

## DIOCESAN NEWS

## AIDS camp gives kids break from daily battles

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

MIDDLESEX — Lisa, 11, grinned as she talked about her week at Camp Koinonia, where she and other children swam, hiked, sang and made arts and crafts items.

"We got to go in the woods and see the little animals," Lisa said, adding that she saw a salamander.

Meanwhile, Keith, 14, a junior counselor at the camp, said it was fun watching out for the younger children like Lisa.

"They think I'm fun, and they look up to me," he said.

Lisa and Keith were among 33 children, ages 6 to 16, and their family members who attended the "Camp S.O.A.R. (Safe Opportunity for children affected by AIDS to Recreate and Relax)" program at Koinonia during the week of July 27-31. The camp's primary sponsor was AIDS Services, an office of Diocesan Catholic Charities' Community and Residential Services.

All the campers were either HIV-positive or came from families where at least one member had the virus or had developed AIDS. Due to privacy concerns, for this story the *Catholic Courier* agreed to identify campers only by first names.

Lisa's smile as she talked about hiking in the woods seemed to epitomize what Camp S.O.A.R.'s director, Janey Hallinen, was hoping to see on all her campers' faces.

"Our whole aim is to let kids be kids," said Hallinen, AIDS services director for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Rochester, Inc.

Hallinen noted most of the campers were from the city of Rochester and had rarely, if ever, spent time in the country.



Greg Francis/Staff Photographer  
Camp S.O.A.R. (A Safe Opportunity for Children affected by AIDS to Recreate and Relax) counselor Ulises, right, plays in pool with Justin, 7, July 27 at Camp Koinonia, Italy Valley.

"Some have seen woodchucks, deer, things they've never seen before," she said.

She added that many of them come from homes where they must take care of a parent or sibling with AIDS.

"(AIDS) robs them of their childhood," Hallinen said of the children. "They can't

participate in activities that would be a normal part of childhood. They have to get home early to make dinner or take care of others. Sometimes, they can be as young as 7 or 8, and they can be responsible for a younger sibling. Sometimes they're responsible for reminding their parents to

take their medication."

Hallinen said that while other camping programs for children with AIDS exist, Camp S.O.A.R. was unique because it was targeted at both children with HIV and/or AIDS and family members who didn't have the virus. She added that putting together different families affected by AIDS made everyone feel more comfortable than they might in their own communities.

"AIDS is about secrets," she said. "Many of these kids can't disclose to their friends that someone in their family is affected."

She added that AIDS services is hoping to slate other activities throughout the next year, like rollerskating parties and picnics, for the campers.

Hallinen pointed out that Camp S.O.A.R. received wide community support. About 50 volunteers made the camp a reality, she said, adding that AIDS Services was one of nine Rochester area agencies that helped get the camp off the ground. Meanwhile, she said, Camp S.O.A.R. received extensive support from the Joan and Harold Feinbloom Support Foundation, which gave the program \$10,000. Other donors included the Joey DePaolo Foundation; The Beautiful Fund; Musica Spei/Stephen Marcus; St. Mary's Church in Scottsville; St. Ann's and St. Augustine churches in Rochester; Irondequoit Dodge; and Mr. and Mrs. David Pratt.

Naomi, Keith's mother — who is HIV-positive — volunteered in the camp kitchen, and said it was worth it to see the children simply enjoy themselves.

"For a minute, they just want to be kids, and to not have that responsibility for taking care of anybody, but to be taken care of," she said.

## Interfaith group learns that Israel's home to diverse views

By Kathleen Schwar  
Staff writer

JERUSALEM — The Western Wall was so close, yet so far away at 15 minutes to midnight.

The 23 pilgrims on the Interfaith Leadership Mission to Israel agreed to turn back rather than visit the Wall for the second time in two days, their bus caught in a traffic gridlock most of the time since leaving dinner in an Arab village restaurant at 10:30 p.m.

Sunset that day, Saturday Aug. 1, had marked the start of Tisha B'av, the holiday mourning tragedies, including the destruction of the two Temples. Jews were thronging to the Wall to recite the Book of Lamentations.

On the Rochesterians' bus there was disappointment, but not quite lamentation over missing this experience. Many of the pilgrims showed signs of exhaustion from a full Friday afternoon and evening: walking the Via Dolorosa, where Jesus carried his cross; praying at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Jesus was crucified and resurrected; and at the Wall.

Friday marked the first day of an 11-day mission by the pilgrims to see the Holy Land through each others' eyes and to further their understanding of each other. The interfaith group of Christians and Jews is being led by Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Rabbi Alan Katz of Brighton's Temple Sinai. Rochester Mayor William Johnson, an American Baptist, had also been sched-

uled to lead the group, but he was forced to cancel following his father's death July 26.

Virtually no Jew can deny the pull of Tisha B'av at the Wall, noted an editorial in the Aug. 2 *Jerusalem Post*. "The Wall and what it represents has transcended its religious function and is one of the most powerful of nationalist symbols, uniting Jews from all over ..."

