

Story by Mike Latona
 Photos by Greg Francis



Jacquie Homack, 16, and Kitty Peterson place Indian corn on a display in the yard of Sylvia Ferrara, W. Bayard Street, Seneca Falls.

BY!

group members. "All that we sell at that table will be pure profit. There's just a lot of talent in the parish, and we needed to utilize it," said Emily, 14. She and Sarah, 13, both plan to attend the national convention. Car washes, a jelly sale and a bottle-and-can drive also have helped raise funds for the group's trip.

Also on Oct. 25, Spencerport's St. John the Evangelist Church will sponsor a dance marathon from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. This is one of the last events in an incredible 23 fundraising activities to support the Kansas City trip. As of early October, youth minister Sue Versluys reported that more than \$12,000 had been raised.

Ryan McKee, 15, spearheaded one of the activities. He and his family coordinated a yard-raking project in the village last fall, as well as a spring cleanup.

"We got a lot more people than we thought we would. If you ask for money for church, pretty much people are going to say yes," Ryan commented.

Youths at St. Gabriel's Church in Hammondsport have also staged a long list of fundraising events. Among the activities: spaghetti dinners; a Polish dinner; a dunking booth at the parish festival; a chewing-gum sale; and babysitting for parishioners. The youths also made direct appeals to the congregation by speaking during weekend Masses in August.

According to Barbara Serphillips, parish secretary, the St. Gabriel's youths had raised more than \$6,500 toward a \$7,800 goal through early October. The money will enable 11 teens to travel to Kansas City.

One of the youths, Brendan O'Connor, said he has been gratified by the parish support.

"The people were nice. A lot of people were impressed that 11 of us from such a small parish were going (to Kansas City)," said Brendan, 15. His sister Colleen, 16, and brother Patrick, 18, will also be among the conventioners from St. Gabriel's.

On the weekend he appealed to parishioners, Brendan added, he asked them to take envelopes home and return with their sealed contributions the following weekend. However, he was handed two immediate donations from out-of-towners. "I didn't realize people were so generous," he remarked.

Although many recent fundraising efforts have focused on the national conference, raising money is also necessary to support regular youth-group activities. For example, Teresa Smith said that the first-ever "Chocolate Extraordinaire," held Sept. 20 at Holy Family Church in Auburn, will help pay for youth dances and excursions as well as the Catholic Youth Organization program.

Teresa remained in step with the day's theme by operating a face-painting booth, at which she drew images of Hershey bars and kisses on people's faces.

"It was very, very popular; I was working almost all day. Some adults even came," said Teresa, 15. She added that she also helped her mother bake chocolate-chip cookies — dipped in chocolate — that were sold that day.

"It was a big blast because it was so different. Other churches do fundraising dinners, but you see 'Chocolate Extraordinaire' and say, 'Whoa, what was that?'" Teresa remarked.

Although these fundraising efforts can be fun, they also can be awfully tough work, the Kirchoffs pointed out.

"It's pretty hard to ask people for money. You have to be pretty outgoing," Sarah said.

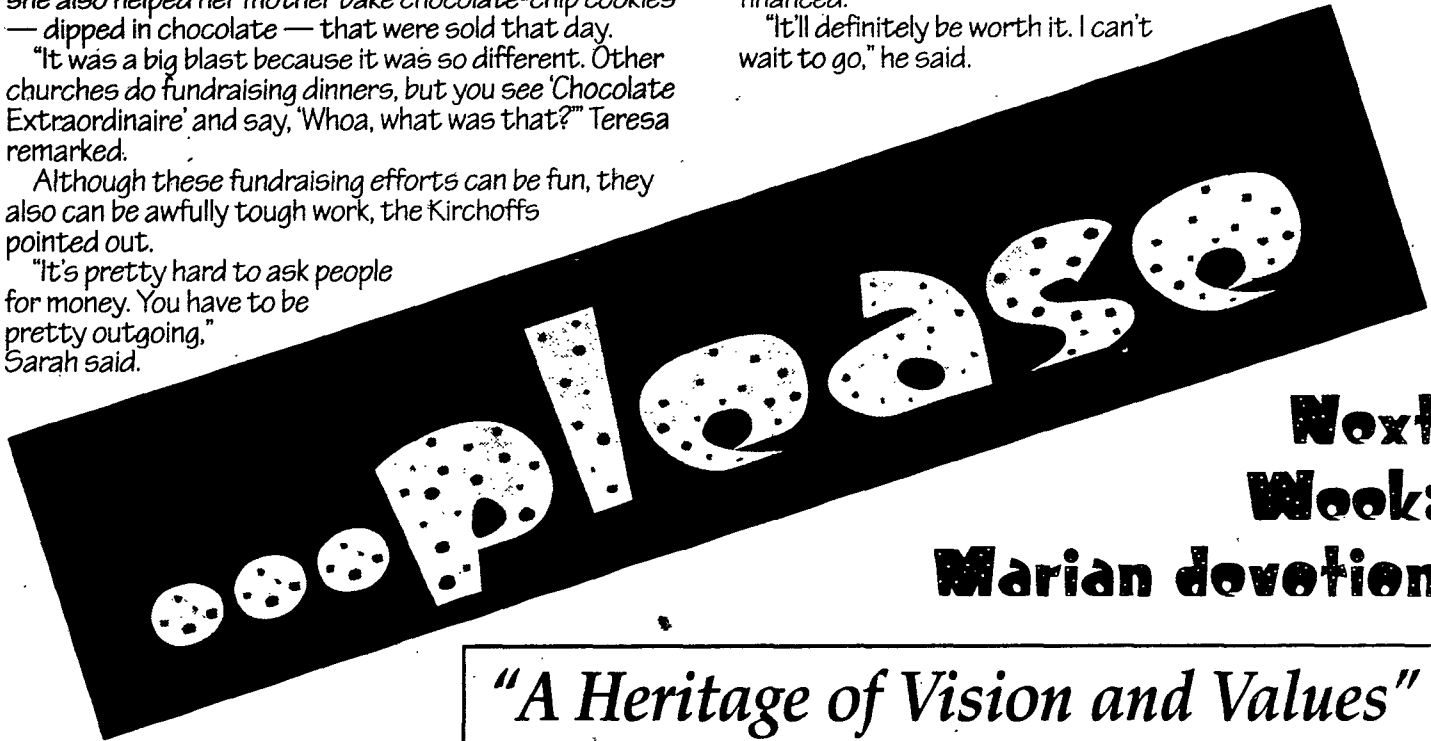
"It takes a lot of commitment and a lot of time," Emily added.

Ryan has also discovered that fundraising success hinges on commitment from the entire community.

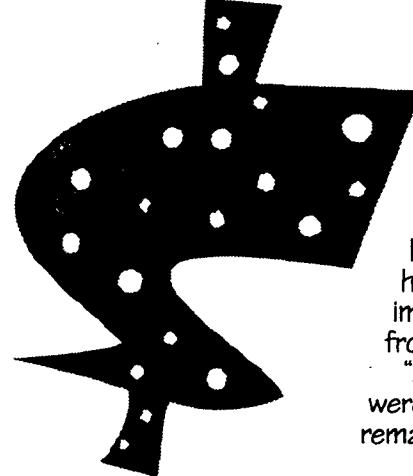
"The kids are all pretty close, so you work well together. Then parents have friends, and they get them motivated," Ryan noted.

Yet Ryan said the hard work pays off in the end, now that his trip to Kansas City is almost fully financed.

"It'll definitely be worth it. I can't wait to go," he said.




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