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Volunteers try out numerous niches

Dinners. Scout troops. Liturgical ministry. Religious education. Fundraising. Festivals. Stephen Ministry. Nicaragua projects. Haiti projects. Martha Ministry. Grounds maintenance. Refugee work. Pro-life rallies.

How to choose from all the work, all the causes? How do people know their church or community or monastery work is a good fit, and how did they leave behind work that wasn't?

Doug Mason, for one, has found his niche. He gets off work at 7:30 in the morning as a security guard at Mercy Health and Rehabilitation Center in Auburn. Then he opens Doug's Market and works there till noon, goes home to sleep, and returns to close the market by 9:30 at night before going back to work at Mercy.

Oh — and on certain days every month he attends a Scouting advancement board meeting, chairs the troop committee, serves as a merit badge counselor and liaison between a United Methodist-based troop and the Cayuga County (Boy Scouts) Council.

And he teaches religious education.

And he and his wife Mary run a bingo night at Sacred Heart Church. And he helped start a bingo night at St. Joseph's School.

Mason said something has changed since the 1970s when he dropped his sons off at Scout meetings and thought, "I don't have time for this. You can do it."

In 1980, Cub Scouts at the church graduated to Boy Scouts, but because the old Boy Scout troop no longer existed, "there was no place for them to go," he recalled. So Mason and other fathers re-started a troop at Sacred Heart and he became scoutmaster.

Continued on page 14

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