

# Prayer, good times mark youth day celebration

## Geneseo church hosts gathering

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

GENESEO — Now the social circle is fairly complete for the diocese's Catholic teens.

It all began back in February, when a Finger Lakes Youth Day was held in Auburn. Another regional gathering, the Southern Tier Teen Cruise, took place in July in Watkins Glen.

And, with Rochester (Bishop's Day with Youth in April) and Keuka College (Junior High Youth Rally in July) hosting diocesan-wide events along the way, that left few areas which hadn't yet thrown a big party in 1993.

Finally, this past Saturday, Sept. 11, it was time for youths from Livingston County, northern Steuben County and western Ontario County to have their day in the sun.

Approximately 100 young people in grades 7-12 attended Genesee Valley Youth Day, a nine-hour event held at St. Mary Church, 13 North St.

Activities crammed the schedule from start to finish. Entertainment occupied the afternoon hours, including a wide array of indoor and outdoor games along with an appearance by Monarch, a Christian rock band.

Everyone then took time out to attend the 5:30 p.m. Saturday Mass at St. Mary Church. Readings and intercessions were all performed by youth par-

ticipants, and the homily featured some teenagers' recollections of their experiences at World Youth Day in Denver last month.

The first homilist, Barb Bland, stressed the importance of including youths in parish life. She recalled how Pope John Paul II, during his recent trip to Denver, had stated that young people in particular should be preaching the Gospel.

The 15-year-old Bland admitted later to the *Catholic Courier* that she was initially nervous speaking in front of the standing-room-only crowd, but was pleased that so many St. Mary parishioners complimented her afterward.

"I think it was really neat how the people sat there and respected you," said Bland, a parishioner at Livonia's St. Joseph Church and a sophomore at Livonia Central High School.

The day's agenda was topped off with a spaghetti supper, followed by an evening of "karaoke" music, in St. Mary's parish center. Youths performed rousing renditions of old favorites such as "Born to be Wild" and "Sum-



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer  
Betsy Bancroft (left) and Anne Marie Scharenberg keep their balance during a game of Twister, just one of several activities during the Sept. 11 Genesee Valley Youth Day at St. Mary Church in Geneseo.



Kevin Washer of Perkinsville's Sacred Heart of Jesus Church tries out the *Catholic Courier* photographer's camera.



Marrissa Kozei of St. Joseph Church in Livonia tries to get her message across while playing charades.

mer Nights," and an adult contingent even got into the act for a little "Jailhouse Rock."

Sharon Bricks, one of the Genesee Valley Youth Day's organizers, noted that events such as this are important for her sparsely populated region in which social opportunities are limited.

"In rural life, kids face different kinds of problems and there's a different social structure," remarked Bricks, who serves as youth coordinator at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Perkinsville. "You're either in an 'in' crowd, or you're kind of out there. You go out and hang on the street corner in Dansville or Geneseo.

"So if we don't do something for some of these kids, they have nothing," she said.

Bricks added that the Genesee Valley parishes expect to stage additional youth days in the future. In the meantime, organizers plan on sending brochures out to the teens "just to let them know we're thinking about them and care about them," she said.

Charles Kellett, a 16-year-old parishioner at St. Mary, Our Lady of the Hills Church in Honeoye, favors the concept of celebrations such as Genesee Valley Youth Day, in which prayer and fun activities are blended into one event.

"It gets people to see their faith with a different attitude," noted Kellett, a junior at Honeoye Central High School. "Faith is not just praying; faith is also getting together and being the church."

## Registration open for biking fundraiser

MENDON — Tour de Teddi, the annual bicycle-ride fundraiser benefiting the Teddi Project at Camp Good Days and Special Times, will be held Sunday, Sept. 26, at Mendon Ponds Park.

This third annual event will feature a 20-mile bicycle ride around the park. In addition, two other activities will take place for the first time: a 10K run just before the bike ride, and a "teddi bear run" for children on Sept. 25 at Pittsford's Thornell Road School.

To register, or to make pledges or contributions, call 716/624-5555.

Camp Good Days and Special Times is a non-profit corporation which provides recreational activities for children with cancer and/or AIDS.

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