

# On the MOVE

## SUICIDAL THOUGHTS:

After a long bout with family strife, drugs and falling grades, "Carol" felt she'd finally found the solution to her problems:

She would step in front of a train hurtling down the tracks through a suburban Rochester village.

The possibility of suicide had been on Carol's mind for a long while. One day in April 1995, she decided that the time had come to act out her thoughts.

"That was going to be the day," said Carol, who asked that her actual identity not be revealed.

If not for a policeman who intercepted her at the tracks, Carol would probably not have lived to tell this story. And if not for her mother's concern, the policeman wouldn't have been aware that Carol was in crisis.

"I never showed up for school that day. So my mom called the cops, looking for me," explained Carol, 18.

The problems that pushed Carol to this extreme are common among teenagers contemplating suicide, said Dr. Christopher Hodgman.

"Anxiety, depression, substance abuse, parent-teen conflicts, boyfriend-girlfriend problems, academic pressures" are all leading causes of suicidal behavior in teens, Hodgman said. Hodgman, a professor of psychiatry and pediatrics at Rochester's Strong Memorial Hospital, lectures frequently on teen suicide.

Hodgman stated that most of us, at some point in our lives, will deal closely with someone having suicidal thoughts. Therefore, he said, we should treat a suicide situation like a fire drill: Know ahead of time how to act.

"Before it happens, think about a reliable person — somebody who's wise, whose advice you can count on, and who knows the system," Hodgman said. "The time to identify that person is now."

He added that that person should be an adult who knows the best way to get the proper professional help. "There's a difference between (consulting with) an adult and gossiping with your friends about it," he said.

Because of the potential tragedy, Hodgman recognizes that suicide is a tense topic for anyone.

"This is an act that makes all of us scared," he said.

Kate Rickard, 14, experienced that fear a few months ago. Through a series of phone calls, Kate realized that an acquaintance of hers might be having suicidal thoughts.

"Every time the talks would get a little bit heavier and longer," said Kate, a

Story by  
staff writer  
**Mike Latona**

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### ☆☆ Coming Attractions ☆☆

from the Catholic Courier

#### Education

Publication Dates: August 8th  
Advertising Deadline: July 25th  
The Rochester Diocese has made lifelong Christian education its top priority. Thus, as students gear up for the first day of school, the Courier will make its annual study of trends, developments and issues in education — from kindergarten to the continuing education of adults, from Catholic schools to religious education programs.



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### Catholic Courier

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