



Dina D'Aluto (left), co-chair of Monroe County's Education for Peace Week, holds the microphone for Melinda Patterson of Seton Primary School while Patterson delivers her appeal for peace at the fourth annual conference held at Seton Intermediate Junior High School April 27.



Keynote speaker Joseph F. Gersitz, who coordinates humanitarian aid to Novgorod, Russia, proclaims his message of peace.

Young voices echo peace theme

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

BRIGHTON — If it had been just one or two voices, the message wouldn't have hit home so sharply.

Yet even the most apathetic listener may have been influenced by this parade of young people coming to the microphone, one by one, issuing their profound appeals for peace.

"The more things that can be done like this, the more awareness can be raised," said Christopher Meagher, principal of Seton Catholic Junior High School, 165 Rhinecliff Drive. "Peace will happen only when we want it to."

Meagher's school was the setting for this "peace assembly" held last Tuesday morning, April 27. Approximately 200 people gathered for the event, staged in conjunction with Monroe County's Education for Peace Week.

This marked the first time in the assembly's four-year history that it was held at a Catholic institution.

The youth participants, whose speeches frequently reflected a maturity and insight which belied their actual ages, highlighted the ceremony. Ranging in age from 6 to 18, these designated "peace ambassadors" served as representatives of local Catholic schools as well as city and suburban public institutions.

Each student told of how peace was being promoted at his or her school. Many revealed the manners in which they deal with ongoing difficulties such as violence and racial differences.

Claire Hunter, a fifth-grader at Nazareth Hall, 180 Raines Park, Rochester, noted that the various ethnic backgrounds at her school have helped defuse prejudice.

"Differences don't make us grow apart. They help bring us together," the 10-year-old Hunter stated.

Jerome Tavolino, a junior at East High School, 1801 Main St. E., Rochester, addressed a similar theme.

"What we fail to realize is that we are all unique, but at the same time we are more alike than we are different," Tavolino pointed out.

The 17-year-old Tavolino added, "Even though the only perfect society is the one above, we can still make a difference (here on earth)." He concluded with a challenge to the audience: "Hope or despair? It depends on you and me."

Mixed in among the students' remarks were a series of musical presentations, including a dance version of the song "Let There Be Peace on Earth" performed by four female students from St. Theodore's School, 170 Spencerport Road, Gates. In addition, a guitar trio from McQuaid Jesuit High School, 1800 Clinton Ave. S., played relative songs such as "Blowing In the Wind" and "Day is Done."

A colorful "peace quilt," which was displayed near the podium, marked another creative feature. The quilt was constructed by first-grade students from Our Mother of Sorrows School, 1777 Latta Road, Greece.

Also participating in the morning's festivities were various local school and government officials — including Timothy Dwyer, diocesan superintendent of schools — who issued proclamations commemorating Education for Peace Week.

These dignitaries' announcements were followed by a stirring keynote address from Joseph Gersitz, a former teacher at McQuaid Jesuit who now acts as a coordinator of humanitarian aid to Rochester's sister city of Novgorod, Russia.

Gersitz encouraged the students to address the world's problems rather than ignore them.

"To give in, or run away, means to accept a less peaceful way of life," he said.

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