

a Young

Center employee is a STAR to elderly clients

Story by Rob Cullivan

Photo by Mike Mergen

ROCHESTER — In order to find her life, Maureen K. Murphy, 29, had to seek it among the dead — The Grateful Dead, that is.

Murphy, a parishioner and lector at Blessed Sacrament Church, currently serves as assistant manager of Catholic Family Center's Support To Aged Residents Program (STAR). The program assigns case aides or volunteers to senior citizens who need help living at home.

It's a job, Murphy said, that echoes her earlier experience as a worker with Franciscan Volunteer Ministry, which places lay volunteers in soup kitchens, parishes and other Catholic centers. Murphy learned about the program after truckin' down to Buffalo to see the Dead almost a decade ago.

As Dead guitarist/singer Jerry Garcia and company jammed away on stage, Murphy found herself talking to a friend of a friend who had just completed a year of service as a Franciscan volunteer. On a napkin, Murphy jotted down the name and address of the ministry program and eventually wound up becoming a volunteer herself. She spent 1992-93 at a Buffalo parish doing outreach work among parishioners, refugees and the homeless.

"During that year, it felt like the hardest thing you could ever do," she said, noting she lived on a \$75 monthly stipend along with free room and board.

However, looking back, she sees the time as a "luxury" because she had no worries about climbing the corporate

ladder, paying rent, or generally playing the career game. Her entire life, she said, was devoted to service. And although she no longer can afford the luxury of living on virtually nothing, she said she still feels a calling to serve others through the STAR program.

"What I like best about (Catholic Family Center) is that I really feel the people here are walking the walk," she said, noting that the Diocesan Catholic Charities agency is carrying out the church's call to serve the poor.



As STAR's assistant manager, Murphy oversees the program's day-to-day operations. STAR aides and volunteers provide clients help with transportation for banking, grocery shopping, medical appointments and other essential errands.

Clients are divided into two categories, "regular" and "on-call," she said. Regular clients need repeated assistance, whereas on-call clients only need occasional help. In both cases, she said, not only do clients get help, but their families who take care of them get a much-needed break from helping their elders.

Currently, STAR serves 1,200 people age 65 and older. Murphy said she's glad she's working with the elderly because they're a population often hidden in the world of social work where the plight of children is more often highlighted.

"I really believe that the elderly are overlooked," Murphy said. "The elderly shaped this century. The folks that we're dealing with have made the 20th

century what it is, and truly deserve to be treated well."

Treating people well is one of the church's core teachings, and Murphy said that believing in the commandment to love thy neighbor is one of the reasons she's remained a practicing Catholic when many of her friends have discontinued. She added that although she disagrees on how the church views the role of women, and its teachings on homosexuality, she nonetheless still needs her Catholicism.

"I don't necessarily agree with everything that goes on, but I have to believe that there is something greater than myself," she said.

Humility and a sense of gratefulness also motivates her in her work at STAR, she said, pointing out that she has been blessed with a loving family and many friends. The confidence such blessings have given her are something she wants to share with others.

"I've been really, really lucky, and it's the least I can do," she said.



A Rockin' Halloween Charity Bash

For ALL young adults (ages 21+).
Presented by the Catholic Courier and Odyssey,
the diocesan young-adult network.

Friday, October 29
8 p.m. to midnight

Top of the Plaza, 1400 Midtown Tower, Rochester

\$10 tickets include music, finger foods and prizes. Cash bar available.
Costumes optional. Best costume prize to be awarded.

100 percent of proceeds benefit the Catholic Courier/Catholic Charities Christmas Appeal, a year-round fund for individuals and families needing emergency assistance.

For tickets call Odyssey at 716-328-3228, ext. 375,
or 1-800-388-7177, ext. 375

or the Catholic Courier at 716-328-4340 or 1-800-600-3628

Thanks to our corporate sponsors:



Events

For information on the following events, call the hotline for Odyssey, the diocesan-sponsored young adult network, at 716/328-3228 or 1-800-388-7177, ext. 375, or e-mail rais@ccc.ccr.org.

• Wednesday, Oct. 6: Discussion on "Our Love Relationship with the Church," 7:30 p.m. at St. Paul the Tenth Church, 3038 Chili Ave., Chili.

• Sunday, Oct. 10: Rollerblading.

• Saturday, Oct. 16: Bowling in Bristol Hills.

• Thursday, Oct. 21: Dinner at

the Elmwood Inn, 1255 Mt. Hope Ave., Rochester.

• Friday, Oct. 29: The Catholic Courier/Odyssey Halloween Dance at Top of the Plaza Restaurant, 1400 Midtown Tower, Rochester, 8 p.m.

Admission: \$10. Proceeds benefit the Catholic Charities/Catholic Courier Christmas Appeal, which helps needy people in emergency situations. Deepest music and finger foods. Prizes awarded for best costumes.

Costumes optional. Tickets \$10. For more information, call 716-328-3228, ext. 375.