

YOUTH

Four 'Hands of Christ' helped rebuild youth group

By Mike Eatona
Staff writer

CANANDAIGUA — With their persistent telephone tactics, Sarah Meyer and Adam Savaria could easily pass for telemarketers.

They're also equipped with another essential of salesmanship: faith in the product.

In September of 1994, Sarah and Adam plunged into what ultimately became a very successful campaign — selling youth ministry to older high-school students in their parish, St. Stephen's of Geneva.

Although Sarah and Adam were entering their junior years of high school at the time, they found they had already become the oldest members of their youth group.

"I felt we could do a better job," remarked Adam, now a senior at Dundee Central High School. "I'd see huge groups at Geneseo (for the Diocesan Youth Convention), and they'd impress me so much."

So he and Sarah, a senior at Geneva High, assembled a list of potential St. Stephen's members and earnestly began hammering away.

The initial response was mixed, Sarah admitted.

"Some people were like, 'Eh, I don't think so.' And I said, 'Well, I'll keep bothering you!'" she recalled with a laugh. "We kept saying, 'We're going to get them, we're going to get them.'"

Slowly but surely, membership began to pick up as the youth group performed such fun service projects as a "Canned Food Scavenger Hunt," in which youths collected various items for charity.

In addition, the St. Stephen's teens made two visits to White Springs Manor, an adult residence in Geneva, and conducted weekly question-and-answer sessions among themselves on various religious topics.

Now St. Stephen's has sailed into the 1995-96 school year with approximately 20 members, many of whom are high-school juniors and seniors. The youth group is under the direction of Adam's father, Walter, who also serves as religious-education director at St. Stephen's.

Sarah's and Adam's pioneering efforts were recognized at the Hands of Christ awards presentation this past weekend. The annual diocesan ceremony — which honors high-school seniors showing ex-



Bishop Matthew H. Clark presents a Hands of Christ Award to Adam Savaria, a parishioner of St. Stephen's Church in Geneva, during Sept. 30 ceremonies at St. Mary's Church in Canandaigua. S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

ceptional commitment to their parish and community — took place Saturday evening, Sept. 30, at St. Mary's Church in Canandaigua.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark celebrated Mass and issued plaques to each Hands of Christ recipient, both at St. Mary's and at St. John the Evangelist Church in Greece the following afternoon. The bishop will also preside at the third and final Hands of Christ ceremony, set for Oct. 15 at St. Mary's Church in Corning. Approximately 325 seniors from the diocese are being honored for the 1995-96 school year.

Although the Hands of Christ award is based on past service, Sarah said she doesn't plan to relax her efforts at St. Stephen's while also preparing to begin college next fall.

"I'm not going to stop helping out," she asserted.

Bishop Clark pointed out that intense dedication like that of Sarah and Adam is exactly the reason Hands of Christ nom-

inations are sought from each diocesan parish.

"People in your communities noticed the good things you do for other people," the bishop told Saturday's recipients in Canandaigua.

Michael Theisen, diocesan youth-ministry coordinator, agreed: "We are all called, but we do not all respond. They did."

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