



"If you're happy with yourself and your situation, it's all the better," Sarah said.

For the time being, though, Nik Hall said that marriage is one of the furthest thoughts from his mind.

"Marriage is not something I put high on my list of priorities right now. It's not a very important issue in high school;

**I think what's more important is thinking about getting good grades and getting into college,"**

said Nik, 15, from Elmira's Eastside Parish. He's a sophomore at Elmira Notre Dame High School.

On the other hand, marriage is a very current topic for a couple in Rochester's 19th Ward youth group.

Carla Logan, 18, and John Zynda, 16, have been dating since the summer of 1996. Although they may not get married for at least a couple of years, they emphasized that they plan to be together for life.

John, still in his junior year at Aquinas Institute, said he's certain of his feelings toward Carla.

"We started getting closer and closer, and I thought, this is the person I want to spend the rest of my life with," John said. "I'm totally prepared to get married now, but I think it's best to wait until I at least finish high school and we could afford to live together."

Carla, also, feels comfortable about the possibility of marriage in her near future.

**"I've always wanted a lifelong relationship. I prefer it as early as possible, personally,"**

said Carla, who graduated from Nazareth Academy last June. She is currently working two jobs, and she and John both plan to attend college.

Although some friends and family members have questioned if it's wise to be married so soon, Carla stated her grandmother was 16 and her grandfather was 19 when they tied the knot — and they're still happily married.

"I don't think age matters. Love has no bounds," Carla said. Carla admitted that she's aware of the high divorce rate in the United States. She suggested that this trend exists because people are overly concerned with individual goals.

"Materialism and money — it's a dog-eat-dog world. People think, 'I have to think only of myself to survive,'" Carla said. "There's so many marriages that are falling apart."

But she and John feel they will be able to rise above this attitude.

"If you go by what other people say and do, it can do harm to your relationship. It's how you feel about each other," Carla said.

**"Relationships have to be selfless in order to survive,"** John added. "It pretty much comes

down to what people's definition of love is, and how faithful they want to be to their marriage."

"Instead of 'I, I, I' — it's got to be 'us,'" Carla said.

That element of commitment, Sarah said, is the main reason she's so thrilled about the upcoming wedding of Jodi Gardner, the 19th Ward parish's youth minister, this spring.

**"It's exciting to see two people committing themselves to each other. It's beautiful,"**

Sarah said.



Sarah Echter

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