

# Activist's passion for social justice still burns

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ITHACA — Back in 1936, Margaret Driscoll was studying at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie to become a writer.

Then she met Dorothy Day. Her encounter with the famed Catholic activist made Driscoll realize that her original career plans were about to become rerouted.

"(Day) came to speak at a Newman Club gathering. She just set fire under me; she changed my whole life," Driscoll recalled.

Driscoll decided to join Day's Catholic Worker Movement, and moved to New York City shortly after graduation to volunteer at the movement's headquarters. And more than 60 years later, the fire of activism still smolders within her.

"I have a continued passion for justice. It's an emotional thing," Driscoll said. "I think it's in me until the point I can't give anything anymore."

Driscoll, 83, currently belongs to the social ministry committee at her parish, St. Catherine of Siena in Ithaca. She is also a board member of Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier, as well as a steering committee member for the agency's new branch office in Ithaca.

Driscoll said her current concerns are centered around welfare reform; the plight of farm workers; and hunger — "especially children's hunger." She has also taken part in protests to close down the controversial School of the Americas, the U.S. Army-operated training ground in Georgia for Latin American military officers.

Driscoll said she continues to be inspired by Day, who founded the Catholic Worker in the 1930s and continued crusading until her death in 1980. The movement is dedicated to spurring Catholics into social action through dedication to pacifism and serving the poor.



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Margaret Driscoll receives some loving attention from one of her four children, Eileen Zampogna, at Margaret's Newfield home May 7.

"Having Dorothy Day as a role model — Dorothy Day held back nothing of giving of herself," Driscoll said.

After graduating from Vassar, Driscoll moved to New York City to volunteer at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, the Catholic Worker house founded by Day and Peter Maurin. It was Maurin, Driscoll recalled, who became her chief mentor.

"He educated me. He spent hours just walking up and down, talking with his hands in his pockets. I learned so much from him," Driscoll said.

It wasn't long before Driscoll was distributing *The Catholic Worker*, the movement's newspaper, at subway exits.

"I was a little farm girl from upstate New York, selling the newspaper, picketing and dealing with police," she said.

The Canandaigua native said she also got a firsthand look at the causes for which she was fighting.

"I saw the bread lines stretching around the corner. It was people who came from the dregs of society," Driscoll remarked. "I thought, 'Why were they in the situation

they were in?'"

Driscoll said she became friends with Day, but decided against devoting her life to the Catholic Worker.

"(Day) asked me to consider staying in the movement, but I had to be honest and say I wanted to get married and have a family," Driscoll said.

After nearly three years in New York, Driscoll moved to Rochester where she became active with a new Catholic Worker group. However, her activism lessened after her 1942 marriage as she raised four children while traveling extensively with her husband, Richard, a broadcaster for the Voice of America.

Driscoll and her husband retired to her current residence in Newfield, located just south of Ithaca, in 1976. Following Richard's death 14 years ago, Driscoll once again immersed herself in social ministry. In addition to her current activities, Driscoll served for six years on the diocesan Women's Commission.

Driscoll admitted that social ministry can be taxing at times. "You never feel as if you're doing enough," she said. "There are so many important issues, you begin to feel frustrated because you can't do more."

Driscoll said she has gradually come to accept the reality that no one person can solve all the world's problems. But, she said, a passage from the late Archbishop Oscar Romero's "Reflection on Ministry" keeps her motivated:

*We may never see the end results,  
but that is the difference  
between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders,  
ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets of a future that is not our own.*

"I'm scared by all this consumerism and globalization, but we are a people of hope," Driscoll concluded.

Spring Open House Sunday, May 17, Noon - 3 p.m.

## "I Fell in Love with the Incredible Value."

The French call it *joie de vivre*, or love of life. That ability to approach life joyfully and fully appreciate all that each day has to offer. Every day, residents of Chapel Oaks, Rochester's newest and finest rental retirement community, are finding the joy of retirement living. Once you've experienced life at Chapel Oaks, you may find yourself falling in love with the true joy of living all over again.

Fall in love with the *tradition* of St. Ann's of Greater Rochester, Inc., who for 125 years has provided senior adults with a truly fulfilling retirement lifestyle. The *location* of being perfectly situated on 14 beautiful, secluded acres of the St. Ann's campus and just minutes away from Rochester's finest shopping, entertainment and cultural activities. The *independence* to continue an active lifestyle without routine maintenance and tiresome daily chores. The *value* of a rental concept with no entrance fee, which makes Chapel Oaks Rochester's most affordable retirement living option. The *convenience* of exceptional services and amenities, and the spacious one- and two-bedroom

apartment homes. Or, fall in love with the *security and peace of mind* that comes from having priority access to a full continuum of health care services right on the St. Ann's campus.

Retirement is your time to seize the day and enjoy life to its fullest; to experience your "joie de vivre." Please call (716) 342-3052 for more information about Chapel Oaks or to arrange your personal tour. Once you see all that we have to offer, you may just find yourself falling in love with the true joy of living all over again!

**CHAPEL OAKS**

A GROWING TRADITION.

1550 Portland Avenue Rochester, NY 14621

(716) 342-3052

An affiliate of St. Ann's of Greater Rochester, Inc.



When you take a little retirement community, I made sure I understood the variety of options available to me. At Chapel Oaks, besides having no entrance fee, when you compare the rental fee to the amount you would have to pay for a home, it's a real value. This was a great decision for me. I love the location, the amenities, and the independence to continue an active lifestyle without routine maintenance and tiresome daily chores. The value of a rental concept with no entrance fee, which makes Chapel Oaks Rochester's most affordable retirement living option. The convenience of exceptional services and amenities, and the spacious one- and two-bedroom

nces with

hth-graders  
en School.  
serve cook-  
nce with se-

ing it, and I  
old people,"

old Geneva  
d that the  
enny Good-  
ust-listen-to  
hat she had

dancing in,  
t, but I had

a little time  
up at the

s when they  
at about an  
hard to tell

ton