

Now on the



In her first two years of high school, Liz Sands has found herself involved with different cliques.

At first, she said, she belonged to a tiny and rather quiet group of friends. She has since become part of a clique with fellow members of the school band, and another through her involvement in athletics. And she has enjoyed all of these associations.

"You feel acceptance, security, a sense of belonging. It can help your self-esteem," said Liz, 16, a parishioner at St. Jude's Church in Gates. She's beginning her junior year at Gates-Chili High School.

Cliques — small, exclusive circles of friends — are a regular and often vital part of the high-school social scene, according to teens interviewed for this story. Jonathan Schwartzmeyer, for one, asserted that cliques enable you to "have better friends."

"They know you more, and they have more in common with you," said

Jonathan, 17, from St. Columba/St. Patrick Parish in Caledonia and Mumford. He's a senior at Caledonia-Mumford High School.

Virginia Gorak said that finding a clique was a big priority for her a year ago, when she was a

freshman at Greece Olympia High School.

"In the beginning you're in a new school with new people, so you try to

hang out with the same people and don't want to know anyone else," said Virginia, 14, from St. Charles Borromeo Church in Greece.

Virginia's clique included people who share her love for music and art. However, Virginia said, the urge to cling to this group decreased as she adapted to her environment.

"I talk to everybody now, so I'm not in one clique anymore," she said.

Meanwhile, Jonathan said he belongs to a clique that attends church retreats and talks openly about religion. But he also enjoys spending time with what he terms his "regular" group of friends — people that may not be defined as any particular clique.

"We just hang out and stuff," he said.

Jonathan added that he doesn't think it's a good idea to get wrapped up in one clique.

"If you become too insulated, you might think there's only one way of living," he said. "It can make you one-sided; you might only have one point of view. (But) you can understand things better if you know more people and have a better understanding of them."

Yet Liz cautioned that not every clique has attractive qualities.

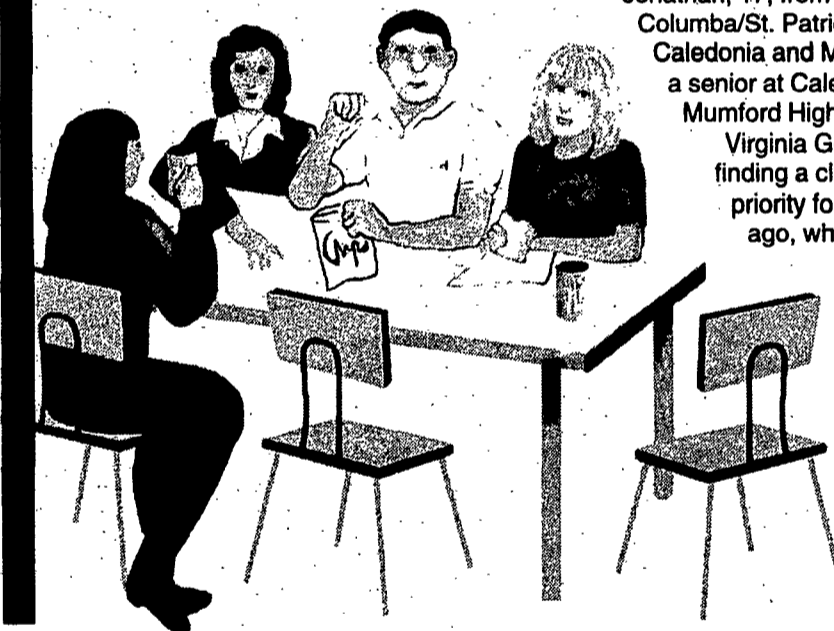
"Cliques can definitely seem superficial and snobby," Liz said. "They dress a certain way, talk a certain way, act a certain way."

Some of those actions, she noted, can include cruel put-downs of people who were deemed unworthy of the clique. And that's where Liz draws the line, saying that she will only belong to a clique "as long as it isn't really hurting anyone."

Exclusion of outsiders is the main reason that Pamela Snyder dislikes the whole concept of cliques.

"I feel like a lot of people are left out at school. I think it's stupid," remarked Pamela, 16, from St. Mary's Church in Bath. She's a sophomore at Haverling High School.

Pamela said the popular crowd at her school can be identified by their attire.



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