

Future Michelangelos?



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

St. Pius youths redecorate room



In photo at top, Cara Beals (foreground), Deirdre Connellan (middle) and Carey Barnard work on personalizing the St. Pius the Tenth youth room Aug. 19. The room is located in the basement of St. Pius X School, 3000 Chili Ave., Rochester. In addition to painting walls, the busy painters (bottom) took time to make their mark on each other. The project was under the direction of Todd Parsnick, who previously worked with youths at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Rochester.

Cherishing her community

Teen co-chairs first Auburn youth festival

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

AUBURN — In about 20 years, you might catch people in Cayuga County reminiscing about their newly elected Congresswoman — the same person who, as a teenager, used to tag along to all the local government meetings.

Congresswoman Tricia Purdy? Those who know her well wouldn't scoff at the possibility.

Purdy, who will turn 15 on Sept. 10, has already taken quite a liking to civic affairs. Her biggest community project to date occurred this past Saturday, Aug. 28, when she served as co-chairperson for the first-ever Auburn Youth Festival.

She was selected for this honor by Auburn Mayor Guy Cosentino, who phoned Purdy last December and requested that she assist in the festival's planning stages.

Purdy and Cosentino are both parishioners at St. Mary's Church, 15 Clark St. She first became an active supporter of the mayor by attending several of his debates during the 1991 campaign.

The youth festival idea emerged, Purdy said, because of the lack of local summer activities geared toward the city's young people.

"I always thought there should be something for youth to do. There's not a ton to do here unless you belong to a yacht club or something," remarked Purdy.

Last Saturday's festival, held over a six-hour period in a section of downtown Auburn, was the equivalent of an outdoor fun house. Karaoke singing, "Velcro jumping," dunking booths featuring local schoolteachers, and "gla-

diator fights" were all part of the gala.

Education also played a vital part in the agenda: booths were set up to pass along information on timely subjects such as AIDS and rape crisis.

Purdy, whose recommendations resulted in many of the festival's activities, hopes the event will serve as a catalyst for future community-wide youth functions.

"We do hope to get more youth involved in this. I think it's real important," said Purdy, who is entering her sophomore year at Auburn High School. "Maybe we'll do something in the winter."

Formulating youth festivals is just one part of Purdy's busy and diverse schedule. A talented musician, she sings in the St. Mary's choir and also plays the flute, piccolo and piano.

She is considering medicine and politics as long-term career possibilities. Purdy supplements her political knowledge by regularly attending city council meetings with her parents.

Yet before she begins offering her opinions on local affairs, Purdy feels that she needs to take a step that many politicians are accused of neglecting: sit in on more meetings to gain a broader knowledge of the issues.

"I just like to absorb it all in," she explained.

Auburn's mayor, for one, thinks that Purdy's leadership skills could lead to a promising political career.

"She is outgoing and is a super young lady," Cosentino remarked. "She's involved in her community and a leader in a lot of the challenges we face."

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