

## Visit to missions gives women new perspective

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

A lot of people in this country know how poor the people are in the Third World, according to Sarah Norton, a 19-year-old occupational therapy major at Keuka College in Penn Yan. But after traveling to Brazil this summer, Norton says she now knows how wealthy the people are as well.

"They were poor by American standards," Norton said of the material lot of the Brazilians she met. "But they were rich in faith in God and in their sense of family and in their devotion to the church. They're one of the richest people I know as far as their values and their sense of commitment."

Norton was one of five lay women students from Keuka and St. John Fisher College who traveled to Brazil Aug. 11-21 with Sister Joana Mendes, a Brazilian Sister of St. Joseph currently studying at Nazareth College in Rochester.

The women were also accompanied by Brigid Hetzler, 23, a physical therapist at Monroe Community Hospital in Rochester; and Marie Wilkins, 72, a parishioner at St. Michael's Church in Penn Yan.

The women stayed with missionary Sisters of St. Joseph working in villages outside of Brazil's second largest city, Goiania, which lies in the northwestern state of Goias. The women shadowed the sisters during their work there, they said, visiting villagers and sharing their daily lives.

Hetzler pointed out that the average family of five in Goias lives on \$150 a month, and Norton added that the Brazilians she met often held such jobs as vendors. However, Norton added that there is a growing middle class in Brazil, and that she knew of some people in the region she visited who held white-collar positions as computer salespersons. Indeed, Norton spoke of a world of paradoxes, where people often live in homes with such modern devices as televisions while still washing their clothes by hand.

Among her many activities while there, Norton said she helped one family make kites; cleaned up a church; and visited some schools, a pottery shop, and some elderly Brazilians.

Hetzler said she had been particularly interested in finding out about physical therapy in Brazil. She found that no schools in the region she visited taught physical therapy. In fact, she said, little health care is available at all. Only one clinic was at hand to serve 130,000 people, she said of the area she visited. She added that she saw another health clinic that catered to wealthy Brazilians that would nonethe-



less be considered substandard for U.S. citizens.

"There were no ventilation systems, no sterilization," she said of the clinic for the wealthy. "I didn't have to mask or glove when I went into the intensive care unit."

But both Hetzler and Norton said they were struck by the strong faith of the Brazilians, who made up in religious devotion what they may have lacked materially. In particular, both young women were struck by the important role young adults and teenagers played in the Brazilian Catholic Church, and they both noted that young people led Communion services while they were there.

"I believe that the youth are a real asset to the community," Norton said, adding that such youth participation is essential to a Brazilian church that suffers a serious priest shortage.

The women's trip was funded in part by the Diocesan Missions Office as well as their home parishes and their campus ministry offices, according to Brigid's mother, Deirdre McKiernan Hetzler, one of the trip's organizers, and a campus minister at St. John Fisher. The women helped to pay for the trip as well out of their own pockets, she said. McKiernan Hetzler added that she wants to organize another trip for college students to Brazil in August 1999.

Wilkins was the one who came up with the idea of sending young people to Brazil because she has worked on a newsletter connecting missionaries with diocesan Catholics, she said. The newsletter had been the brainchild of Father Peter Deck-

man and his former co-pastor Charlie Mulligan, who left the priesthood this year to marry. Father Deckman co-pastors St. Michael's with Father Brian C. Cool. Mulligan and Father Deckman both had served in Latin American missions, and inspired Wilkins to help them connect diocesan Catholics with missionaries, she said.

Wilkins said she wants more young people to travel to the church's foreign missions to inspire them to serve there, and to come back to their home parishes and participate in small Christian community life.

Apparently, her dream has already borne some fruit in Brigid Hetzler's mind. Hetzler, who will marry in June of next year, said she and her fiance plan to donate money they would have spent on wed-

ding reception favors for guests to help the people of Curiciba, the village she stayed in. Her guests will receive a card at her wedding indicating that a donation has been made, she said.

She added that she has already presented an informational show on her visit to her fellow hospital workers.

"One of the most important things you can do is make people aware of the situation," she said.

Norton shared Hetzler's sentiments. "People need to be informed how people live in the rest of the world, and not just in the U.S.," she said. "I think we have to appreciate how lucky we are. In Brazil, there isn't a lot of money, so they make do with what they have."

### Young Adult Events

Unless otherwise indicated, for information on the following events, call the hotline for Odyssey, the diocesan-sponsored young adults network, at 716/328-3228 or 1-800-388-7177, then press 1-5-375. You can also find information at the Odyssey Web page at <http://www.ggw.org/odyssey/>.

◆ **Friday, Oct. 30:** Peggy Wegman and James D. Ryan will talk about the Wegman Inner City Voucher Program (WIN) for the families of six diocesan inner city schools at the Last Friday Luncheon, sponsored by the Catholic Leadership Forum. The luncheon will take place from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Genesee Valley Club, 421 East Ave., Rochester. Cost: \$12. Reservations are required. Call Nancy Nash at 716/328-3228, ext. 278.

◆ **Saturday, Oct. 31:** Odyssey will host an evening Halloween Party at Rand Lodge in Powder Mill Park

in Mendon. Call the hotline for information.

◆ **Tuesday, Nov. 3:** Between 10 and 15 young adults are needed from 6-8:30 p.m. at the Blessed Sacrament Supper Program, 534 Oxford St., Rochester. Volunteers are needed to prepare meals, serve dinner, organize stock and clean up. Odyssey will also be organizing volunteer nights at Blessed Sacrament on Dec. 15, Jan. 26, March 9, April 20 and June 1.

◆ **Friday, Nov. 6:** "Bowling Night Out" at Clover Lanes, 2750 Monroe Ave., Brighton. Cost for two games and shoe rental is \$6; \$5 without shoe rental. Additional games are \$2 each. Reservations needed by Nov. 5.

◆ **Thursday, Dec. 31:** New Year's Eve Party at Lakeshore Country Club, 1165 Greenleaf Road, Greece. Tickets cost \$48 and include dinner; three-hour open bar; champagne toast at midnight; and a disc jockey. Reservations needed by Dec. 1.



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