

graduation 1994

Family tragedy motivates Mercy High senior

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

BRIGHTON — According to family members, Leigh Foos' grandparents were the type every child would dream for.

"My parents told me they were very caring, and watched out for others," said the 18-year-old Foos.

But Foos never got to experience that love and warmth first-hand. It disappeared before she was even born, on a winter night nearly 25 years ago.

That was when a drunk driver's car collided with one driven by her grandfather on Empire Boulevard near Irondequoit Bay. Killed were Foos' grandfather and grandmother as well as her great-grandmother; an aunt was the only passenger in the vehicle to survive.

"They left seven children, ages 8 to 26. My uncle Tom, the oldest male, basically raised all the children. Some of them were older, but four of them had to grow up with my uncle," Foos acknowledged.

"My father (Bud) has said that it was very hard not to have a father and mother at such a young age. It was taken away in a snap."

Foos' family tragedy spurred her to join the Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD) program at Our Lady of Mercy High School, where she is now a senior.

Nancy Wunder, a Mercy health and physical education instructor who moderates the school's 40-member SADD program, noted that it's "sad but true" that Foos is not alone when it comes to this type of adversity.

"I have several underclass-



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Leigh Foos, an Our Lady of Mercy High School senior, is a member of the school's 40-member Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD) program.

men who have gone through similar experiences," Wunder said. "But they're very open about it, and it's very therapeutic for them to talk about it. That really makes us a stronger group."

Part of SADD meetings involves the use of videos showing wreckage from drunk-driving accidents. The effect, said Foos, is more dramatic than simply being told not to drink and drive.

"You can actually view what does happen," she remarked.

Foos' other school activities have included band and campus ministry, and she has also been one of Section 5's finest female bowlers. A parishioner at St. Thomas More Church in Rochester, Foos plans to attend the State University of New York College at Cobleskill this fall.

She acknowledged that while she doesn't preach her views about alcohol with her peers,

there is a very definite juncture at which she will speak up.

"People who are 14, 15 years old are always around it. Drinking is a big thing to some teenagers," she remarked. "I do not drink, and I certainly will try not to until I'm 21. They can do whatever they want — it's their body, their mind. I'm not going to sit there and tell them what they should do."

"But if someone were to try to get in a car, I would put my

foot down."

One such person still registers in Foos' mind — a person she wasn't able to stop.

Yet, rather than being angry, Foos has remained hopeful about the drunk driver who survived the accident that killed three of her family members.

"I think that if the person has gotten help and is somewhat rehabilitated, then that would take some of the pain away," she concluded.

Justice tells grads to grasp reality, dreams

By Susan P. Mucha
Catholic News Service

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas told graduating seniors at a Catholic high school to get a grasp on reality while not letting go of dreams.

Speaking to the May 20 Class Night of Aquinas High School in Augusta, Thomas encouraged the students to take the advice he was once given — if you want to know what lies down the road, ask someone who's on the way back.

Thomas reminded the seniors that the end of high school is

the beginning of adulthood.

"This is serious business. Adulthood brings us freedom, responsibilities, obligations. If we don't carry out our responsibilities and obligations, there is no freedom."

While most people daydream of a world with no worries or problems, the reality of life is a place of ups and downs, good days and bad days.

"How you deal with reality is up to you," he said. "It is up to you to be positive, not negative; to love, not hate."

And he encouraged the students to dream.

"Hold onto your dreams,"



File photo

Justice Clarence Thomas.

Thomas said. "Work toward your dreams. But remember dreams are just goals to be achieved, not opportunities."

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Prayer

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by majority vote who will speak for all of them and what type of speech they will offer "is giving students power to make majoritarian decisions," he said.

The Duval school district's policy "is about as hands-off as I have seen," the Americans United legal director conceded. "It's possibly going in the right direction."

If he were writing a policy his organization would find acceptable, it would permit students to choose speakers but not dictate in any way what those presenters would say.

"If the student who is elected to give a graduation speech on his own decides he's going to make a reference to God, that might be permissible," he said.

Legal observers predict there will be at least several more years of contrasting rul-

ings before the Supreme Court agrees to take on a case that might give a clear guide on student-led prayer.

"The Supreme Court often sits back and waits to see what happens with an issue like this," said Jesuit Father Charles M. Whelan, Fordham University law professor. "I think it will be this way across the country for at least several years because I don't see a real solid consensus one way or another."

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