

Me!

John Wilkin

So Kim Ciaccia, a senior at Our Lady of Mercy, contributes toward student-to-student support as an active member of Mercy's Peer Mediation group. Begun this school year, Peer Mediation comprises students and faculty members who facilitate during disputes. The conflict can either be between students, or involving a student and teacher.

Kim, 17, said her primary role is simply to hear both sides of the story. "I think it will be difficult not to pass any judgment, but we'd like them to come to a resolution by themselves," she said. "We're not supposed to offer suggestions unless they can't resolve it by themselves."

At Elmira Notre Dame, listening is also the key component of the school's Peer Helpers program. Guidance counselor Carole Morrell, who coordinates Peer Helpers, refers to her student members as "field workers" because they often hear of other students' problems before faculty does.

The peer helpers can then inform school officials of any serious situations, such as a student

abusing drugs or considering suicide. Often times, however, the peer helpers' primary role is to act as a sounding board for others.

"Sometimes they just need someone to talk to," Morrell said.

Not only can student-to-student ministry require strong personal skills, but a few brains don't hurt either. At McQuaid Jesuit, Joe Weisensel volunteers as a biology tutor each week for freshman Rory Connellan, 15.

"Sometimes kids teach kids better, because it's hard to talk to teachers," Joe commented.

"With Joe, he knows from experience what it's like," Rory added.

Joe, who is taking Advanced Placement biology, finds that tutoring also serves as a valuable refresher course.

"It's a good review for me. If you teach it, you have to understand it," Joe remarked.

Bill Breen, a Geneva DeSales senior, actually travels beyond school grounds to help other students. He tutors math for Adam Say, a fourth-grader at Skoi Yase Elementary School in Waterloo. Bill, 18, also resides in Waterloo.

"I'm pretty confident about myself and my math, so I figure I can help," Bill said.

However, Bill admits that it might take some time to become fully confident in his teaching abilities.

For the first time in his life, he said, "You have to explain it to someone instead of having them explain it to you."



Friendliness and a desire to help others are the building blocks of the Peer Ministry group at Aquinas Institute.

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