

ON THE MOVE

SPINA

Alanna Gottshall understands all too well the old saying, "too close for comfort."
 "I need my space. I don't like people right on top of me; otherwise, I get uptight," said Alanna, 16, a parishioner at St. Michael's Church in Penn Yan.
 "I have so many things on my mind. And if a person stands too close, I can't think anymore," she explained. "I'd be too self-conscious. I could maybe say hi or hello,

* Most people can handle strangers squeezed closely at their sides, but not closely in front of them.

but not have an actual conversation. That person would be too close — way too close."
 Alanna admitted that she erects a protective barrier when she doesn't know a person by keeping a physical distance of at least a few feet.
 "You never know what's on their mind.

You don't know what they might do," she said.
 Alanna was one of a number of diocesan teens who said in interviews for this article that "personal space" is important to them. According to Robert Sommer, author of *Personal Space: The Behavioral Basis of Design*, personal space refers to "an area with invisible boundaries surrounding a person's body into which intruders may not come."

* Students overcrowd at tables in cafeterias much more frequently than in libraries.

Teens said differing settings, moods and familiarity with the people involved all affect how big that area is.
 Alanna, for example, allowed her personal space to shrink during a diocesan retreat in early May. There, Alanna said that she trusted the other participants enough to sit close to them and hug them.
 "We were all in the same mind frame, we were all there for the same reason," Alanna said.
 Paul Reimringer said he feels that sense of community at his youth-group meetings, where he often greets other teens with hugs. However, he said he

* If the first two people to occur sit on opposite ends, it is much more likely that the middle will go unoccupied.

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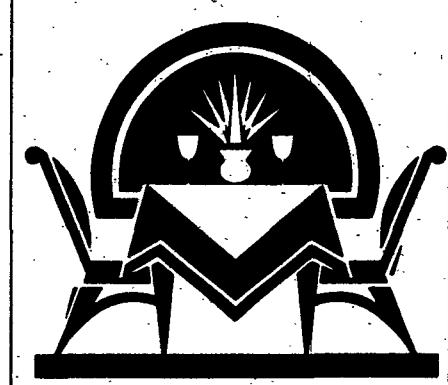
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