

Young

Knights sound call for young members

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

When Arthur Louis DiNieri III dons his full Knights of Columbus regalia, he draws considerable attention — and it's not just due to the elaborate attire.

You can't miss the Knights' Color Corps at parades and special religious functions. Each member wears a black uniform, red cape and gigantic feathered hat, and carries a sword.

What makes DiNieri stand out even more is the absence of gray in his hair. At 26 years old, he is less than half the age of most of his Color Corps members.

"So many people look at me — look at me and wonder. There's a young person. They're shocked," DiNieri said.

DiNieri and Todd Cucchiara, 29, belong to the Color Corps in the Knights' John W. Steger Assembly 2297. Out of the 90 assembly members, they said they're the only two under the age of 30 who are regularly active. They're also the only two members of the Color Corps who are in their 20s.

This is a trend that permeates other Knights of Columbus assemblies and councils in the diocese as well, DiNieri and Cucchiara said. But Cucchiara emphasized that it's not because older members are standoffish to potential new Knights.

"Gentlemen from all walks of life, and various stages of life, are willing to help you. If a young person could have only one reason to be a Knight, it would be (this) support and encouragement," Cucchiara remarked.

So where are the young Knights? Cucchiara said that although the fraternal organization is open to men ages 18 and up, young adults may assume differently.

"It's a vicious circle. More young people don't join, because they see more older Knights," Cucchiara observed.

Yet this problem doesn't appear to be permeate all pockets of the Knights organization. They are the world's largest lay group of Catholic men, and according to their Web site, their current membership of more than 1.6 million is an all-time high.

Cucchiara said it's up to existing Knights in the Rochester Diocese to step up recruiting efforts for young adults.

"We need to promote more. We don't talk enough," he said.

Ironically, Cucchiara said, the Knights of Columbus were founded in 1892 by a young adult, Father Michael J. McGivney. The priest was 29 years old when he launched the Knights in a parish basement in New Haven, Conn.

John Fadden, 27, maintained that many people his age might be interested in the Knights but "they're afraid. They're waiting for someone to come ask them."

Fadden said he became a Knight through the encouragement of DiNieri. He joined Pope John XXIII Council 7707, Spencerport, last November.

DiNieri has belonged to Council 7707 since becoming a Knight in 1996.

Meanwhile, Cucchiara joined the Knights in 1992 and currently belongs to Council 4812, Our Lady of the Genesee, Henrietta.

DiNieri and Cucchiara are fourth-degree Knights, the highest degree attainable. A Knight who advances to this level becomes eligible to join an as-



John Powell/Photo intern

Arthur Louis DiNieri III (third Knight in line), helps lead a procession down Stenson Street celebrating the feast of St. Ann July 23.



Arthur Louis DiNieri III (foreground) processes during the feast of St. Ann at Rochester's Most Precious Blood Church. DiNieri, 26, is one of the youngest members of his local Knights of Columbus.

sembly, a regional coalition of fourth-degree Knights.

Fadden, a parishioner at St. Theodore's Parish in Gates, said he can't wait to take his fourth degree: "I want to go all the way to the top."

Each successive degree, Cucchiara said, reflects a deepening commitment to Catholicism, family, brotherhood and benevolence — the chief tenets of the Knights of Columbus.

"Each degree has something to say about life and church, commitment to God. It helps you to remain grounded," said Cucchiara, who attends St. Mary's Parish in Genesee.

Knights of Columbus councils are highly active with charitable efforts in the community. Cucchiara said that Council 4812 has raised funds for agencies serving the developmentally disabled, while DiNieri noted that Council 7797 has supported food cupboards and a home for the dying. In addition, the Knights extensively promote vocations and pro-life activities.

DiNieri, who attends St. Charles Borromeo Church in Greece, said that his activities as a Knight are all done with tremendous pride.

"What I'm conveying is, here's a young gentleman who's rooted in his Catholic faith," he stated.

For anyone interested in becoming a Knight of Columbus, Fadden, DiNieri and Cucchiara suggested checking a parish bulletin for the nearest council or asking a parish priest. Further information about the Knights can be obtained on the Knights' Web site, www.kofc.org.

Events

For information on these events and to obtain RSVP information, call the hotline for Odyssey at the diocesan-sponsored young adults network, at 716/328-3227 ext. 2176, or 1-800-388-7177 ext. 2176. Or visit the Web site at www.godyssey.org.

○ Sunday, July 30

Kayaking/canoeing. Meet at 8 a.m. p.m. at the canal side on Mount Avenue/State Street in front of the Pittsford Dinner is held at a restaurant.

○ Saturday, Aug. 12

Renaissance Fair. Meet at 10 a.m. at the post in Saratoga Springs. East Avenue. Meet at 8 a.m. at the post in Saratoga Springs.

○ Sunday, Aug. 13

Sampler at St. Charles Borromeo Church, 300 Genesee Street, Henrietta. Meet in front of the church. Dinner at 7 p.m. at the restaurant.

Also, rollerblading along the canal. Meet in front of the Hampton Inn, Greece (near routes 104 and 300) at 1:30 p.m. Full equipment is recommended.

○ Saturday, Aug. 19

Odyssey/Quest day at Six Flags Darien Lake. Odyssey joins the Quest, the young adults council of the Diocese of Buffalo, for a day of fun at the amusement park in Corti, N.Y.

○ Sunday, Aug. 20

Family Day at Frontier Field. Odyssey joins the rest of the Rochester Diocese when the Rochester Red Wings face Syracuse in a 2:15 p.m. baseball game. Odyssey has obtained discounted tickets. Orders must be placed by Aug. 13.

○ Thursday, Aug. 24: Dinner at the Elmwood Inn. A casual night out, a chance to relax. Dinner is at 7 p.m. at the Elmwood, 1256 Mount Hope Ave., Rochester. RSVP by Aug. 23.

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