

Marriage

New program aids those previously married

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Lou Rivellino and his fiancée, Carolyn, had already been through two marriages each. As they planned their Oct. 2 wedding last year, Lou recalled, they wanted some reassurance that they were on the right track.

"After being married twice, you kind of have your doubts occasionally. It's a scary situation. (You wonder) is it going to work out this time?" Lou commented.

As it turned out, the Rivellinos were ideal candidates for a first-year diocesan program, New Again.

New Again is designed for engaged couples in which one or both individuals have been previously married — divorced or widowed. Those who are divorced must have already had an annulment, or be in the process of obtaining an annulment.

The program helps couples identify strengths as well as challenges as they again head into marriage, according to Maribeth Mancini, diocesan director of evangelization and catechesis.

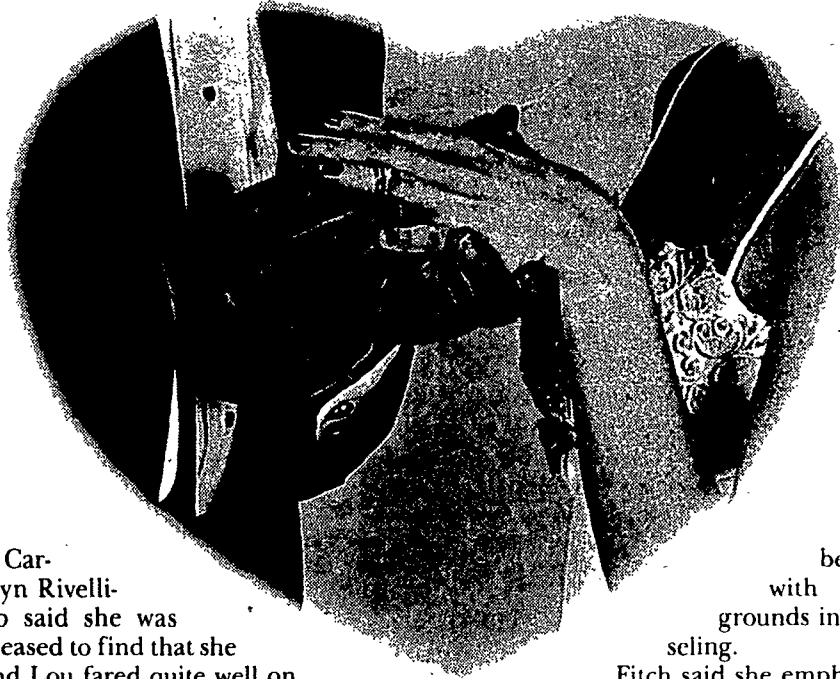
"It's for those couples where ordinary marriage preparation isn't appropriate. The couples may have been married before, they may have had children. That raises different questions," Mancini said. "It's not that marriage preparation doesn't address some of these questions. It just doesn't address them all."

New Again is offered as a complement — rather than a replacement — for the required marriage preparation process. Parish pastoral ministers can refer couples to New Again as a first step in the process.

Each couple meets for two sessions with a trained pre-marriage adviser, who works with the copyrighted Prepare/Enrich marriage inventory tool.

The couple and adviser examine such topics as marriage expectations; personality issues; communication; conflict resolution; finance management; leisure; sexual relationships; children and parenting; family and friends; and spiritual beliefs.

Following completion of the New Again sessions, the adviser submits a report to the pastoral minister. From there, the pastoral minister determines whether the couple should go on to regular marriage preparation, or further specialized counseling or programs.



Carolyn Rivellino said she was pleased to find that she and Lou fared quite well on the questions they were asked.

"It showed us we were going to be compatible, and if problems did arise, we were going to be able to work it out," said Carolyn, 60. She and her husband, 68, are parishioners at St. Mary of the Lake Church in Ontario.

New Again was also an effective tool for George and Joan Hainsworth, who had both been widowed.

"It draws attention to a lot of things. You take time to think about it — your children, what are they thinking," said George, who noted that he and Joan both have children from their former marriages.

Even though the Hainsworths didn't feel they'd have major difficulties, going through the New Again process was a nice confidence boost, Joan said.

"It probably affirms what you had a feeling of all along. It's a great affirmer," Joan remarked. She and George were married Oct. 10, 1998, at St. Patrick's Church in Victor.

Both the Rivellinos and Hainsworths worked with Donna Fitch, one of 10 pre-marriage advisers in the diocese. Most of these advisers are parish staff mem-

said Sister Karen Dietz, SSJ, who oversees New Again in her role as diocesan coordinator of sacramental catechesis. "We also want couples to acknowledge that marriage is hard work, and the choice of marriage in the church is a conscious choice."

As is the case with other marriage preparation programs, Deacon Warren Rutan remarked, New Again helps couples probe deeply into their relationship.

"The primary thing is to help them communicate with each other to show them where they think and act alike, and where they think and act differently — and to use their communication to examine their differences, to understand and accept them," said Deacon Rutan, parish deacon at St. John the Evangelist Church in Newark Valley. He serves as a pre-marriage adviser in the Southern Tier.

