

New play probes societal values

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Although she's only 13-years-old, Nellie Kuitems is familiar with the plight of the homeless woman she will portray in an upcoming play.

As a parishioner at Corpus Christi Church, 864 Main St. E., Kuitems often assists at Dimitri House and other parish outreach ministries for the homeless.

"It just happens; you might never expect it," Kuitems remarked about homelessness. "One day you could have a great job, the next day you could be laid off."

Now Kuitems will take on the role of "Sam" in the play "Different and Alike." This production, which debuts Friday, Feb. 25 in the first of three local performances, is a joint effort of the youth groups at Corpus Christi and St. Helen's Church, 310 Hinchey Road.

The fictional story of "Different and Alike" centers on a group of teenagers who look down on Sam because her lifestyle is drastically different than theirs. Sam further alienates herself from the teens by challenging their prejudices.

Accompanied by snappy, humorous dialogue and several musical numbers, the play reveals how these teenagers eventually re-examine their ways of thinking.

"Different and Alike" was written by Kathleen Fuchs, youth-minister at St. Helen's and a parishioner at Corpus Christi. She noted that the "Sam" character can, in many ways, be likened to Jesus Christ and his teachings.

"The whole thing is questioning traditional values of society," Fuchs remarked. "Materialism and not accepting cultural differences — these were the things I saw as pushing kids apart."

Fuchs added that she chose "Different and Alike" as the play's title because "maybe our values are different and we have cultural differences, but we're not that different inside."

Jule Walton, 17, a St. Helen's parishioner who portrays "Jesse," said she likes the manner in which humor and earnestness are juxtaposed in the script.

"I really believe in the message we're trying to send. The play has meaning, but it's funny, too," said Walton, whose character dares to break down social barriers by befriending Sam.

Rehearsals for "Different and Alike" began this past fall. The cast includes members from nine high schools and three colleges.



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer
Jule Walton (left) and Nellie Kuitems sing 'Side by Side' at St. Helen's Church on Feb. 20. The two youths were rehearsing for an upcoming play titled, 'Different and Alike.'

In addition to its three local shows, the group will perform "Different and Alike" at an ecumenical gathering in April in Myrtle Beach, S.C. The play will also be staged at the diocesan Junior High Youth Rally this coming June.

As is the case with any acting troupe, this contingent is both excited and somewhat nervous as rehearsals near their completion.

"I was supposed to have my lines memorized by Thanksgiving, and it hasn't happened yet," Kuitems said with a laugh. "Maybe by next Thanksgiving."

EDITORS' NOTE: "Different and Alike" will be presented on Feb. 25 and 26 at 7 p.m. at St. Helen's Church. Another performance is scheduled for March 6 at 7 p.m. at Corpus Christi Church. Tickets are \$3 for students and senior citizens, and \$6 for adults. Children under the age of 4 will be admitted free. A \$15 family package is also available. Call 716/235-2407 for details.



Patty Hewitt portrays the role of a rich person in 'Different and Alike'.

Fuchs discovered that, in some ways, the youth actors from St. Helen's and Corpus Christi became real-life images of their characters.

"Blending two youth groups did not go well at first. It was almost just the play — 'different and alike.' But they really warmed up to each other," Fuchs commented.

Benefit dance held for former youth minister

IRONDEQUOIT — Although David Desmond left St. Margaret Mary Church this past summer, he has not been forgotten by the youth group he formerly directed.

Desmond, now a campus minister at the State University of New York College at Geneseo, is battling cancer. To help defray some of his medical expenses, the St. Margaret Mary youths presented a benefit dance on Saturday, Feb. 12, at St. Margaret Mary School, located at 400 Rogers Parkway.

About 60 people attended, according to youth-group member Peter Spaker.

"It was a big success," remarked Spaker, who served as disc jockey.

He noted that proceeds from the dance, as well as additional donations from St. Margaret Mary parishioners and other well-wishers, will be presented to Desmond in the near future.

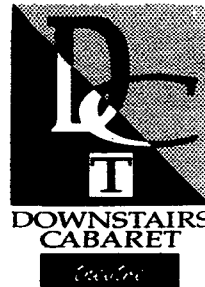
'Annie' to be presented by Nazareth Academy

ROCHESTER — Nazareth Academy, 1001 Lake Ave., will present five performances of *Annie* for its annual musical.

Show dates are March 4-6 and 11-12 in the Nazareth auditorium. All show times are 8 p.m., with the exception of a 2 p.m. matinee on March 6.

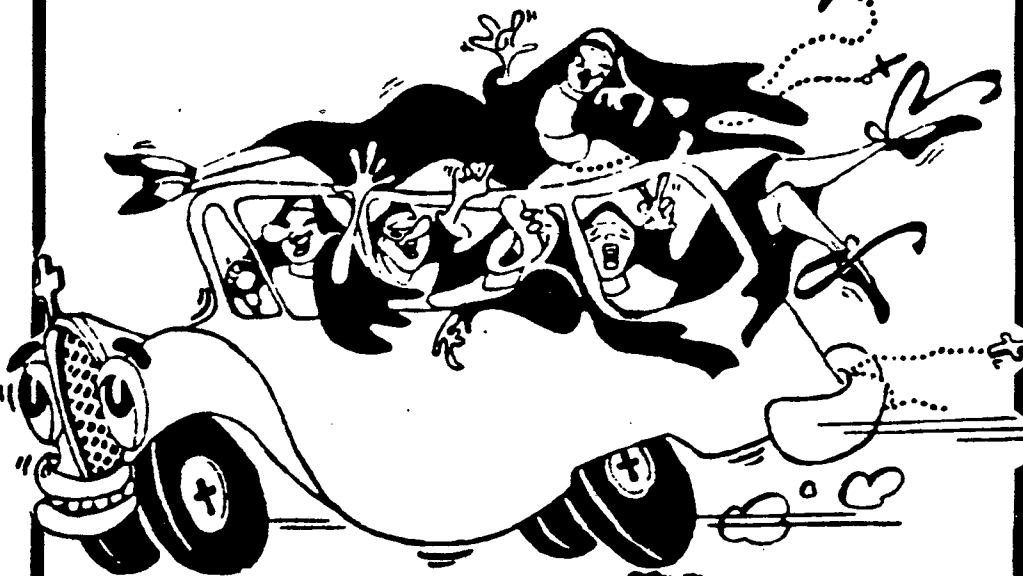
Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$5 for senior citizens and children under 12. To reserve tickets, call 716/458-8583.

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