

on the MOVE

Story by Mike Latona

Plenty of activity cooking in Bath

Interested in getting a taste of Great Grandma Elsie's Hot Milk Sponge Cake? A few kernels of Nana's Mohawk Popcorn? Or a bite of Hummingbird Cake?

Chances are, there's only one cookbook in the world that includes these titles — and it's available courtesy of the youth group at St. Mary's Parish in Bath.

For several months, the youth group has busied itself compiling the elaborate cookbook. According to Mary Carol Wall, St. Mary's youth minister, many of the book's 410 recipes are family heirlooms and others are prize-winning recipes from state fairs. In Erin McConnell's case, she contributed numerous recipes without really knowing their origins.

"We just have these big boxes of recipes. They've come from all different places," remarked Erin, 17.

According to Wall, the cookbooks will be available by mid-January. Youth-group members were already at work selling holiday gift certificates for the book (at \$8 each) during the parish's annual craft fair/bazaar Dec. 3. The youth group also hopes to stage a parish dinner in 2001, based on recipes from the cookbook.

Sound ambitious? Well, ambitious projects are right up this youth group's alley. Another example occurred last July, when the St. Mary's teens helped overcome a shaky situation to make a rousing success out of the Cancer Relay for Life at Steuben County Fairgrounds.

The group was pressed into emergency action when a violent storm struck, overturning many tents and dousing hundreds of "luminaries" — candles that were set up around the track in honor of people who had been affected by cancer.

"The storm basically destroyed the luminaries. We had to make them all over again," said Peter Ezzo, 16.

St. Mary's teens also served as walkers around the track well into the night. Peter walked at 2 a.m., and Michael Carisetti, 16, took his walking shift at 4 a.m. The parish's youth and adults, with a combined force of 40 people, had the largest participation of any group in the community fundraiser. St. Mary's also raised the most money, more than \$4,200, earning first-place recognition and a big trophy.

This combined effort of youth and adults, Erin observed, is evident in numerous aspects of the youth group.

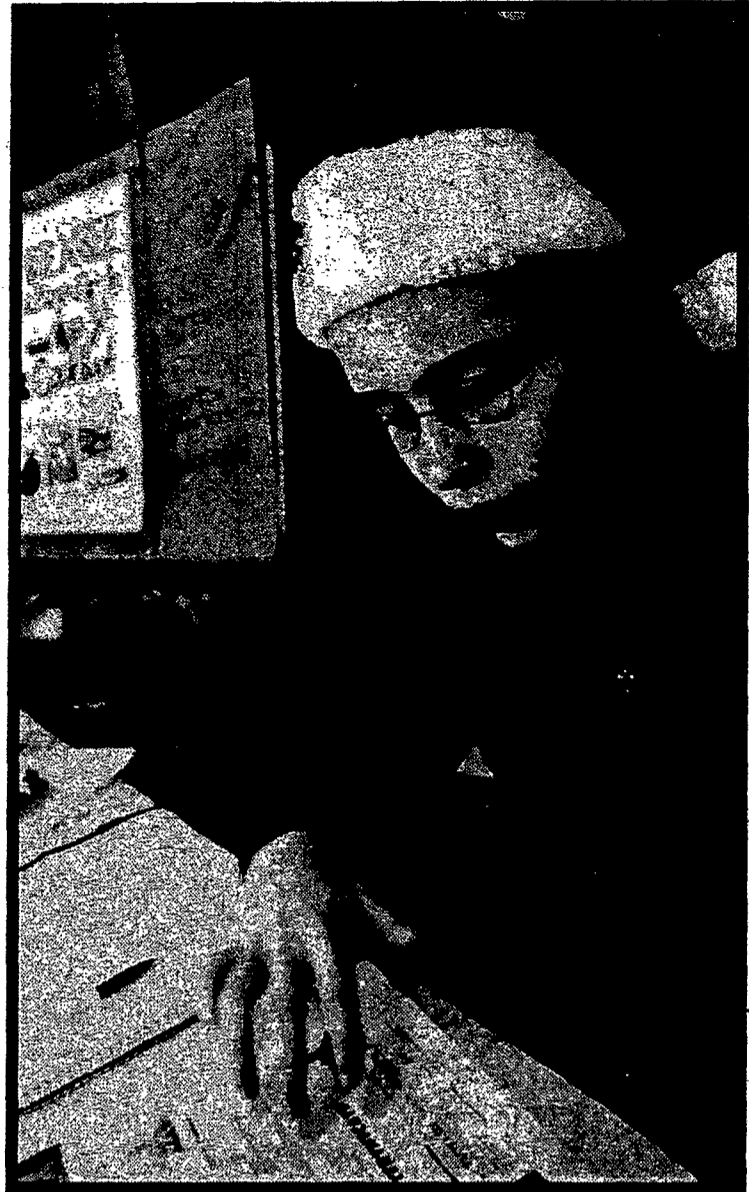
"We set up committees within our group, and we work with a lot of adults on those committees," Erin said.

"A lot of the adults have encouraged us and always welcomed us," Michael Carisetti remarked. "It's very easy to get involved."

Parish teens also join with St. Mary's adults to form "assemblies" — teams that rotate liturgical ministries at weekend Masses. So on any given week, a teen could serve as a lector, eucharistic minister, altar server, greeter or usher.

In addition to its parish activities, the St. Mary's youth group links up with nearby parishes for such events as movie nights and a social-justice retreat that was held this year. St. Mary's extends its geography even further by taking part in numerous diocesan events. In fact, Erin — a member of the Diocesan Youth Committee — said she makes a point of promoting diocesan events, such as retreats and the annual convention, to her fellow youth-group members.

While parish youth-group events normally draw anywhere from 15 to 25, Wall said she hopes at least that many teens will travel to the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis. Though the convention won't take place until



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Sarah Ambrosone, 17, sells gift certificates for the youth group cookbook at St. Mary's Christmas Bazaar in Bath Dec. 3.

November 2001, the youth group has already begun fundraising efforts. In fact, Wall said, most of the proceeds from the soon-to-be-released cookbook will be put toward "financing a fund for not just the national convention, but also (diocesan) retreats."

Wall, who has served as St. Mary's part-time youth minister since 1999, said she strives to expand her youth group's horizons by involving them in events both at St. Mary's and beyond.

"It's not our little parish. It's more of a universal church," Wall said.

Sean McKinley, for one, expects a healthy turnout by St. Mary's at the national conference as well as other future events.

"There seems to be more interest than ever before," remarked Sean, 16.

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