

# Health care is an issue for all, graduate claims

## She seeks to halt injustices

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — It's far more than her chemistry degree that will make Roseann Ponticello a valuable addition to the health-care profession.

The 22-year-old Ponticello would like to make contributions that emanate not just from the laboratory, but also her heart.

Children, especially, fuel Ponticello's desire for a better future in our nation's health-care system.

"My roommate is a nursing major who works at Bridgeport (Conn.) Hospital. She tells me about the dangerous conditions people live in — gunshot wounds at a young age; children with all these horrible things they come into the emergency room with. And there's no way to pay for it," Ponticello told the *Catholic Courier* in a recent telephone interview from her residence at Fairfield (Conn.) University.

Ponticello, who received her bachelor's degree from Fairfield this past May, also has first-hand experience within Bridgeport's poverty-laden environment through her extensive volunteer work at the St. Charles Urban Retreat Center.

Bridgeport's living conditions, she reported, are a far cry from her comparatively comfortable surroundings at Fairfield and in her native town of Pittsford.

"Fairfield University is affluent, but Bridgeport is like the worst part of Ro-

chester. My parents tried to give me the best of everything, but in Bridgeport, these children have been given nothing. It jolted me when I first saw

it; it shook me up," Ponticello recalled.

She points out that poverty in itself is a health-care issue, with youths bearing the brunt of these injustices.

"Children are left unattended. I've seen kids go and play in this burned-down house in Bridgeport. So if they climb up the steps and then fall through them and get hurt, that's unhealthy. They play with the garbage, too."

Ponticello gave further examples of how poverty affects young people's health: "They don't know how to deal with anger, so they get violent and hurt each other. There are also girls 12 to 15 years old having babies, so they're putting their bodies in danger. And there's always drugs, and there's AIDS. It's a continuous issue."

Due to widespread problems such as these, Ponticello is pleased that President Bill Clinton is committed to bringing about change in the nation's health-care system. However, she doesn't agree with all aspects of his approach, such as his plan to reduce the profits of pharmaceutical corporations.

"Sometimes companies will cut back in ways you don't want them to," she acknowledged. "I think (Clinton) should encourage the companies more; say something like, 'You won't get this money unless you do more pro-active things, like community service.' That way, the profits are going to the community."

Ponticello, a graduate of Pittsford Mendon High School and parishioner



Kevin Wolfthal/Fairfield University  
Roseann Ponticello, a parishioner at Pittsford's Church of the Transfiguration, received her bachelor's degree in chemistry from Fairfield University in May. She hopes to work toward a career in health care.

at Church of the Transfiguration, is certainly doing her part for the community. She wears several hats at the St. Charles Center, serving as a religious-education instructor and as a co-producer for a production of "Pinocchio" this past April. For that play, she cast several inner-city children and also enlisted the support of 25 fellow Fairfield students.

Back on campus, Ponticello will continue her longtime role as a resident adviser until the end of next month. To note her efforts both at the St. Charles Center and at Fairfield, the Jesuit college's Alumni Association awarded Ponticello with its Student Achievement Award this past April.

Ponticello is currently employed as a researcher for Zotos Corporation, a Darien, Conn.-based cosmetics company. She hopes to begin working toward her master's degree within a year and eventually obtain a doctorate related to health care, possibly as a pe-

diatrician.

Although most others are not as extensively involved in the health-care profession, Ponticello emphasized that all Americans can play a part in making the United States a healthier country.

"Everybody can help, just by helping the mind and body develop in a more positive way," said Ponticello, who gave examples such as promoting recreation activities and more practical nutrition habits.

"If everybody gave a little bit of their talent to someone who has less ... even a little bit can be a lot," she said.

They may even find, she noted, that volunteerism is the greatest thing that ever happened to them.

"It's very addictive. People say to me, 'What kind of drug are you on?' But it's not a drug," she said. "It gives you a tremendous amount of energy. You're getting so much more than you're giving, so you can't help but do more and more."

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