

PARISH PROFILE

Cayuga County communities put faith into actions

Parish Profile

Sacred
Heart,
Auburn



St. Ann's,
Owasco



By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

AUBURN — A couple of years ago, Maria Giacona, the daughter of Joseph and Mary Ann Giacona, decided to follow in the footsteps of her older brother, Dominic, and join the youth group for Sacred Heart Parish and its mission in Owasco, St. Ann's. The 16-year-old recalled that she immediately liked the group's weekly meetings at the Sacred Heart Parish Center.

"We did read from the Bible, but it wasn't boring, it was fun," she said, talking about how she and the other teenagers shared their insights about Scripture. "The people there made it enjoyable. It wasn't serious. It wasn't too heavy."

She has particularly enjoyed the friends she has found in the 17-member group.

"It's just a great way to meet new people, good people, people you want to know," she said.

Giacona also serves as a Finger Lakes



Karin von Volgtlander/Photo intern

St. Ann and Sacred Heart's Bazaar, held at St. Ann's in Owasco July 22, included games for children.

Region representative to the Diocesan Youth Committee, which participated in the planning process for the 8th Annual Diocesan Youth Convention Aug. 3-5 in Geneseo. Her commitment to the church and that of the other kids in the group is what inspires the parishes' part-time youth minister, Stephanie Hesler, to devote herself to teenage Catholics.

"The kids I work with seem to be open to expressing their faith and wanting to learn more about their faith and seem mature enough to embrace it," Hesler said. She attends Sacred Heart with her husband, Stephen, and their two boys, Sean, 2, and Nathan, born almost three months ago.

Hesler's family is one of about 1,100 families that belong to Sacred Heart, according to Father William F. Laird, pastor of Sacred Heart/St. Ann's since July 2000. About 110 families attend St. Ann's, Sacred Heart's mission church in Owasco, south of Auburn, and that church is made up primarily of middle-aged and older parishioners, he said. Meanwhile, Sacred Heart has two demographic "bulges" he said — kids between ages 5 and 15, and adults between ages 35 and 45.

St. Ann's was actually founded first, in 1912, as a mission of St. Patrick's Parish in Moravia, south of Auburn. Following Sacred Heart's founding in 1957, St. Ann's became the mission of Sacred Heart, which is closer to the mission church than St. Patrick's is. Parishioners from both churches participate in each other's activities, which included a chicken barbecue at St. Ann's July 22, and will include a parish picnic following 4:30 p.m. Mass at Sacred Heart on Saturday, Sept. 22. Information on the parishes' activities can be found on the Web at www.catholic-forum.com/churchsites/sacred-heartstann.

Sacred Heart/St. Ann's has been experiencing several new developments over the past few years, according to Tom Kirwan, president of the churches' joint council. For example, he said, as part of the pastoral planning process that's been taking place throughout the Diocese of Rochester over the past few years, Sacred Heart/St. Ann's has worked with other Auburn-area parishes to reduce the number of weekend Masses in light of the priest shortage. The Auburn-area parishes instituted a new Mass schedule to reflect the decreased availability of priests in the second half of 2000, he noted.

In addition to changing the Mass schedule, Sacred Heart/St. Ann's is also cooperating with other parishes on improving such programs as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, according to pastoral associate, Sister Chris Treichel, of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, N.Y.

"Our ultimate goal is to have a year-round RCIA process for churches in Auburn," she said.

Patricia Dellonte, religious education administrator, noted that Sacred Heart/St. Ann's is also working with St. Mary's Parish in Auburn on catechetical efforts for children, which allows both parishes to benefit from a wider pool of volunteers as well as sharing ideas and resources. Such cooperative efforts are changing what it means to be a parish, said Father Laird, who grew up attending St. Mary's.

"What's developing is more of a sense of collaboration than competition," he said. "The sense is we're all in this together."



Eric Vroman, 4, plays a putting game at the event.

That sense extends to both the wider community of Auburn as well as the whole world, according to Laila Cuddy, who attends the church with her husband James. Both serve as eucharistic ministers and lectors.

Cuddy also oversees the Sacred Heart/St. Ann social ministry committee. Among the projects her committee has promoted is an international program to provide heifers to poor families, and a Catholic-sponsored AIDS project in Africa.

Currently, she said, Sacred Heart/St. Ann's is working with other faith communities, Catholic and non-Catholic, in Auburn to establish a home for the terminally ill called Matthew House. Dying patients unable to go home for various reasons would be able to obtain care there, she said. For more information on the home, or to donate to its establishment, she suggested writing to Sue and John Moran, Matthew House, P.O. Box 283, Auburn, NY 13021.

Supporting the home is just one way that lay Catholics like her can live out their faith, she noted. Like other members of the Sacred Heart/St. Ann's community, Cuddy sees her involvement in social ministry as a way of answering the church's ongoing call for greater lay participation in Catholic life.

"We can't leave it up to Father or Sister," she said. "It's up to us."

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SNAPSHOT

Sacred Heart Parish
90 Melrose Road, Auburn
Phone: 315/252-7271
Mission Parish:
St. Ann's Church,
Route 38A, Owasco

Ministerial staff:

Pastor:

Father William F. Laird

Sacramental minister:

Father James C. Enright

Pastoral associate:

Sister Chris Treichel, OSF

Religious education administrator:

Patricia Dellonte

Youth minister:

Stephanie Hesler

Business manager:

Maureen A. Collins

Liturgical musician:

Anne Adessa