

Priests make 'Skiing Saints' out of high schoolers

By Michelle Zotter
Catholic News Service

DETROIT — Fathers Joe Ferens and William Brennan want high school students to learn there's more to the world than just what's beyond their school doors in Detroit.

So for almost 40 years they've been offering youths a chance to discover and explore a part of the Rocky Mountains at almost no cost. Each year they take a group on a ski trip.

The two Detroit archdiocesan priests began taking two or three young people at a time to Aspen, Colo., in 1960, explained Father Brennan, 71, pastor of St. Sebastian Parish, a 2,200-family parish in subur-

ban Dearborn Heights.

Today the number of young people participating is 32; two groups of 16 go to Aspen in January for one week each.

The only cost to the students is transportation — by train — and souvenirs. Father Ferens, who is now retired, and Father Brennan cover the costs of lodging, food, ski rentals and instruction.

"If they can afford it, that's fine," Father Brennan told *The Michigan Catholic*, newspaper of the Detroit Archdiocese. "If not, then it doesn't make much of a difference."

Why Aspen? "It's a great place to ski," said Father Brennan, who has been skiing since he was 35. Besides, the owners of the lodge where they stay every year, Ralph and Marianne Melville, offer them big price breaks.

"They believe in this," he added. "The lodge takes what we can afford. They really like the kids. They've been good to us all these years."

In turn, the students help out at the lodge by setting the table, shoveling snow and bringing in the firewood.

Father Brennan decides which students get to go. "I choose them," he said. "Some need it, and some are just good. I see them in church."

Father Ferens said, "It's important for them to learn that there are other people in the world and to let them learn how to associate with people, to help them to grow to realize that there's more than just their own little world they live in. It gives them an opportunity for mature growth."

Forty years ago it was Father Ferens who convinced Father Brennan to go skiing.

"I started skiing when I was invited out by two priests, and then I bugged him all year to come out," Father Ferens recalled. "He wouldn't do it. The following year he said, 'OK, I'll just try it.' I told him that if

he didn't like it, I wouldn't bug him anymore. We went out one time and he was hooked."

Father Brennan enjoyed it so much that he thought it would be a great experience for youths, too. He thought "it would give kids something to hang on to," he said.

Three sets of parents are also asked along to chaperone. They also help with the cooking.

"In the last few years, we've saved money on food," Father Brennan said. "We cook our own dinner." Their meals include spaghetti, hot dogs and lasagna.

For easy identification, each student is given a matching blue ski jacket that Father Brennan provides for them. Embroidered on each one is "Skiing Saints," which was Father Ferens' idea.

Once the jackets have served their purpose, Father Brennan donates them to the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Most of the money for the trips is raised by Father Brennan, who builds and sells grandfather clocks and other handicrafts. He builds the clocks in his garage. He also built the altar and pulpit in his church.

The clocks take about two months to make. Three of them are the major prizes in the parish festival's raffle every May.

Money also comes in from people they

meet on their trips.

"In fact, one year, I don't even know this guy, but he saw the kids and he sent me \$2,000," he recalled. "It says to me that people are impressed. The kids behave themselves and they're courteous."

Some of the same kids can go to Aspen up to four times "if they behave themselves," he said. "But we have new ones every year. It's not strictly from the parish."

Father Ferens added, "They experience and meet people from all over the country and so there's different cultures, ideas, and it helps them to grow up and give them something they can't receive by living in one area."

Father Brennan receives many letters of gratitude from the students.

One from Laura VanAssche said, "I am a true believer that experiences build on each other and help to create the inner person. In life, we are exposed to so many experiences. Sometimes, however, some are out of our reach. That is, until it lands right on your lap because someone thought you were special enough to be exposed to something."

By being asked to go to Aspen, Father Brennan "enabled me to climb a mountain and come down a better person," he added.

Thoughts to Consider



EDWIN SULEWSKI

Funeral Director

When a pet dies, what can I do for my child?

A child may be quite upset when a pet dies. One way you can help is to plan a ceremony with the child for saying goodbye. A pet funeral gives the child a feeling of being in control and allows him to express some feelings about the loss. Finding a box to place the pet in, digging a grave, and holding a ceremony also satisfies a child's natural curiosity about the physical aspects of death.

When a pet dies a child may continue to be sad for several days then, as a rule, they turn their attention to other matters. Listen to your child when he expresses his feelings and be available to answer any questions your child might have.

SCHAUMAN-SULEWSKI FUNERAL HOME

2100 St. Paul Street, Rochester

(716) 342-3400

MIDTOWN MANOR APARTMENTS

(For Age 50 and Older)

Studio: \$290
One Bedroom: \$359



- Convenient Downtown Location
- Walk to Shopping • On Direct Busline
- All Utilities Included • Laundry • Intercom System
- Free Wegman's Bus • Cable TV
- 24 Hour Emergency Maintenance • Section 8 Accepted

475 East Broad Street, Rochester
(716) 546-3650

Unity offers help with Medicare forms, insurance issues

GREECE — Senior citizens having difficulty with Medicare forms or who have other health insurance concerns, can obtain free assistance every other Wednesday at Park Ridge Hospital, 1555 Long Pond Road.

Trained volunteers will assist seniors with completing Medicare claim forms or making appeals regarding Medicare payments. Information is also available on

health insurance and medical bills.

To schedule an appointment for this free and confidential service, call 716/274-7810.

This service is being offered by Unity Health System — an alliance of St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester and Park Ridge — in cooperation with the Health Advocacy Service, a coalition of health and senior citizens groups.



Ev - olu - tion (ev' e-loo 'shen):

To develop gradually; to reach a highly developed state by a process of growth and change

You've known Sage Ruttly for over 80 years as one of Rochester's oldest and most trusted investment firms. In addition to the traditional brokerage services, we are now proud to provide our clients and Rochester area Professionals these additional services available from our local advisory staff:

- Pre-Retirement Analysis and Planning
- Estate Planning Strategies and Implementation
- Asset Allocation and Portfolio Development
- Tax Analysis, Planning and Preparation
- Long Term Care Insurance
- Trust Services
- Fee Based Asset Management
- Fee Based Mutual Fund Management
- Retirement Plans
- Cash Flow Analysis
- Insurance Trusts
- Elder Care Services

For a complimentary, no obligation appointment, Please call our President, Wayne F. Holly at 232-3760

SageRuttly
And Company, Inc.

183 East Main Street
Rochester, New York

23 Coach Street
Canandaigua, New York

Creating and Preserving Wealth for Generations
Members NASD, SIPC

A SPECIAL PLACE CALLED HOME

- Fully furnished accommodations and comfortable common rooms
- Delicious & nutritious meals served to you each day
- Security • Transportation • Activities

Personal Care Assistance... a blend of concern, patience & skill monitoring medication, assisting with the activities of daily living including bathing and dressing, with a professional staff, always available, 24 hours a day.

Senior Quarters
Assisted Living Residence

AT GREECE RIDGE & PENFIELD

716-225-3010

716-381-0282

150 TOWNGATE ROAD
ROCHESTER, NY

2006 FIVE MILE LINE ROAD
PENFIELD, NY

Formerly known as Town Gate Manor and Town Gate East

Call 1-800-986-5800 for information about Senior Quarters locations throughout the U.S.A.
Visit us on the internet at <http://www.seniorquarters.com>