

# Young

a d u l t s



Brian Gallagher (center) of Good Shepherd Parish, Henrietta, and Christine Nowak (right), of St. Joseph Parish, Penfield, learn how to swing dance May 18 during an Odyssey event at Rochester's Blessed Sacrament Church.

## Odyssey offers host of activities

Engaged for only two weeks, Michelle Gremani-Helt, 26, already has sent her relationship into the gutter with Andy Stotz, 36. And the couple, who attend Church of the Transfiguration in Pittsford, couldn't be the happier for her efforts.

The young romantics were found bowling at AMF Dewey Garden Lanes in Greece on the evening of May 17, and Gremani-Helt had amassed a stunning pinfall of 14 by the eighth frame of the second game of the night. A self-confessed "directionally challenged" woman, Gremani-Helt had a unique technique of throwing the ball forward toward the pins, yet somehow managing to have it turn left in midair and land in the channel.

The *Catholic Courier* investigated Gremani-Helt's bowling technique as part of a larger quest to find out what members of Odyssey do when they get together. For more than half a decade, Odyssey has been the Diocese of Rochester's network for adults in their 20s and 30s. On Tuesday, May 28, Odyssey will host an orientation for new volunteers from 6:30-9 p.m. at the Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Road, Gates.

Nora Bradbury-Haehl, program specialist for the diocese's youth and young adult ministry, said the network is searching for new volunteers and ideas. Laura Lehner, who organized the bowling night for Odyssey, said the network's planning committee consists of only a handful of people, and it needs subcommittees to plan one-time events.

"We realize that people do have jobs and do have lives outside of Odyssey," she said, noting that network members at one time met monthly to plan activities, but now meet less regularly. "It would help if everyone was doing a little instead of a few people doing a lot." New volunteers, she added, will be asked to meet for planning purposes four or five times a years.

One of the reasons Odyssey wants new volunteers is that some volunteers who met through the group have gotten married and dropped out of regular participation. (Odyssey is open to married couples, nonetheless). Others have turned 40, or are approaching it, she said, although Odyssey may consider allowing older people to become volunteers.

Jean Derby, 38, a parishioner at St. Thomas More Parish in Brighton, said she'd like to see Odyssey do more

By Rob Cullivan

community service projects than it does currently, and create more faith-sharing groups that meet to study Scripture and pray.

"It's time to take it in a new direction with new people," said Derby, a planning committee member.

Current Odyssey members offered a wide variety of opinions on what they liked best about the group during the first years of its existence.

"I like the wine tours," Stotz said of Odyssey activities, which he has been attending for more than four years. "Bowling is kind of fun. Laser tag was awesome, and the movie nights were kind of nice."

Stotz, however, pointed out that Odyssey is not just about fun and games. He also participated in a prayer and faith-sharing group that he found fulfilling.

"I liked being personal with people, to be open and honest with people," he said.

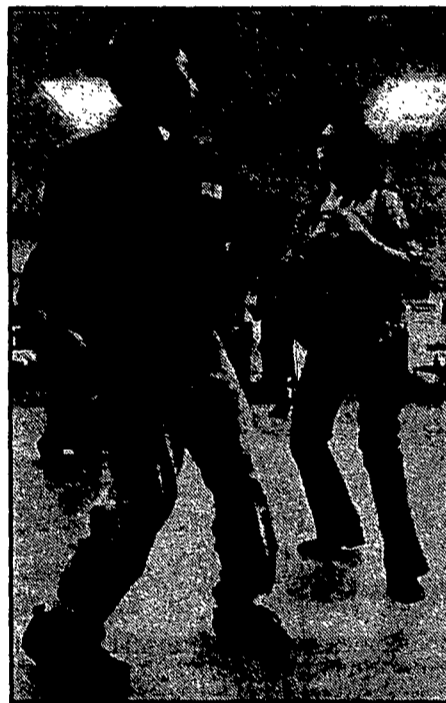
"I didn't know anybody when I moved up here," Gremani-Helt said, noting her fiancée introduced her to Odyssey when she moved from Pittsburgh three years ago. The couple met at the Renaissance Faire, held over a series of summer weekends in Sterling, N.Y. "They're just good people," she said of Odyssey members.

That point was seconded by Christine Hauslauer, 29, a parishioner at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Scottsville. Hauslauer attended the bowling night with her brother, George, 30, who attends St. Pius Tenth Parish in Chili. Both were first-time bowlers that night, and said they enjoyed hanging out with the Odyssey crowd.

