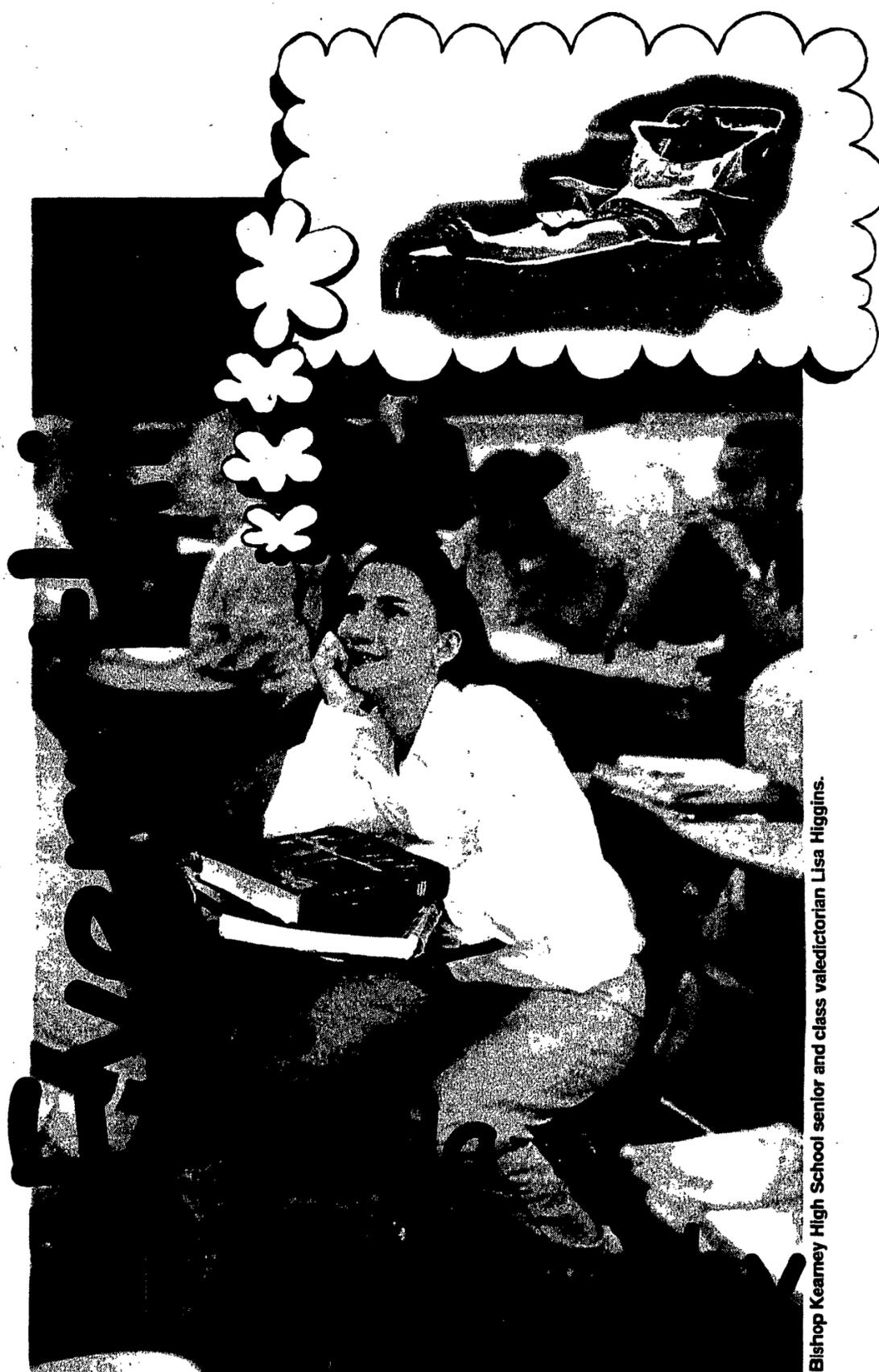


# ON THE MOVE



Bishop Kearney High School senior and class valedictorian Lisa Higgins.

Story by Mike Latona · Photos by Greg Francis

Senior ball. Senior picnic. Graduation. Parties. Preparing for college.

Throw in some nice weather, and you have all the conditions for a syndrome that peaks at this time of year: senioritis.

The disease has engulfed Stephanie Putnam, who said she catches herself daydreaming in class thinking, "Two more periods and I get to go home."

"There's not as much effort this year. From spring break on, I tried to push myself in school because I don't want to just get by. But when it's nice weather, I'd rather be outside doing fun stuff with my friends," said Stephanie, 17, a parishioner at Church of the Epiphany in Sodus. She graduates this month from Williamson High School.

Lisa Higgins, senior class valedictorian at Bishop Kearney High School, is certainly no slacker. But with her studies largely behind her, she said, the pressure to excel simply isn't there.

"You're in that so relaxed state. You don't care if things are getting done. Everything is kind of floating by," said Lisa, 18, from St. John of Rochester Church in Perinton.

Meanwhile, Dana Jarzyniecki said she's been counting the days to her June 19 graduation from Aquinas Institute.

"It's just a feeling, you can't wait to get out. It's just such excitement, to go on to something bigger and better," remarked Dana, from Our Mother of Sorrows Church in Greece.

Dana said that school administrators appear to

have sympathy for students stricken with senioritis. Earlier this year, she recalled, seniors were allowed to leave school one day after morning Mass.

"It's a lot more fun. Seniors seem to have a lot more freedom," Dana said.

Kearney senior Christopher Bush agreed that this is a time when seniors revel in shedding their responsibilities.

"It's almost like you're treating these last two months nonchalantly because in the fall, you're going to have to buckle down again," said Christopher, from Holy Spirit Church in Penfield.

Stephanie noted that she relaxed her commitment to softball this spring and went out for track instead.

"It's something different," she said, explaining that if she hadn't been a senior, she would have felt obligated to stick with softball.

Senioritis can also lead to a thriving party atmosphere — and a tendency to party too hard. Lisa said that her high school had scheduled two events this spring to draw attention to the dangers of drinking and driving.

"They might help make an impact for some people," she said.

Stephanie already knows she won't be tempted to drink. She's joining the Navy this September, so she plans to keep a clean slate.

"If I mess up now, I'm done," she said.

However, others in Stephanie's senior class may not be as cautious. On a recent weekend night, she said, seniors camped out at the Williamson High

School yard but the event was tainted because some seniors brought alcohol.

"It made a lot of us mad, because school officials had put a lot of trust in us," she said.

On the positive end, Stephanie said, many of the seniors mingled while camping and seemed to be moving beyond the cliques that had separated them for years.

"That's why it was so good. Everybody was one," Stephanie commented.

Lisa and Steve Hessel have seen bonds develop among their BK senior class as well, saying they now spend time with classmates they haven't socialized with in years past.

"One kid, I had thought he was a junior. Now we're friends," said Steve, 17, who attends Rochester's St. John the Evangelist Church (Humboldt Street).

Steve said that graduation time brings on mixed feelings.

"You're psyched for college but you're saying, 'Man, I've got just a few weeks left with these kids,'" Steve remarked.

Lisa said that friends at her lunch table recently brought in a cake to commemorate their final days together. And Christopher said he often catches himself saying "This is the last time I'll ..."

Lurking behind all this excitement, Dana agreed, is a tinge of melancholy at graduation.

"There will be sadness when the day comes," she said.

COMING NEXT WEEK: Young cancer survivor