SSION 9 tes

Hannah Maher sorts through articles and papers in the basement office of Carol Crossed, a Rochester-area pro-life activist.

Hannah, 16, has taken up the pro-life cause through interning with Feminists for Life, debating with classmates about abor-

up about it; I just can't stop. I've got to

learn to keep calm, not raise my voice

She said she tries to talk these

situations out even with those who

wrong' - and then walk away," she

"You can't just attack a person and say

'I'm pro-life, you're pro-choice and you're

Through such discussions, Hannah

said she hopes to enlighten people who

may say they favor abortion but not really

"They hear that it's a woman's body and

her choice, and that an unborn baby is just

a blob of tissue," she said. "Maybe it's

These debates are worth the effort,

Hannah emphasized. Over the years, she

said, "A lot of people I know have changed

But others — even friends — do tune

"It's hard when people get up and walk

Asked why she catches so much oppo-

sition to her pro-life views, Hannah said,

"Because it's the easy way out, that's what

Hannah said that her parents, Ken and

people think. They don't know how many

Mary, provided her with a very simple

"I .iey've always taught me basic

morals," she said. "It's not really hard to

understand; it's never been confusing to

"Family has always been important to

me. I feel sorry for people who can't expe-

rience that because they don't want to,"

Hannah added. "They choose to abort,

watch (someone go through with an

they contribute to it, or they stand by and

Hannah, a parishioner at St. Bridget's

Church in Rochester, said she began to

take strong ownership of her views when

"I really got the passion; it really got to

away and say 'I'm not going to listen

something their parents have said."

her out, she acknowledged.

women are in depression."

understanding about abortion.

me: 'Thou shalt not kill."

abortion)."

she was 12 or 13.

anymore," she said.

continue to disagree with her.

about it."

remarked.

know why.

their views."

tion, and traveling to the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C.

In Hannah Maher's opinion, being pro-

life isn't something you do halfway — or

Being pro-life may mean not going

along with popular opinion. It may mean

alienating your friends. Or becoming upset

to the point of tears while defending your

Hannah, 16. "I'm very, very sensitive, and

people can get to me very easily. Things

do get ugly sometimes. People get very

environment, Hannah doesn't hesitate to

raise the subject of abortion among her

where Hannah is a junior. Once, she said,

used during abortions to scrape out parts

of a fetus from a womb. Needless to say,

"They were shocked," she said. "It's not

She also recalled an intense classroom

that provoked quite a reaction from her

oretty. You've got to be straightforward.'

abortion. By the time it ended, the whole

classroom was buzzing with discussion.

Then there was the time in seventh

shirt to school. And once, there was a

understand her decision to abort.

"I said, 'Wait. You don't have to

get for people who want to push her

"If you put it in front of their face, they'll

grade when Hannah wore an anti-abortion

guest speaker at The Harley School who

had had an abortion, and told the students

that someone has to live the experience to

experience it to know it's wrong," Hannah

With such strong statements, Hannah

acknowledged that she has become a tar-

"Oh, they love to do it. They know if

crazy that I care so much. I get so worked.

they say 'abortion,' I'm right there," she

said with a laugh. "They find it kind of

debate with a fellow student about

listen," she said.

Story by

Mike Latona

Photo by

Mike Mergen

classmates at The Harley School, a

private school in the town of Pittsford

she brought in a type of utensil that is

Yet however challenging the

angry, including myself."

"I've definitely cried over it," said

even 90 percent of the way, for that

matter.

P aske lege

nati

stop doing this," she said. **COMING NEXT WEEK:**

me," she said. "A lot of people say, 'You're

just pro-life because your parents are.' Of

raised you this way and now it's your turn

Feminists for Life of Western New York, a

women's organization that advocates for

numerous pro-life causes. As part of the

office of Suzanne Schnittman, the

internship she worked last summer in the

diocesan life issues coordinator who also

Then, in the fall, she began working every

Carol Crossed, a Feminists for Life board

member. There, Hannah files articles and

documents related to pro-life issues. She also makes phone calls and writes letters,

Hannah said she would like to set up a

group for teens to discuss such subjects.

"A lot of people my age don't say 'I'm pro-

life' or 'I'm pro-choice.' We'd just talk about

Hannah plans to take part in the March

for Life in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 24.

marches, held annually to commemorate the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme

Court's 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision that

to become a teacher. Even higher on her

priority list, she said, is to get married and

I get pregnant, I will put everything aside

aligned with pro-life activities well into

adulthood.

Not surprisingly, Hannah plans to stay

"Yeah, definitely. I don't think I'll ever

"Souper Bowl" fundraiser

"I just leave that up to God," she said. "If

Looking ahead, Hannah said she'd like

legalized abortion in the United States.

women's issues," she remarked.

She has attended the two previous

imploring other women to get involved

with pro-life causes.

weekday at the Pittsford home office of

serves as Feminists for Life treasurer.

Hannah currently has an internship with

course your parents influence you, but

mine are very good at saying, 'We've

to choose."



