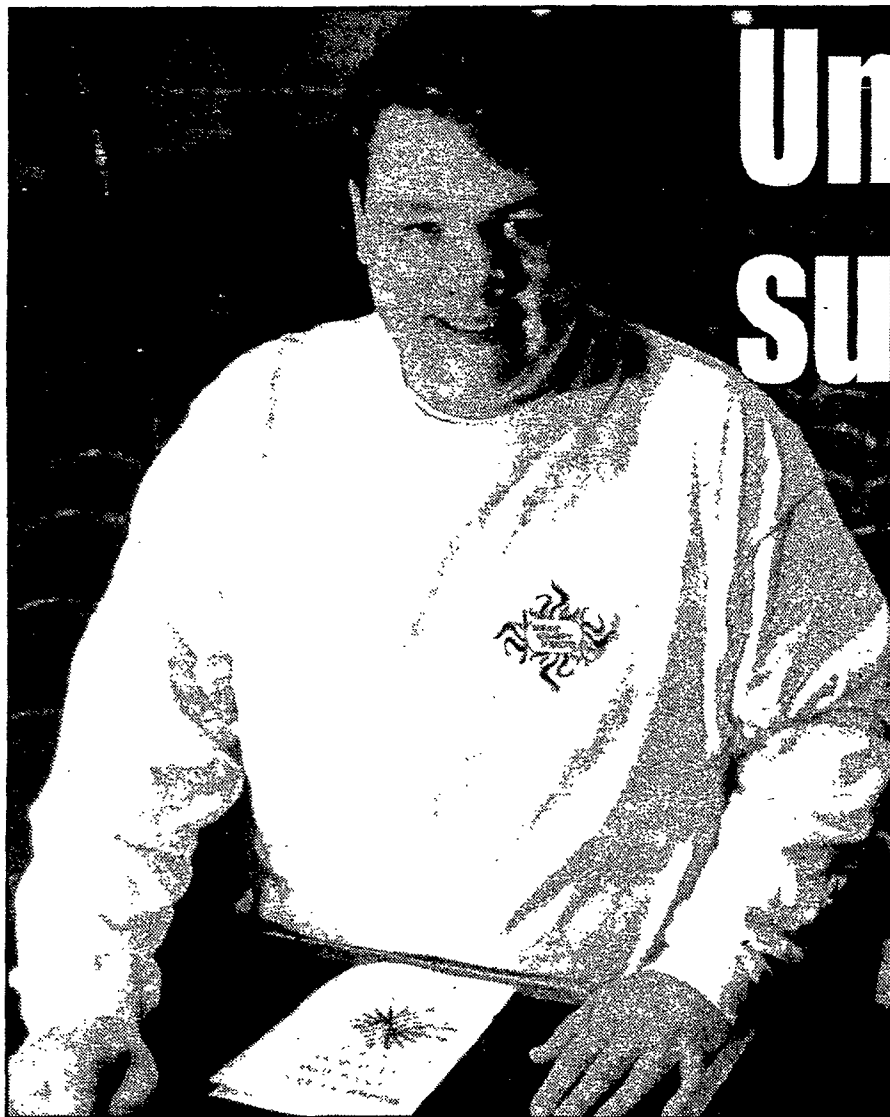


# MONROE

Story by Mike Latona • Photo by Mike Mergen

# on the



## Unarguably successful

**S**cott Ellsworth hones his persuasive powers at numerous oratorical competitions. Recently, a real-life situation forced him to put those selling skills to work. At stake was the future of his Bishop Kearney High School speech-and-debate team.

Last summer Kearney's longtime speech-and-debate adult moderator, Thomas Downs, had been severely injured in an accident. Scott was the lone veteran from last year's squad; the rest had graduated. Realizing he was the only possible person to carry the torch, Scott went from classroom to classroom in an effort to get new members.

"The team could very easily have faded out," said Scott, 17.

Surprisingly, during this recruiting drive, Scott found that facing possible rejection from other students is more nerve-racking than being in competitions.

"That was a challenge. I didn't want to go and see those little freshmen," he said. "Probably if you ask most people, I'm a very shy, quiet kid."

Recruiting wasn't the only obstacle to pulling a team together. Scott lives in Spencerport, nearly 15 miles from Bishop Kearney, and the oratorical competitions often require extended travel. Scott said that his mother, Carol, has done the bulk of the driving this year, carting the team around in her van.

Scott can look back with much to be proud of. He came up with eight new

members, many of whom compete dually on the speech-and-debate and mock trial squads at Kearney. Scott serves as captain of both. He will travel with four teammates to Harvard College for a national speech-and-debate competition Feb. 18-22.

Scott has been having quite a year as an individual, as well. He won the Monroe County American Legion oratorical competition — for the third straight year — in November. He captured the district American Legion title in January, and on Feb. 5 placed second in zone competition — covering all of Western New York — to earn a \$1,500 savings bond.

Of the many speech-and-debate categories available, Scott favors oratory, where participants can devise a speech on any subject; extemporaneous speaking, where competitors can choose from topics pulled out of a hat; and dramatic interpretation, which requires the re-creation of a scene from a movie or play, taking on all the characters. For instance, in the national competition at Harvard, Scott's dramatic interpretation will be the courtroom scene from the movie, "A Few Good Men."

Scott said he prefers oratorical categories that don't require him to argue both sides of a case.

"I don't do debating, I do speaking," he remarked.

His second-place effort at the American Legion zone competition consisted of speeches related to the Constitution. For example, in one presentation he defended the liberties contained in the Bill of Rights.

However, Scott said that he will only go so far in presenting points that may not reflect his true convictions.

"The kind of person I am, I can't be a hypocrite," said Scott, 17, a parishioner at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Hamlin. "There's an issue of genuine feeling."

For that reason, he said, he will probably steer away from a career in law. Instead, he would like to study marketing at either St. Bonaventure University or Clarkson College.

"One reason I don't want to go into law is, I know I could not be a defense lawyer when I knew someone was guilty. I would definitely have serious problems," he said.

Scott said he could relate to the recent struggles of some mock trial teams from Delaware. (Mock trial resembles a courtroom scene and requires a team to act as both the prosecution and the defense.) In November, all six Catholic high schools planning to enter the Delaware state competition withdrew due to the fact that the subject was physician-assisted suicide. The Catholic schools' administrators felt their students should not be forced to argue in favor of a subject that Catholic teaching opposes.

Scott said that if he were put in the same situation as the Delaware schools, he, too, would probably bow out.

"I would definitely have a hard time doing the trial. I would see the same ethical issues," Scott said.

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