

Visit
us
on
the
web
at

www.catholiccourier.com

Campus ministry:

worth checking out early

Story by Mike Latona
Photo by Bill Hawken

If you're a high-school senior, chances are you've begun to realize how much your life will be altered when college begins next year. Childhood friends will scatter. Once on campus, you'll become acquainted with such new realities as dormitories, meal halls and financial aid offices.

Amid these changes, you might also be searching for a new place for worship and fellowship. That, also, might be a significant switch if you've belonged to the same parish all your life.

"It was an adjustment, being a new person. Everyone at church and on diocesan retreat staffs had known me," said Erin Curtin, 18, a freshman at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Conn. Her home parish is Our Lady of Lourdes in Brighton.

Erin said that she joined a campus ministry choir at Fairfield after a fellow member of her college's glee club — who also sings in the choir — spotted her at a Sunday Mass on campus.

"It made it a lot easier. It was nice to have someone ask me to join, rather than me asking to join," Erin said.

On the other hand, Jeanne Kidera took the initiative to explore campus ministry while she was still in high school.

"I knew I was going to have a work-study job on campus, so I wrote letters to campus ministry to see if I could get a job there," said Jeanne, 18, a freshman at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio.

Jeanne said her interest in campus ministry was spurred by her youth-group involvement at St. Thomas More Church in Brighton. She had also attended numerous diocesan retreats and conventions, and attended Catholic high school at Our Lady of Mercy.

"I knew what great friends I had in high school. They were the same kind of friends I wanted to make in college," Jeanne said. "So I had to



Jeanne Kidera (foreground) and her sister, Ann, have taken active roles in their college campus ministry programs. Jeanne is a freshman at John Carroll University in Cleveland and Ann is a senior at Loyola College in Baltimore.

go where I knew they would be. I think a lot of it was the fear of not meeting those people. That made me go straight to the source. I would definitely say investigate if you know where you're going to school."

Jeanne works two days per week as a receptionist in the campus ministry office. In addition, she staffed a retreat for freshmen this past fall.

Jeanne's sister Ann, who attends Loyola College in Baltimore, also became active in campus ministry as a freshman. Now a senior, Ann is serving a campus ministry internship and hopes to become a youth minister in the Rochester area after she graduates from Loyola this spring.

Ann, 22, said that some of her closest friends have emerged from campus ministry. "The people I've met have grown into a support system," she remarked.

Ann added that campus ministry can help many students, especially freshmen, to deal with the challenges of a college environment.

"When you get to college, it's easy to let things get away from you," Ann said. "I know a lot of people who go to the bars. But when drinking becomes a focal point of college ..."

In order to ensure that students become connected with campus ministry as soon as possible, Ann said that her staff at Loyola has devised a new offering for incoming freshmen.

"We started a pre-orientation program. We had seven or eight freshmen come a couple days early

(in the fall). It was set up to introduce them to all parts of campus ministry," she said.

Freshmen must accept that campus ministry is not a carbon copy of their youth-ministry programs back home, Ann observed.

"I was disappointed that I participated as a freshman, but couldn't really lead," said Ann, a former member of the Diocesan Youth Committee. "I realized you can't always be in charge of things. It's a different world, a different lifestyle. You're going to have to change as your environment changes."

Erin remarked that she attempted to go on a retreat this fall at Fairfield, only to discover that the two freshman retreats scheduled had already filled up. But she has persevered: Not only has she joined the choir, she also plans to perform service projects through campus ministry this coming semester.

"Part of the way I carry out my faith is by being involved," Erin said.

Whether it be through service projects, liturgical ministry, faith-sharing sessions or simply attending Mass, Ann said that freshmen can find some sort of niche with a Catholic campus ministry.

"There are so many different components. We have a lot of people who are eucharistic ministers or lectors," Ann said. "That doesn't require a sharing of your life story, like at a retreat. But it can still be very rewarding."

**Coming next week:
Seasoned altar server**

CAT
—
N
—
Er
cor
Sor
Nei
cre
Flo
p.n
I
fur
Au
Ble
Sor
no
71
I
Pr
Jr.
Wl
Sci
Au
p.I
ad
H
for
res
ad
71
M
ho
Sa
Sc
Re
60
gr
W
38
da
al
B
sc
Pr
G
E
Ja
C
G
R
R
F
C
E
M
er
cu
In
R
I
te
P
A
ir
d
n
a
tu
E
r
F
F
F
r
A
F
i
E
7