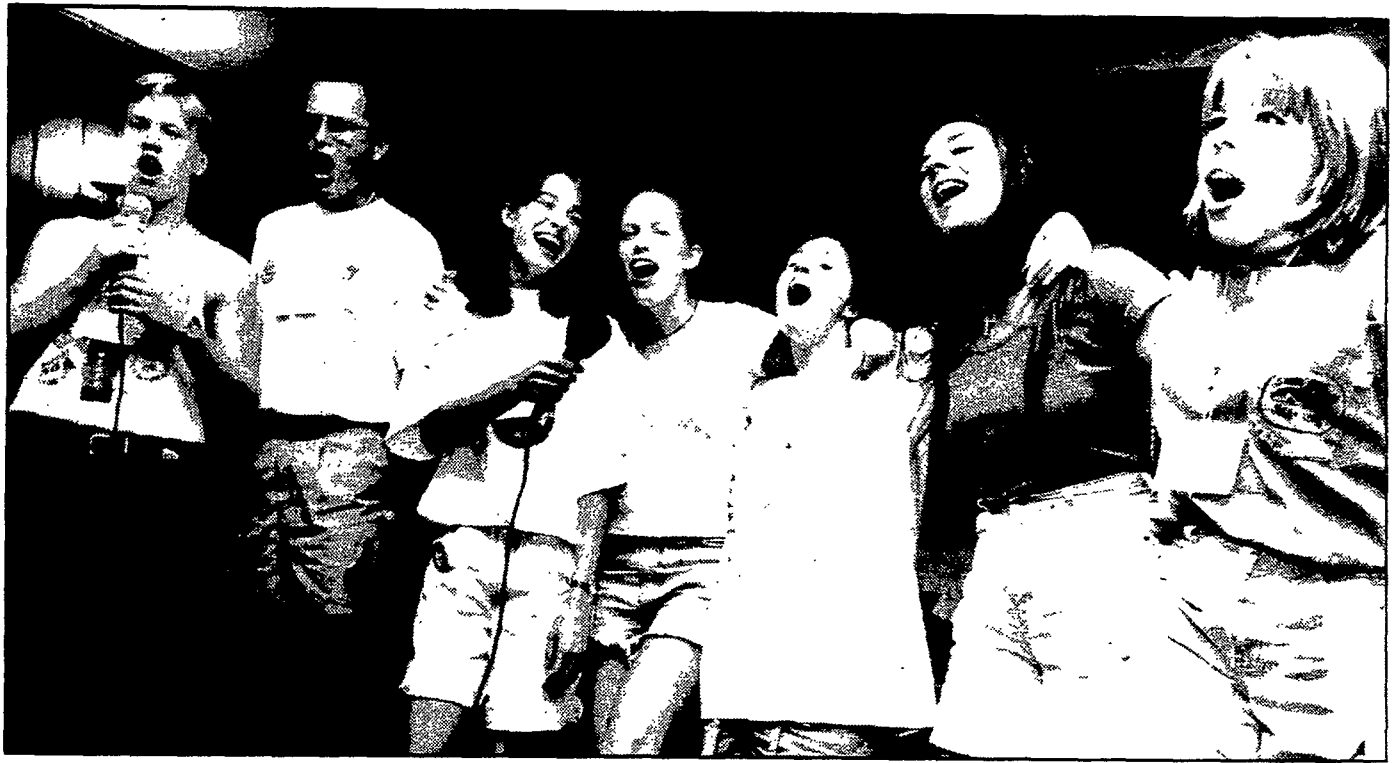


YOUTH FEATURE



Keynoter Steve Angrisano performs during a Saturday-evening program.



Bryon Lockhart (far left), a parishioner of St. Helen's Church in Gates, leads a rousing rendition of "New York, New York" during Saturday's karaoke session.



Jane Krouuze, a parishioner at Elmira's St. Casimir/St. Charles Borromeo cluster, offers a hug during the sign of peace during last Saturday's Mass. Krouuze is a member of the Diocesan Youth Committee.



Bishop Matthew H. Clark, who attended the Diocesan Youth Convention Aug. 5-7 at the State University of New York College at Geneseo, celebrated Saturday's Mass for the 367 youth and adult conventioneers.

they would have long ago collapsed," he acknowledged with a laugh.

Just one of the kids

Speaking of the bishop, he spent the entire weekend blending right in with the other participants — from socializing with tables full of youths during meals, to taking a crack at karaoke on Saturday.

Bishop Clark's actions were reminiscent of when he accompanied the Rochester diocesan contingent to World Youth Day a year ago, choosing to hang out with the youths rather than stay with other bishops and Catholic Church dignitaries in Denver.

Yet as many times as Bishop Clark was lauded during the Diocesan Youth Convention for his thorough participation, he emphasized that the weekend stay did not constitute inconvenience or sacrifice on his part.

"I get a whole lot out of this, too. It's a very mutual thing," he said.

The convention, he said, was truly a celebration of youth.

"Their exuberance and their physical liveliness has been honored; they've been allowed to be kids," the bishop observed. "The beauty of their adolescence and teen years has been raised up."

A team effort

The list runs long of all the adults who made this weekend possible: Angrisano; Bishop Clark; volunteers and youth ministers; and Theisen as well as other members of the diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis such as Maribeth Mancini, director, and Jeannie Raisbeck, secretary.

Yet youth input was just as vital in the event's planning and execution. Young members of the Diocesan Youth Committee spent several months helping to design the convention's format and then took on various leadership roles last weekend, leading Theisen to comment that the monumental gathering never

would have occurred if not for the DYC.

The convention's last event honored this group of more than 20 teens and adult advisers. The committee lined up across the stage as Bishop Clark bestowed a blessing upon each member, commissioning them as DYC members for the upcoming year.

Commendable actions by youths were both planned and spontaneous during the convention. One example of the latter was a collection taken up for the Catherine McAuley Housing Project, a Rochester-based outreach service for single mothers operated by the Sisters of Mercy. By Sunday morning, more than \$100 had already been raised through this effort which had started less than 24 hours earlier.

Let's do it again

With such an exhaustive planning effort, diocesan officials were at first hesitant about a second youth convention next year.

"We'll be setting up an evaluation committee. We don't want to make any premature judgments, although it's quite possible that this will occur again. We just don't know when or in what form," Theisen said on Sunday morning.

Yet Mancini, after observing the powerful effect of the concluding events later that day, remarked that she will lobby for another convention.

In the meantime, those who flocked to the Geneseo State campus are back in their own parish communities, striving to live out the directives issued by Bishop Clark at last Saturday's Mass:

"Let the Lord speak to your hearts about the good gifts you share in your spirit," the bishop said. "We should treat one another as Christ trusted us. Remove all barriers to that kind of communication with our sisters and brothers."

In other words, live out the convention's slogan to the fullest: be companions on the journey.