works to overcome the high poverty rate and lack of jobs — particularly among rural women — in the 10 counties of the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions.

Twenty-five percent of CHD funds collected at parishes remains in the diocese and is allocated by regional committees. Since 1970, the Rochester diocese has collected more than \$2.1 million on behalf of the agency — more than \$500,000 of which has gone to area projects.



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Oakland editor to speak at Nazareth dinner

ROCHESTER — Pearl Stewart, a 1967 graduate of Nazareth Academy who was recently named editor of the *Oakland Tribune*, will be the featured speaker when The Nazareth Schools honor two distinguished alumni later this month.

Stewart is the first African-American to be appointed to this post at a major metropolitan daily newspaper, according to a press release on the event.

The first-ever Lumina • Lux Awards will be held at the Hyatt Regency, 125 E. Main St. on Tuesday, April 20. The event will begin with a champagne reception at 6 p.m.

Two prominent Rochesterians have been selected to receive lifetime achievement awards from both Nazareth Hall and Nazareth Academy.

E. James Hickey of Brighton, an at-

torney with the firm of Harter, Secrest and Emery, will receive the Lux Award as an outstanding alumnus of Nazareth Hall, 180 Raines Park. Margaret Larkin McMahon of Brighton, administrative assistant to three presidents at St. John Fisher College over 33 years, will receive the Lumina Award as an exemplary alumna of Nazareth Academy, 1001 Lake Ave.

According to the release, the Lumina • Lux Awards are given to Nazareth Schools' alumni who demonstrate Christian involvement and values in the Rochester community; have achieved great personal achievements; and are loyal to their alma maters.

Tickets for the Lumina • Lux dinner are \$40. Patron level tickets are available for \$50. Reservations must be made by April 10. Call 716/458-8583.