"For the most part, everyone treats you well," Christine said, adding that she's enjoyed the hikes the network has organized in various Monroe County parks.

"They're very nice people," George said, noting that he also enjoys the network's monthly dinners at Woody's II in Henrietta.

The *Courier* continued its investigation into Odyssey by exploring a swing-dance instruction class held in the parish hall at Blessed Sacrament Church, Rochester, on the evening of May 18. Inside the hall,



Matt Salzmann and Michelle Long, both parishioners of St. Joseph's in Penfield, try out a new move.

six couples followed the instructions of parishioner Mike Thibault, a member of the Rochester Swing Dance Network. The network regularly organizes dances and classes at area churches and halls.

"What's going to happen is back, step, down, back, step, snap," Thibault told the dancers as he mimicked Ella Fitzgerald scatting "Bo doo woo, doo woo, d'bee, d'bee, doo woo!"

His partner, Cori Williams, 26, a Free Methodist who also belongs to the dance network, told the ladies: "You need to have your hands out here all the time, accessible."

"Like handles," Bradbury-Haehl said, dancing alone because the *Courier* was unable to provide her a dance partner who understood the concept of "rock, step."

As the dancers took a break to chow down pizza and guzzle sodas, Thibault and Williams said they were pleased with the dancers' efforts.

"We didn't make it an easy class, but they got everything," Williams said. For many that night, it was their first time at an Odyssey event.

"I had a great time," said Tim Jutsum, 21, a parishioner at St. Joseph's Parish in Penfield. Like others, he had attended

## Events

For information on these events, call Nora Bradbury-Haehl at 585/328-3228, ext. 218, or 800/388-7177, ext. 218, or visit the diocese's Web site at [www.dor.org](http://www.dor.org). Click on departments, then evangelization and catechesis, and then young adult ministry. Odyssey is the diocesan-sponsored young adults network.

● **Tuesday, May 28:** Odyssey volunteers orientation from 6:30-9 p.m., Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Road, Gates. (See story on this page). RSVP by May 27 to Bradbury-Haehl by phone, or via e-mail at [Bradbury-haehl@dor.org](mailto:Bradbury-haehl@dor.org).

● **Saturday, June 1:** Special Olympics at Rochester Institute of Technology from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Volunteers needed to help athletes with disabilities.

● **Sunday, June 2:** Hiking at Powder Mills Park, Pennton. Meet at 2 p.m. Hike for 90 minutes.

● **Thursday, June 6:** Theology on Tap at Johnny's Irish Pub (Johnny's Smoke Free), 1362 Curver Road, Rochester. Discussion on Catholic and related issues from 8-10 p.m.

● **Friday, June 7:** Miniature golf at Adventure Landing, 3340 W. Ridge Road, Greece. Meet out front at 7 p.m. for one or two games, and go out for ice cream afterward.

● **Thursday, June 20:** Dinner at Woody's II, 2758 W. Henrietta Road, Henrietta, 7 p.m. RSVP by June 19.

● **Saturday, June 22:** Sixth annual Odyssey picnic at Mendon Ponds Park, Monroe County, 2-10 p.m. at Hopkins Point Lodge. \$10 admission covers meat, rolls and cabin rental. Softball, volleyball, hiking. Contact Odyssey hotline at 585/328-3228, ext. 375, and leave your name and phone number to sign up, and someone will get back to you. Volunteers needed as well.

the event at the invitation of Bradbury-Haehl, who once was a youth minister at his parish.

Other dancers had attended such diocesan young adult events as Theology On Tap, a monthly discussion of Catholic issues at Johnny's Irish Bar in Rochester. Among them was Michelle Long, 20, a University of Rochester student. She said she had been swing-dancing for four years, and couldn't pass up the opportunity to learn more about it.

"I can't just sit there and listen to (big band music)," she said. "Dancing is the only real way to appreciate this music."

As the *Courier* concluded its investigation, it found that Odyssey members tend to be well-mannered and interested in socializing with other people who share their Catholic faith. In fact, Lehner said Odyssey inspired her to start going to church again, something many young adults are tempted to give up, according to Christine Nowak, 19, another St. Joseph's parishioner who attended the swing dance.

Nowak may have summed up best the value of a network that offers both social and spiritual activities for young adults when she remarked that young adulthood "is such a time of transition. It can be so easy to lose your faith."

Then, turning to look at the people around her, she added that a fun night like the swing dance has a special meaning when it's sponsored by the diocese.

"I think it's just cool that we can come together as the church, but not just be focused on the church."