

ft, food



Left, youth group member Melissa Miller, 12, chats with Judi Flack of Utica, who was staying at the Ronald McDonald House while a family member was under care at Strong Memorial Hospital. Top, from left, Melissa Horohoe, 11, Penny McClure, 12, and Elizabeth Schirmer, 12, pray before testing the spaghetti dinner they had prepared for families. Above, Chris Robbins, 15, plays the piano as the families eat dinner.

For at least the sixth straight year, youths from St. Anne Parish, Rochester, took part in an Advent service project at the Rochester Ronald McDonald House. About 13 youths visited the facility Saturday, Nov. 22, to prepare and serve spaghetti and meatballs to families staying at the house.

The big yellow house near Strong Memorial Hospital provides temporary lodging for families who have members, from young to old, receiving medical treatment at nearby hospitals.

According to Alice Leistman, religious-education coordinator at St. Anne, parish youths jump at the chance to volunteer for this project.

"The biggest thing is just the idea they help people, even though they may not meet them directly. It gives them satisfaction," Leistman said.

She added that the event became so popular that St. Anne has now begun visiting Ronald McDonald House during the Lenten season as well. While she had to limit the number of teens helping this month, others who volunteered are already scheduled for March 14.

Chris Robbins, 15, helped with meal preparation Nov. 22 and also added dinner music — he played Christmas songs, show tunes and other melodies on the piano.

"The guests who stay there really appreciate it. It makes them feel a little better for what they're going through," Chris said.

The youth sat and chatted with families; some enjoyed dessert with them.

"Oh, I was never so well taken care of in my life," one woman exclaimed to Leistman.

"It must be terrible having a child in the hospital, so it must be really nice to come back and have a meal all ready for you," added Elizabeth Schirmer, 12.

Elizabeth added that seeing these families' plight made her value her own good health more deeply.

"It was almost like a reality check," Elizabeth said.

— Mike Latona

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FRANCIS

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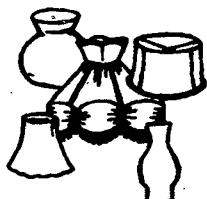
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