

# MOV on the

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## 'It gives you a really good feeling'

**M**ichael and Erin Hurley enjoy making frequent volunteer trips to Elmira's Community Free Soup Kitchen. "It gives you a really good feeling after you've finished," said Michael, 14. "Some of the people ask who you are, and where you're from, and thank you," added Erin, 12.

While these siblings' volunteerism touches people on a local level, the organization they represent — Elmira's Holy Family Junior High School Service Club — is making a national impact as well. The club was showcased at the Boston College-National Catholic Education Association conference held in Boston June 28-30.

According to conference organizers, Holy Family's Service Club was selected because it is "considered exemplary in the education of young adolescents," enhancing their "physical, emotional, intellectual and psychological developmental needs." Of the nine national models selected, Holy Family was the only one from New York state. Principal Elizabeth Berliner, who attended the conference in Boston, said she'll travel to St. Louis next April for the NCEA annual convention, where the Service Club will once again be acknowledged.

The club got its start in 1981 under former principal Sister Patricia Carroll, SSJ, when the junior high was located in the St. Patrick's school building. (It moved to St. Casimir's in 1986.) This effort has grown to what Berliner terms a "very comprehensive" program. "I think what makes it unique is the level or depth of involvement," she said.

In the community, club members' charitable works include working in the soup kitchen, making Christmas baskets for underprivileged people, collecting and sorting clothes for the Samaritan Center, collecting canned goods for food pantries and doing fundraisers for overseas relief organizations and such groups as Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Within their own school, the seventh- and eighth-graders offer their free time as attendance messengers, lunch servers and temporary receptionists "so we don't have to get adults to do this," Berliner said.

When applying for the Service Club, students are asked to specify what volunteer duty they can offer at their parishes, such as assisting with baby-sitting during Mass or being altar servers. That information is then



Members of the Holy Family Junior High School Service Club work together Aug. 7 at Elmira's Community Free Soup Kitchen to begin serving food they helped prepare. From left are Connor Buchanan, 14; Ryan Hurley, 10; Evan Buchanan, 11; and Kim Janeski, 13.

forwarded to the churches.

Another Service Club component is the Builders Club, which involves about half of Holy Family's students. There, students link up with civic organizations to perform such diverse activities as staffing exhibit booths during all-day science fairs, pitching in on downtown cleanups and taking part in Make a Difference Day. This past year the school made a difference by planting daffodils at Elmira's Eldridge Park.

Berliner said that many teachers and families get involved in the Service Club as well. For instance, Michael and Erin's mother, Julie, often volunteers along with their 10-year-old brother, Ryan, an incoming fifth-grader at Holy Family Intermediate School.

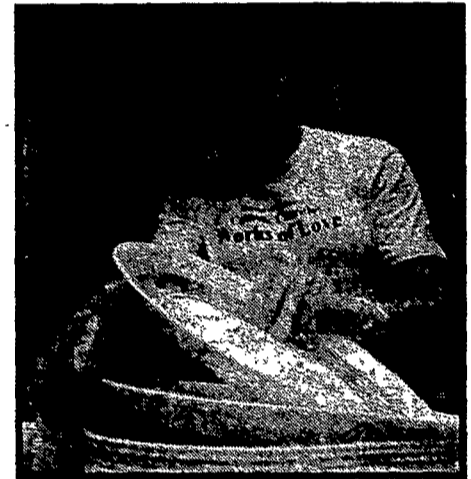
"I would like them to volunteer as they get older. I hope they take it on as adults, and that they instill it in their own kids," Julie Hurley said. "If we take volunteerism into the family and make it a lifelong cycle, then it's a great thing for the community."

Many times, Berliner observed, young people don't get started with volunteerism until high school or later. But based on her experience with the junior-high students, she said, "They're very capable of rendering genuine service. And they're enjoying it."

Berliner cited the monthly soup-kitchen visits as a prime example. "They buy the food, plan the menu and serve it. They really come through. It's different than just doing something that you ask them to do."

The Service Club's overall level of participation is commendable as well. According to Berliner, participation is not required, but 99 percent of the students volunteer anyway.

Despite this flurry of volunteer activity,



Kim Janeski counts plates to ensure that enough are available for the many guests expected to arrive for dinner Aug. 7.

Berliner emphasized that the students never miss class time. In fact, she said, many of them perform service over the summer. For instance, Michael and Erin, parishioners at Our Lady of Lourdes, are devoted to their summer duty at the soup kitchen. Both said they help out in appreciation for their comparatively comfortable lifestyle.

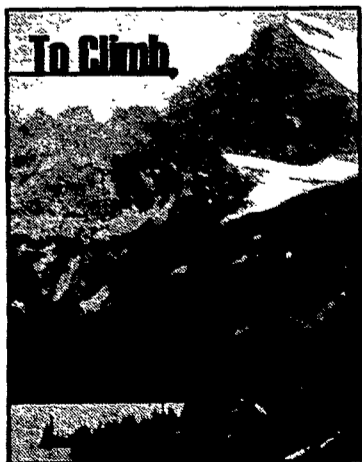
"Even if you don't have all the stuff you want, you kind of learn to deal with it," said Michael, who will move from the junior high to Notre Dame High School this fall.

"You see the people, how much they don't have and how much you do," said Erin, who is entering eighth grade at Holy Family Junior High.

Michael also remarked that good works are often returned, saying that beneficiaries might "come back someday and help you out when you actually need it."

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