

a Young Adults

Young-adult coordinator ministers to her own

Story by Mike Latona

When she was growing up, Nora Bradbury-Haehl recalled, "I had a hard time deciding what I was going to do with the rest of my life. I've always been somebody who's got a lot of interests."

So rather than go into one area of expertise, Bradbury-Haehl has put her main talents and interests — "music, an ability to relate to people, and a love for my faith," she said — to work for the Catholic Church. She's logged 13 years of parish youth ministry, and has also been a leader and innovator with diocesan youth-ministry programs.

Beginning last summer, Bradbury-Haehl's focus is now turned toward young adults. As the diocesan program specialist for youth and young-adult ministry, most of Bradbury-Haehl's duties are geared toward diocesan Catholics in their 20s and 30s, as well as college students.

At 33 years old, Bradbury-Haehl finds herself coordinating programs for her own age group. In fact, you'd have a tough time singling her out when she attends events involving Odyssey, the diocesan young-adult network.

"I feel like I've fit right into the group, in with my peers," she said.

Adjusting to her new diocesan position, Bradbury-Haehl said, was also eased by the fact that a solid base of volunteer leaders had already been developed under the previous diocesan young-adult coordinator, Karen Rinefield. However, Bradbury-Haehl said, ministering to young adults is an ongoing challenge.

"It's a mix of people — married, single, divorced, students, working," she said. "You can take four 25-year-old women and one might be a single mom, one a graduate student, one single and working full-time, and one at home with the kids."

Compared to childhood, the diversity of life choices may alter a young adult's relationship with the Catholic Church, Bradbury-Haehl noted.

"In youth ministry I'd see kids coming up through our programs. But for some reason, they're not always able to find their way into the church wherever they are after college," she explained. "I want to help move them to the next step that comes after youth ministry."

For that reason, Bradbury-Haehl has put an emphasis on college-age students in her new ministry. In late December she held an evening of reflection that was attended by nearly 20 people ages 18-22.

Reflection for older young adults is a priority as well, she said. Along with Odyssey's ongoing slate of social, and spiritual events, Bradbury-Haehl is enthusiastic about the monthly Catholic Coffee House series at St.



As the new diocesan program specialist for youth and young-adult ministry, Nora Bradbury-Haehl (bottom right and top-photos) organizes events in conjunction with Odyssey, an outreach to young adults in their 20s and 30s. They include this cabin party photographed at Mendon Ponds Park Feb. 3.

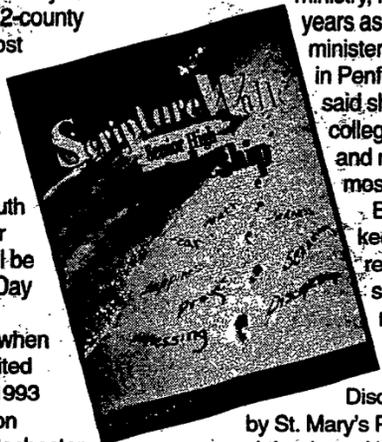
John Fisher College. The series offers guest speakers and discussions centering around topics of interest to Catholic young adults.

Another goal of Bradbury-Haehl's is to involve the entire 12-county diocese; currently, most Odyssey participants are Monroe County residents. One event that could provide a big boost, she said, is World Youth Day in Toronto, set for August 2002. This will be the first World Youth Day to take place in North America since 1993, when Pope John Paul II visited Denver. Whereas in 1993 most of the 600-person contingent from the Rochester Diocese were teens, the target crowd for Toronto will be ages 18-35.

"That will be a real opportunity for us to build young-adult ministry, in the same way that Denver did for youth ministry," Bradbury-Haehl said.

Bradbury-Haehl is a native of Ontario, Wayne County. She attended Nazareth College as a music major but instead became involved in youth ministry, most notably for 11 years as the full-time youth minister at St. Joseph's Parish in Penfield. Bradbury-Haehl said she plans to return to college for her bachelor's and master's degrees, most likely in religion.

Bradbury-Haehl still keeps her hand in issues related to high-schoolers; she recently released her second book, "ScriptureWalk Senior High: Discipleship." Published by St. Mary's Press, the book equips youth leaders with suggestions for provoking discussion among teens, using the Bible, prayer and everyday issues as backdrops. Bradbury-Haehl had a book-signing Jan. 25 at Alpha and Omega Bookstore in Penfield. Married since 1988, Bradbury-Haehl



For information on Odyssey, the diocesan young adults network, call 1-800-388-7177, ext. 375.

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