Deacon Rutan emphasized that pre-marriage advisers are not the final authorities on marriage issues; rather, they're just one step of the process.

"I have to be careful of what I say, because I am not a certified professional marriage counselor. But I can steer them toward a marriage program or pastor," Deacon Rutan said.

Most of the pre-marriage advisers have worked with anywhere from one to five couples since New Again was launched last summer. One adviser, Father William Donnelly, gave the program a big thumbs-up.

"It appears to be very user-friendly for somebody who has been married before or is blending families," said Father Donnelly, pastor at St. Mary's Church in Rochester. "It indicates whether there might be some additional work; it gives a clear direction."



bers with backgrounds in counseling.

Fitch said she emphasizes to New Again couples that marriage cannot be taken lightly.

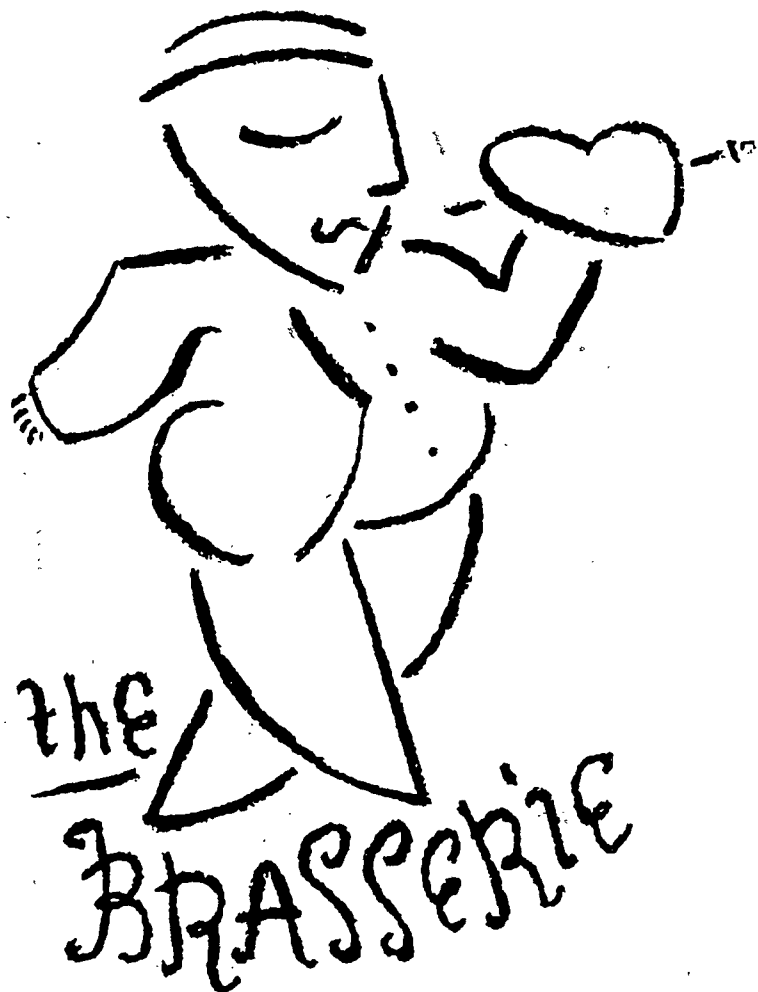
"The bottom line is, two people must be committed to this marriage. Our goal is to help couples realize the commitment they're making," said Fitch, who serves as pastoral associate at St. Patrick's Church in Macedon. Her husband, Deacon Jim Fitch of Holy Rosary Church in Rochester, is also a pre-marriage adviser.

Mancini pointed out that commitment cannot be over-stressed when dealing with New Again participants, many of whom have been divorced at least once.

"Fifty percent of all marriages fail, and a higher percentage of second marriages fail," Mancini remarked.

"We want to improve that statistic,"

The radiance, the rarity of diamonds represent lifelong commitment. Perhaps you'd be more comfortable with a creme brulee approach.



for your special wedding events.

387 East Main Street, Rochester, New York 14604, 232-3350

Wedding Guide

Fioravanti Florist

For that one special occasion you'll want perfection.

2279 Clifford Ave. (near Culver) (716) 482-1001

DAN'S CRAFTS & THINGS

352 EMPIRE BLVD., ROCHESTER, NY 14609
716-654-8388 • SAVE • DO IT YOURSELF!

- Wedding Accessories
- Ribbons
- Headpieces
- Instruction Books
- Cake Tops
- Silk Flowers
- Bridal Bouquets
- Favor Supplies
- Veling

The Perfect Setting... for the Perfect Wedding

Package start at \$44.95
Choice dates still available in 1999 and 2000

Vanoyards • 2287 Turk Hill Road, Fairport, NY • (716) 223-4210

Brides

Gift Registry
Lamps
Decorative
Accessories
Attendant's Gifts
Gift Certificates

The Shadee Lady

LAMPS • SHADES • GIFTS • REPAIRS

"one convenient location"

50 State St.
Northfield Common • Pittsford
Mon.-Fri. 10-5, Sat. 10-3
385-7559