

## Birthday party for an 'Angel'

Angel Ramos, who suffered serious injuries during a car accident in 1990, celebrated her 13th birthday at Gates Memorial Park on Sept. 11 with family, friends, classmates and teachers at St. Theodore's School who have been friends with Angel since kindergarten. Angel, (center with sunglasses), her grandmother, Betsy McCabe (right), and her uncle Jimmy McCabe (behind Angel) led revelers in releasing purple balloons at the party's conclusion.



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

## Phelps couple continue Bosnian mission of mercy

By Lee Strong  
Senior staff writer

**PHELPS** — What began simply as a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, site of alleged apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, has turned into a long-term commitment to a mission of mercy for one Phelps couple.

Since their inaugural trip in October, 1990, Robert and Beth Burns of St. Francis Parish (clustered with St. Felix Parish in Clifton Springs) have twice returned to the war-torn region in the former Yugoslavia bearing relief supplies.

Robert is going back again Oct. 10, while Beth remains behind awaiting the impending arrival of a grandchild.

The St. Francis parishioner will be taking with him medical supplies, crayons, paper, candy and whatever else he can carry under the 70-pound weight limit required by the airlines.

In addition, supplies the couple have

been collecting since their last trip in October, 1993, will be distributed among the people Robert will be accompanying as part of the Mir Peace Group, based in Clark Spring, Pa., which sends regular groups to the region. Swiss Air, the airline on which the group will fly, is allowing the peace group to ship boxes of supplies as well. And a parish in New Jersey has also been assisting by shipping cartons of supplies that people cannot carry on board with them.

Robert said the couple first traveled to Medjugorje simply to visit the site where alleged Marian visions were occurring. That trip came prior to the former Yugoslavia's splintering, which subsequently led to fighting among various factions.

In October, 1992, the couple planned to return to Medjugorje despite the ongoing fighting. They were then asked by the woman arranging the trip, Helen Sarcevic, of Clark Summit, if they would be willing to carry relief supplies with

them. The couple agreed.

After arriving in Sarajevo, they were delayed at Split because of the fighting. In Split they stayed in a resort filled with refugees.

Americans on the tour were prepared a meal, Robert said, but then they learned that whatever they did not eat would be distributed among the hungry refugees. Upon learning that, he said, "Nobody wanted to eat their meals."

That trip brought them closest to the fighting. At night, Robert said, they could hear shelling as explosions lighted up the sky.

During these trips, the couple talked to victims of war atrocities and were horrified by what they heard. "When this war's over and they start the war trials, you're going to hear stories beyond your imagination," Robert said.

Meanwhile, the region's people are simply trying to survive — often without the help of relief agencies in some of

the more embattled areas. Refugees are often taken into the homes of people in the area, taxing their resources. Other people are sheltered in schools and factories.

"In Medjugorje," Robert reported, "every building is full of refugees."

The relief effort, he explained, "is not to rebuild the country. This is simply to keep them alive."

Needs include not only money, food and medical supplies, but also school materials, toys and stuffed animals. Clothing should not be donated because it is too bulky to transport, Robert cautioned.

He added that response to appeals for supplies has been "tremendous."

Parishioners of St. Francis and St. Felix have contributed generously, he said. The House of John, a home for the dying located in a house owned by St. Felix Parish, donated surgical supplies. A teacher who is a member of St. Francis Parish saw a notice in the parish bulletin and took up a class collection of toys, barrettes, crayons and other items. A pharmacist who heard Robert speak at a Rotary Club meeting contributed cases of toothpaste and toothbrushes.

"Fortunately, I've got a big basement," Robert quipped.

He said Bosnia's people — especially the children — appreciate the assistance.

"You should see the looks on their faces when you give them something," he said.

Indeed, Robert acknowledged, he is haunted by the faces he's seen.

"Once you go to a refugee camp and see the faces of the people, you know you have to go back, you have to help these people," he said. "I think about it constantly. It's on your mind."

Robert said he and his wife will continue to go back despite the ongoing fighting.

"As many times as the good Lord will allow me — and I can afford it," he said.

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**EDITORS' NOTE:** Individuals or groups interested in contributing cash or relief supplies should contact Robert and Beth Burns at 1371 Marletown Road, Phelps, N.Y. 14532, or call 315/548-3898. Supplies for the Oct. 10 trip need to be received by the end of September.

## New Fisher program features money-back offer

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

**PITTSFORD** — This deal carries a money-back guarantee, but you won't find it being advertised on any of cable television's home-shopping channels.

St. John Fisher College, 3690 East Ave., last week announced a new initiative called "The Fisher Commitment" for incoming freshmen. Provided that they fulfill a series of requirements during and after their undergraduate studies, the college will award these students up to \$5,000 each if they do not find professional employment soon after they graduate.

Those who enter this optional program must graduate with a grade-point average of 2.75 or better. In addition, they will be required to participate in on-campus activities, complete job-related internships, and develop their career goals with Fisher career counselors.

If any student completes the program successfully and has not found a job for which a college degree is required six months after graduating, he or she will be awarded \$400 per month — up to

\$5,000 — while continuing to work with the college's Career Services office.

Dr. William L. Pickett, the college's president, said he is not aware of any other U.S. college currently offering a money-back program such as Fisher's.

He stated that the primary reason the college decided to institute this program was to reaffirm the long-range value of attending a private institution.

"As the distance of tuition between private and public increases, there's a concern of, is it going to be worth it," Pickett remarked.

Undergraduate tuition, room and board at Fisher for the 1994-95 school year is \$10,570, a 6.4-percent increase over last year.

The initiative's ultimate intent, said Pickett, is for graduates to become gainfully employed and thus keep the college from doling out any money. "I want everybody to win," he commented.

The Fisher president noted that he doesn't view the program as a mere ploy to increase enrollment. "We could have announced this in February if this was a (recruitment) gimmick," he said. Instead, he added, the college's priority was to

develop the program over several months before it was instituted.

The Fisher Commitment is being offered only to freshmen for the 1994-95 school year and will be available to all future St. John Fisher freshmen. Depending on the program's success, Pickett said the East Avenue college is considering expanding the offer to include graduate and transfer students as well.

Michael Kahl, who serves as director of career services at Nazareth College of Rochester, 4245 East Ave., spoke highly of the Fisher program's goals.

"The kinds of things they're encouraging the students to do are the right things, without a doubt," said Kahl. He added that joining clubs and doing internships are important activities in employers' eyes.

Along those lines, Kahl said that his office recently began "an initiative with business students to reach out and get involved in a whole range of activities before their senior year." An example of this, he said, would be for undergraduates to tap into a network of alumni who have become prominent members of the business community.