

YOUTH FEATURE



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Youths who attended the Tompkins County 'Fun, Food, and Faith Festival' at Holy Cross Church in Dryden on Sept. 18 enjoyed outdoor activities such as a volleyball match on church grounds.

Tompkins youth groups join forces

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

DRYDEN — Over the past year, "the more the merrier" has been the key theme surrounding youth-group activities among Tompkins County parishes.

Events open to all Catholic youths in this Southern Tier county have been increasing in frequency. The latest such gathering was the "Fun, Food and Faith Festival" which took place Sunday, Sept. 18, at Holy Cross Church.

The afternoon began with an outdoor Mass, followed by an array of activities on the church grounds and in the brand-new Holy Cross church hall. Sixty-two youths and 10 adult volunteers took part in dancing, tie-dye shirt making, and volleyball, football and card games.

In addition to the host parish, youth members who took part in the festivities came from Immaculate Conception and St. Catherine of Siena parishes in Ithaca; St. Anthony Church in Groton; and All Saints Church in Lansing.

Holy Cross parishioner Amy Albern, 15, is a big fan of these county-wide events which target her age group. She cited the Sept. 18 homily delivered by Holy Cross interim-pastor Father Paul J. Freemesser as a prime example.

"It's great — the (speakers) go into more depth, because they really want to make the teens understand what they're saying," commented Albern, a freshman at Dryden High School.

Greg Clinton, 15, a St. Catherine of Siena parishioner, also liked the festival. "I wouldn't mind having another one," remarked Clinton, a sophomore

who attends Ithaca High School.

One of the area's first multi-parish youth events occurred in early 1994, when an overnight "Movie Mania Lock-In" took place at the Ithaca Performing Arts Center. A youth Mass at St. Catherine of Siena was then held in the spring.

Barb Ozminkowski, who serves as volunteer youth minister at Immaculate Conception, said the need for these forms of social events is especially vital in a locale such as Tompkins County, which includes several sparsely populated rural settings.

"You tend not to have contact with each other. You can't go two or three blocks down the street and bump into each other," Ozminkowski said.

"It's more fun to do it with a lot more people. You can do a lot more activities," Albern remarked.

Albern summed up the Tompkins County youth activities as "a new experiment that's working very well."

Ozminkowski noted that these get-to-



Christy DeRoos, a parishioner at St. Catherine of Siena Church in Ithaca, documents the day's activities.

gether are an outgrowth of increased emphasis on youth ministry in her own parish, which she observed during meetings for last year's diocesan Synod.

"At Immaculate Conception we hadn't had a youth group in several years. But at the parish synod meetings, we kept coming back to the kids," she said.

Weekend chastity retreat held at St. Theodore's Church

GATES — Regardless of how it's perceived, sex is an unavoidable subject for American teenagers.

It was for this reason that youth-group members from St. Theodore's Church voiced the need to hold a special event addressing sexuality and chastity from the Catholic perspective.

"Just listening to our youth, it's been brought up often about peer pressure with sex," said St. Theodore volunteer youth minister Sue Koch.

To address these concerns, an

overnight retreat was held Sept. 16-17 at St. Theodore for 22 youths of high-school age from both St. Theodore and Rochester's St. Bridget Church.

Among the retreat's highlights were a lecture given by Patricia Baloga, program coordinator for the Problem Pregnancy Help Center in Rochester; a video titled "Sex, Lies and the Truth;" the signing of chastity-commitment cards and the distribution of chastity bracelets; and a seminar distinguishing between infatuation and love.

EXTRA CREDIT

• **Gena Zuroski**, a parishioner at St. Joseph's Church in Penfield, is a recent award-winning graduate of Allendale-Columbia School and currently a freshman at Columbia University.

Gena was honored as the top student in her senior class and was also presented with Allendale-Columbia's Alumni Award, English Department Award, Adeline Menendes French Award and Instrumental Music Award. In addition, she earned the \$10,000 grand award in the Rochester Community Savings Bank "Banking on Creativity" scholarship program.

• **Mark Keyser**, a parishioner at St. Catherine of Siena Church in Mendon, earned first prize in the Crosman Air Rifle National Championship which took place this past summer at the National Explorer Leadership Conference at Indiana University.

Mark, 17, was representing the Rochester Rifle Club, Explorer Post 600. He earned a \$1,000 college scholarship for his performance. In addition, the Explorer Scout won a \$500 scholarship for placing first in the balsa wood bridge competition in the Science and Engineering category.

• **Jennifer Rutt**, a senior at Our Lady of Mercy High School, recently took first place in the national poster competition sponsored by Catholic Daughters of America.



Jennifer's poster, "Celebrating Life," depicted the world wrapped in a rainbow package. She was awarded \$100 for her design.

• **Carolyn Wrobel**, a senior at Aquinas Institute, has been named as a semifinalist in the 1995 National Merit Scholarship Program.

At Aquinas, Carolyn has been involved in student government, peer ministry, drama club, art club, recruitment and yearbook.

EDITORS' NOTE: Extra Credit runs periodically on the Catholic Courier's youth page. Readers throughout the diocese are encouraged to send along notable achievements of young Catholics who attend both Catholic and public institutions, from elementary school through college. Please specify your school and home parish. Photographs (head-and-shoulder shots only) are welcome. Write to Mike Latona at the Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y., 14624. Use of news items and photos is subject to editors' discretion.

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Last month's winner: **Donald Lewis** of Rochester correctly identified **The Joy Luck Club** as the Amy Tan novel that was recently adapted into a successful box office release.

RULES: ALL ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY MIDNIGHT, OCTOBER 14. Random drawing of correct entries to be held October 17 by Catholic Courier Representatives. Entries must be returned by mail to: Catholic Courier, Movie Trivia, 1150 Buffalo Rd., Rochester, NY 14624-1899. Winner will be notified by mail. Prize is one year of Wegmans Video Rentals, membership is free and is required. Prize is not exchangeable for cash or other merchandise.

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