

Pro-life stance earns teenager national recognition

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

BROCKPORT — Janine Mesiti knows her point of view will never be universally shared.

Yet the 17-year-old Brockport youth refuses to let this reality deter her from her mission.

"I'm not going to change everybody. But if I could save one child's life, it would make it all worth it," Janine stated.

Janine has worked tirelessly to protect the lives of the unborn ever since she received information from a pro-life booth at the New York State Fair four years ago.

"I sat in my room and just bawled," she recalled. "I just couldn't believe what people do to these fetuses."

Janine's emotions were so strong that by the time she entered her junior year at Brockport High School last year, she was voicing her views during debates in her history class.

To her dismay, many of Janine's classmates don't question the morality of abortion, she said: "It's absolutely pathetic. They don't even consider it an issue."

She admits that her stance has earned her the occasional label of "crazy pro-life chick."

"It's rough. It's actually really rough. Obviously you're in the minority," she said.

What's even more frustrating, she maintained, is that most of her fellow teenagers are against abortion but are afraid to speak up.

"The pro-lifers are the majority, but they're the silent majority," she said. "If a guy gets asked, 'Are you pro-life,' he says, 'I don't know, I'm not a girl.'"

Fortunately, a new set of friends has fueled Janine with a wealth of inspiration to keep pushing forward.

Janine traveled to Nashville, Tenn., in



Janine Mesiti (center) holds her nephews, 2-year-old Jacob (left) and 3-month-old Jared. Janine, a 17-year-old senior at Brockport High School and parishioner at Brockport's Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, has been recognized at the local, state and national levels for her speeches on pro-life issues.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

early July after taking first place in local and state oratorical contests sponsored by the National Right to Life. Although she did not win the national competition, she said the chance to meet other pro-life teens made the trip well worthwhile.

"We were really rooting for each other. It was a friendly competition because we were together for the same cause," she pointed out.

The speech which earned her a trip to the nationals was written last spring, shortly after the tragic Oklahoma City bombing. Janine's main point, she said, was that the public could become distraught over a photograph of a fireman holding an baby injured in the blast — yet the same sympathy does not exist for the unborn.

"One point five million lives are taken each year by the act of abortion, but does the nation weep?" she asked in her speech. "Does the nation come together as one with the common goal to save these innocent lives? No, it doesn't. Instead the nation fights against each other. People scream in each other's faces; some even kill to prove their point."

Asked how she developed the theme for this speech, Janine deferred to a higher authority.

"I had struggled for two weeks and I went to bed praying, 'Help me, Lord. Tell me what you want me to say.'"

That night, she woke up at 1 a.m. and couldn't write her thoughts down quickly enough.

"It was like He was screaming them into my ear," she said. "I'm like, 'Okay,

I'm writing as fast as I can!'"

Janine is now being sought out to speak to religious-education classes in her parish. She would also like to continue in the footsteps of acclaimed lecturer Molly Kelly, a teenage sexuality expert who Janine met in Nashville this past summer.

"When I'm her age, I would love to go to high schools and speak," Janine said.

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