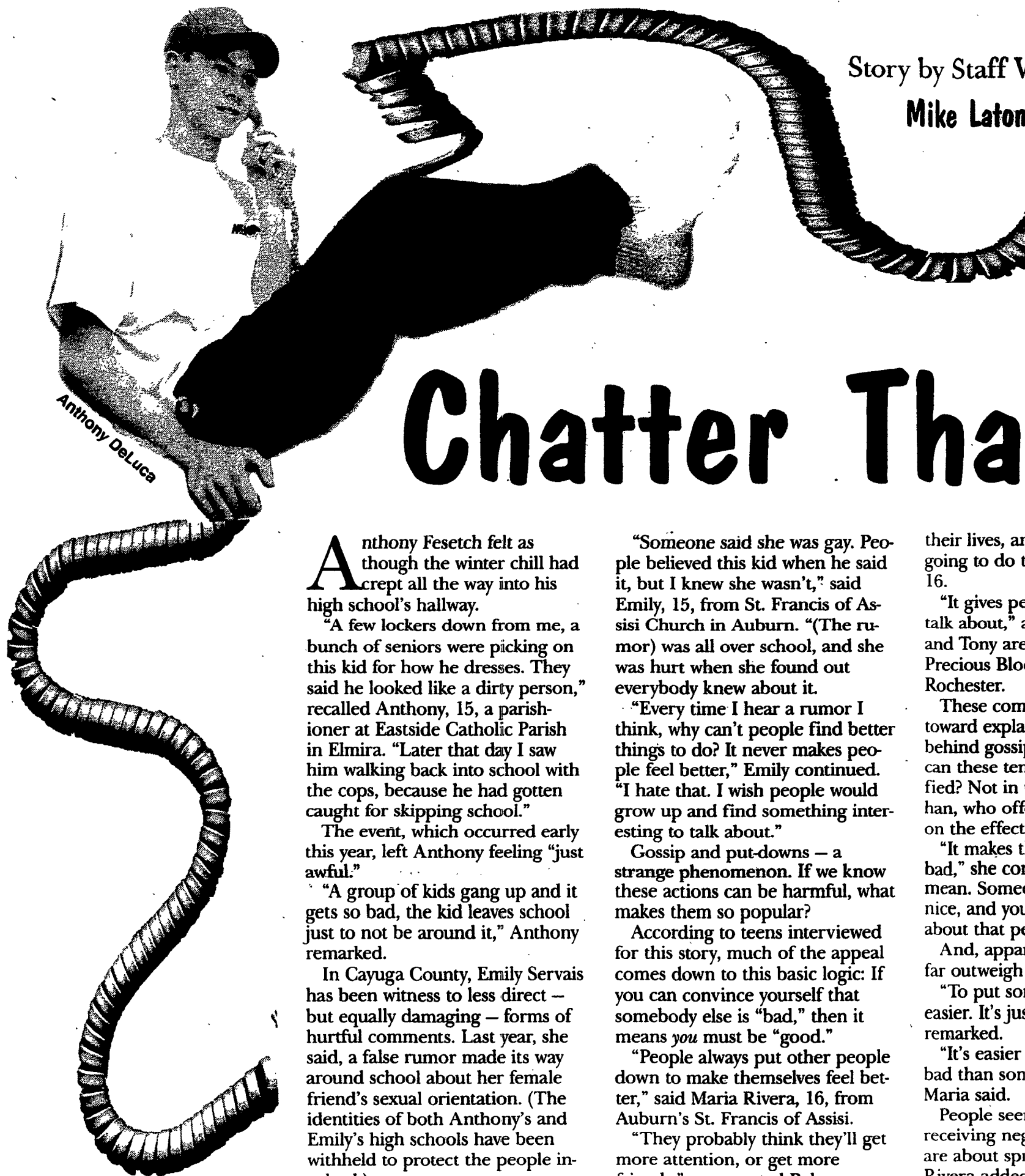


on the MOVE



Anthony DeLuca

Story by Staff Writer
Mike Laton

Chatter Tha

Anthony Fesetch felt as though the winter chill had crept all the way into his high school's hallway.

"A few lockers down from me, a bunch of seniors were picking on this kid for how he dresses. They said he looked like a dirty person," recalled Anthony, 15, a parishioner at Eastside Catholic Parish in Elmira. "Later that day I saw him walking back into school with the cops, because he had gotten caught for skipping school."

The event, which occurred early this year, left Anthony feeling "just awful."

"A group of kids gang up and it gets so bad, the kid leaves school just to not be around it," Anthony remarked.

In Cayuga County, Emily Servais has been witness to less direct — but equally damaging — forms of hurtful comments. Last year, she said, a false rumor made its way around school about her female friend's sexual orientation. (The identities of both Anthony's and Emily's high schools have been withheld to protect the people involved.)

"Someone said she was gay. People believed this kid when he said it, but I knew she wasn't," said Emily, 15, from St. Francis of Assisi Church in Auburn. "(The rumor) was all over school, and she was hurt when she found out everybody knew about it."

"Every time I hear a rumor I think, why can't people find better things to do? It never makes people feel better," Emily continued. "I hate that. I wish people would grow up and find something interesting to talk about."

Gossip and put-downs — a strange phenomenon. If we know these actions can be harmful, what makes them so popular?

According to teens interviewed for this story, much of the appeal comes down to this basic logic: If you can convince yourself that somebody else is "bad," then it means *you* must be "good."

"People always put other people down to make themselves feel better," said Maria Rivera, 16, from Auburn's St. Francis of Assisi.

"They probably think they'll get more attention, or get more friends," commented Ryhan Kennedy, 13, from St. Mary of the Lake Parish in Watkins Glen.

"You think you're better and that you'll get more praise," Anthony said.

Tony DeLuca and his brother, Nick, point out that character assassination is also a popular way for people to spice up an otherwise dull day.

"They need some excitement in

their lives, and going to do it."

"It gives people something to talk about," said Tony and Anthony are Precious Blood in Rochester.

These comments tend toward explanation behind gossip. Can these teenagers be so satisfied? Not in a way, who often find themselves on the effect of the rumor.

"It makes them feel bad," she continued. "Somebody mean. Somebody nice, and you can't talk about that person."

And, apparently, far outweighs the negative.

"To put someone down is easier. It's just easier," remarked.

"It's easier to be bad than someone else," Maria said.

People seem to be receiving negative attention. Rivera added, "If you hear someone say something bad, you tend to believe it."

Unfortunate, but it's a fact. Erica, the twin sister of Tony, said, "People of all ages do it."

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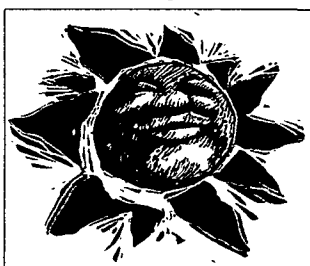
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from the Catholic Courier

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Publication Date: May 23

Advertising Deadline: May 19



As Courier readers prepare for the summer months, this special supplement will present them with a host of activities for their consideration. From nearby church-sponsored festivals and retreats to places beyond, this supplement will serve as a well-used summer planning guide.

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