

## These teens are high on hospitality

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — In the Shackelford and Spaker families, it's not just adults who labor in a hot kitchen.

Megan Shackelford and Peter Spaker are among nearly 40 youths from Irondequoit's St. Margaret Mary parish youth group who have volunteered their time over the past two years at the Francis Hospitality Center, 547 Joseph Ave.

This 30-bed shelter for homeless men, funded by the Catholic Family Center's Homeless and Housing Services Department, was opened in 1991. Not long after its opening, David Desmond, St. Margaret Mary youth minister, attempted to recruit young parishioners to help out with occasional kitchen duty at the Francis Center.

Desmond received such a strong response that he and his contingent have now been volunteering every Monday evening throughout the year. They meet at St. Margaret Mary Church, 401 Rogers Parkway, and then pile into Desmond's car for the five-minute drive over to the Francis Center.

"There have been times when I've had to borrow a van or car because I couldn't get everybody into my own car," Desmond acknowledged.



(From left to right) Collene Burns, Peter Spaker, John Clark and Megan Shackelford volunteer their time at the Francis Hospitality Center, 547 Joseph Ave., Rochester.

Not only do the teenagers prepare dinner, but they also mingle with the residents by playing cards or table tennis.

"I know it sounds corny, but I really want to help them," said the 17-year-old Shackelford, who added that she plans a career in social work.

Shackelford made her St. Margaret Mary/Francis Center connection last November through a senior service project at Bishop Kearney High School, from which she recently graduated. A parishioner at St. John the Evangelist Church in Spencerport, she has now become so dedicated to the Francis Center that she makes the long ride in from her Hilton home every week.

The 14-year-old Spaker, a St. Margaret Mary parishioner and sophomore at Irondequoit High School, admitted that he was "not very comfortable"

during his first trip to the Francis Center about 18 months ago.

But now he's been helping so long that "I know the staff better than some of the guys who live here," he said.

This weekly duty is not only enjoyable for the teens, but also for those whom they serve.

"People here don't say it, but I know that they like seeing someone come in and mingle," said Steve Coffey, who currently resides at the Francis Center.

Desmond asserted that his group's dedication helps alter the perception that teenagers may not be inclined toward volunteer work.

"I do find that young people are interested in offering their services, but as adults we don't always ask them," Desmond observed. "To say that they're not interested or willing, that's just not accurate."

## Vietnamese youths attend Auriesville rally

Approximately 50 diocesan Vietnamese Catholics were united in both their heritage and faith with people from the Buffalo, Syracuse and Albany dioceses during a recent youth rally.

The second annual event took place July 9-11 at the Shrine of Our Lady of Martyrs in Auriesville, located near Albany. According to Ha Nguyen, director of the diocesan Asian Apostolate, nearly 300 people participated.

The weekend comprised youth-related conferences and speakers, games, a music show featuring a choir and band from Rochester, and a closing Mass.

Father John Tiep, a Vietnamese priest from the Immaculate Heart of Mary Shrine Coredemptrix Missions, coordinated the rally.

Nguyen, who estimates that 10 percent of the nearly 5,000 Rochester Vietnamese are Catholic, acknowledged that gatherings such as the one in Auriesville are "very important" for transplanted Vietnamese people.

"It keeps the culture and the tradition going," she said. "In this country we're not fortunate enough to see each other everywhere."

Nguyen and a group of five Vietnamese youths will attend World Youth Day in Denver, Colo., from Aug. 11-15. Following Pope John Paul II's closing Mass on Aug. 15, the pontiff will hold a special one-hour session with approximately 10,000 American Vietnamese youths. Nguyen and other Rochester Vietnamese people are hoping to attend that meeting.

— Mike Latona



Rachel Bopp (from left), Jillian Machucki, Theresa Wania and Elizabeth Paoletti sing 'Living in God's Creation' at St. John the Evangelist's Parish Center in Greece during a Vacation Bible School session led by the youths July 8.

## Greece parish hosts summer Bible school



Marie White (left), a St. John's parishioner, helps Joanna Schnaus with her 'I Am Blessed' mobile.

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