Further, it had bonded the interfaith mission group late Friday, its first night in Israel. Christian and Jewish women shed tears after approaching the Wall, then respectfully backed away to hug and wish one another a "Shabat Shalom." The men approached the Wall, the last remnant of the Temple, on the other side of a barrier. Father Dan Tormey prayed wearing a yarmulke. Father Peter Deckman asked him to wear while there.

Father Tormey said he had to keep saying "Jerusalem" to remind himself he was really there, fulfilling a longtime dream of visiting Israel.

On Aug. 1 they listened to three lectures at the Laromme Hotel, where the pilgrims were staying: first a rabbi on Zionism, then two Christian Arabs; and finally a nun dedicated to teaching about the Holocaust. Noting the numerous experiences in just a short time in Israel, Bishop Clark said he was feeling "the jumble of it."

"It really gave you a symbolic sense of all the things you have to deal with and the issues here," he said. "One of the themes running through my mind is the complexity of life, as all the people who spoke to us

try to work it out."

Bishop Clark said he had tried to put himself in the shoes of Christian Arab Rizek Abusharr, one of the speakers.

Abusharr, Jerusalem-born director general of the Jerusalem International YMCA and a Presbyterian, spoke to the group along with Hanna Siniora, a Catholic who publishes the *Jerusalem Times*, the only Palestinian English-language newspaper. Siniora also is chair of the Palestinian American Chamber of Commerce.

Abusharr told of trying to worship in the Palestinian Arab town of Bethlehem one Sunday with his wife and friends two months earlier, but being stopped at a checkpoint.

"The soldier said Bethlehem is closed today," he recalled. "I said, if I go back, make my name Moshe Cohen, put a kippah on my head, would that be acceptable?"

"They said, 'That is different.' I said that is unacceptable to me.

"The trust we were hoping would be established between the communities has not occurred," he said, adding later that he did not think Israel will ever be a truly pluralistic society. "People tend to be nationalistic, holding on to what is dear to their hearts and minds — faith, national, ethnic background, whatever."

Meanwhile Christian Arabs continue to leave the country. About 1 million of Israel's 6 million people are non-Jews and in that minority Arab Christians are second to Muslim Arabs — 17 percent and 75 percent of that 1 million, respectively.

"What keeps Abusharr and Siniora here?" someone asked.

"Everybody knows me, everybody says hi," Siniora answered simply. "This is where I belong."

For any Jew, Israel is the "single most physically dangerous place in the world to live," said Rabbi Levi Lauer of the Shalom Hartman Institute, who spoke earlier Saturday. He spoke of his own passion for the country, of his 11 years in a combat artillery unit and the continuing threats.

"Our neighbors are not Norway, the Danes and the Swedes," Rabbi Lauer said.

Israel has to recognize "we will never be what we were supposed to be," he also said, and for its future must not only sustain itself "in a bad neighborhood," but build a culture that respects diversity. "We must also recognize we will never be what we were meant to be," he said.

"Most Jews no longer believe that the God of the Jews is capable of manipulating human history. ... And the Halakah code of Jewish law ... that stipulates which shoelace to tie first, that is no longer operative either to most Jews.

"But we do not have anything (else) in place, so we are left with an irresolvable dilemma."

Sister Joan Sobala, SSJ, said she picked up a common theme of restraint in hearing the four speakers, including Sister Gemma Del Duca, SC, of the Catholic Institute for Holocaust Studies.

"Restraint, for the sake of the common good, is built into life (in Israel)," Sister Sobala said. "It is different in our society. We're a go-getter society, an instantaneous society.

"Seek peace in your own place and pursue it in another," she said, quoting Psalm 38 as presented by Sister Del Duca.

"That requires not only enthusiasm, energy, but also self-restraint."

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EDITORS' NOTE: Catholic Courier staff writer Kathleen Schwar and photographer Greg Francis are accompanying the group. They will provide additional coverage in the next two weeks.

## Recognizing

\* Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier June 10 honored 18 people for more than 200 years of combined service to their parishes and communities: **Brendan Curtin, Mary and John Schmidt, St. Patrick Parish, Elmira; Joan Nickerson, Karen White, St. Mary Our Mother Parish, Horseheads; Marilyn Zazzarra, Mary Dougherty, St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Elmira Heights; Dorothy Kubinski, Mildred Malnoski, Evelyn Gural, St. Casimir Parish, Elmira; Betty Engel, Sacred Heart Parish, Perkinsville; Sister Jude Rockenbrock, RSM, St. Ann Parish, Hornell; Joe Bucci, Mary and Bill Norton, Bill Wayne, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Elmira; Ed Derenthal, St. Patrick Parish, Elmira; and Margaret Driscoll, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ithaca.**

Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580) Vol. 109 No. 46 August 6, 1998

Published weekly except the first Thursday in January.

Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.