

a Young Adult's

Teacher left a piece of her heart in Ecuador

Ellen Hughes, 28, remembered that her first few days teaching at The Working Boys' Center in Ecuador were a little different than teaching sixth grade at Martha Brown Middle School in Fairport.

"What was wonderful was that kids were so affectionate," she said of her first-grade students in Ecuador. "They would run up and hug you, and then they would ask your name."

However, the children were also a bit more challenging to discipline than the kids she was used to teaching in the United States, said Hughes, a parishioner at St. Mary's Church, Rochester. As the offspring of parents who often had never been formally schooled themselves, the Ecuadoran kids had never been taught how to behave in a classroom by their parents.

"They were literally running around the classroom," she remembered of her first day with the children. "I'd literally get one in their seat, and five more would get up."

Hughes speaks with great affection of her former students who were the beneficiaries of The Working Boys' Center. The center was founded in 1964 in Quito, Ecuador's capital, by Jesuit Father John Halligan of the Bronx. The program works with families of impoverished Ecuadorans, and has educated more than 5,000 such families.

Hughes served at the center from September 1999 to July 2000. She has occasionally spoken about her experiences, and drew 100 people to a

Nov. 4 talk at St. Paul's Parish, Webster.

Hughes, a member of her parish's social justice committee, and a choir member as well, said she has been interested in volunteering in the Third World since she was a child. As a teacher at Martha Brown — where her father, Robert Hughes, also teaches — she met a colleague a few years back who had been to The Working Boys' Center and who told her about its need for teacher volunteers.

"My faith is kind of what brought me there. I feel that I had such a blessed life, and I felt that this might be a way to give back."

In Quito, the families she worked with often came from single-room homes with no running water and one light fixture to illuminate them, she said. She added that four to six family members sleeping in one bed was not uncommon. Rather than attending school, many poor Ecuadoran children spent their days in the streets, she said.

"Mom and dad didn't sit down with them and read stories before they went to bed because Mom and Dad can't read," she said.

At the center, Hughes, who is fluent in Spanish, lived in a dormitory with other volunteers, and taught children and adults a variety of subjects, including special education, health and English. Her year in Quito was funded by St. Mary's Parish and some private donors, and she received free room and board in exchange for her work.

Hughes said she worked more than 12 hours daily, and often did additional work on behalf of the center on weekends.

"It was really exhausting," she said. "I worked harder there than I've ever worked here, and I think I work pretty hard here."

However, the rewards were enormous, she said, noting that seven times she was asked to be a godmother to children of the center's families. One family gave her a small plaque of Mary, which she said was an extremely meaningful gift because Christ's mother was an important figure in the life of the



Photos courtesy Ellen Hughes

A public market in Quito, Ecuador (above). Three students Ellen Hughes taught in Ecuador, (below) Miguel and Mano Iza Bombon, and their mother, Rosa.

family. She added that she revisited Quito this summer for a month, and may return someday to volunteer again, or possibly work in another poor country. However, for now, she said, she wants to take the lessons she learned about teaching children in Ecuador and share them with her Fairport students.



Andrea Dixon
Ellen Hughes

"I'm much more laid back," she said of educating children since she's returned from Ecuador. "The social studies or science test, that doesn't matter so much. It's about loving the kids and helping them grow and making them the best people they can be."

EDITORS' NOTE: For information on The Working Boys' Center, write Family Unity International Inc., 12750 Stephen Place, Elm Grove, WI 53122, or Working Boys' Center, c/o Dr. Theresa Halligan, 101 Arthur St., Ridgefield Park, NJ 07660.



Events

For information on these events, call Rob Bradley at 585-328-2210 or 800-699-7177, or visit the diocesan Young Adult Web page at www.diooceseyoungadult.com.

Sunday, Dec. 9, 12-15 p.m.

Mass in Blessed Sacrament, St. Michael's Church, 401 S. Main St., Newark, Dec. 10 at 7:30 p.m. in St. Michael's Church, 401 S. Main St., Newark, Dec. 11 at 7 p.m. at St. Joseph's Church, 1355 Hatch Road, Penfield. Both events are free.

Thursday, Dec. 13: Theology on Tap at Johnny's Smoke-Free Bar, 1382 Cuiver Road, Rochester, 8-10 p.m. Father Lee Chase will speak on "Everything you ever wanted to know about being Catholic but were afraid to ask."

Saturday, Dec. 15: Rochester Knights Hawks lacrosse game, Blue Cross Arena, downtown Rochester, at 6:45 p.m. \$9. RSVP to Laura Lehner at 585-621-5672.

Thursday, Dec. 20: Dinner at 7 p.m. at Woody's II, 2758 W. Henrietta Road. RSVP to Jean by Dec. 19 by calling 585-482-9023.

Friday, Dec. 21, and every third Friday of each month: Talze, simple chanted prayer, at Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse Chapel, 1437 Blossom Road, Fairport.

The Solemnity of

CHRIST THE KING

Sunday, 25 November 2001

FESTIVE EUCHARIST
at 11:30 AM

(Schubert: *Mass in G* • Peeters: *Festiva Entrata*)

EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

from 12:30 PM to 5:00 PM

VESPERS & SOLEMN BENEDICTION

at 5:00 PM

Tallis: *Magnificat*. Byrd: *Ave Verum*

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