

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREG FRANCIS

# RENITS

*family member*



Nicole Keenan became a godmother at age 6 to her newborn sister Erin. Erin only lived three days due to an undeveloped arteries and a partial heart. Godparents must normally be 16, but exceptions are allowed under special circumstances.

Hospital. Erin died when she was 3 days old.

Eleven years later, Nicole said that her sister/goddaughter still maintains a special place in her life.

"I still think of her as a little baby, even though time has passed," Nicole said.

Also unusual is that Nicole herself has three godparents — two aunts and an uncle — even though church guidelines call for a maximum of one male and one female godparent per child. This arrangement, also, was approved by the local pastor — Msgr. Gerard Krieg, now the pastor at St. Stephen's Church in Geneva.

"Monsignor cleared it. It was unusual, but it was acceptable," said Nicole's father, Jim.

Although the godparents of

Nicole and Jeniphr are all blood relatives, this need not be the case. For instance, Kevin Stubbings' godparents, Mel and Margy Adner, are long-time friends of his parents. According to Kevin, he and his godparents treat each other like family.

"Sometimes we go out to their house, and I call them sometimes," said Kevin, 12, from St. Ambrose Church in Irondequoit.

They give him Christmas presents, which also shows, he said, "that they care about me."

Regardless of age or relationship to the family, a godparent's role is clear in Jeniphr's eyes.

"A godparent should be a support — to be there, to be someone you can always count on. Somebody to talk to, somebody to look up to," Jeniphr remarked.

Jeniphr said she is already striving to be this kind of person for her godson.

"My godparents have been role models in my eyes, so that's what I want to be to Jake. It's kind of like passing it down," Jeniphr said.

"Faith has been an important part of my life, and I hope it's an impor-



Jeniphr Fields, 17, right, enjoys the privilege of being the godmother of Jacob Volker, 2, the son of her own godmother, her aunt Rose Volker.

tant part in his. I hope (my brother and I) can set set examples for him. We've been involved in youth group, and hopefully he can do something like that someday."

Setting a good example is the reason Nicole selected a teacher of hers — Diane LaDue from Wheatland-Chili High School — as her confirmation sponsor and unofficial godparent.

"I thought of how kind she was, how she treated others. It's partially because of her that I want to become a teacher," Nicole said.

Commenting on LaDue and her three godparents, she added, "I'd like to grow up to be like all four of them."

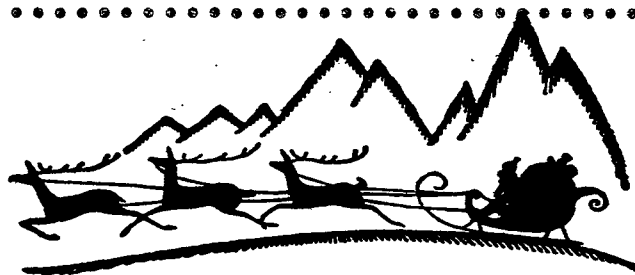


ts." (From left) her aunt and uncle, Patti and Bob Ehrmentraut, were her baptismal godparents' confirmation sponsor.

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